

Collapse 241

Chapter 241 Coocoo Burst Update_1

Fatty glanced at Zi Liang, who was huddled beside him. Don't worry, we're not that close to the door. It'd have to press its eyes right up against the air vent to see us.

Of course, Fatty didn't say this aloud. Instead, he tried to convey it with frantic glances, hoping Zi Liang would understand.

Luckily, Zi Liang had no idea what Fatty was trying to imply. Otherwise, Fatty's terrifying description would surely have scared him.

At this moment, the extremely timid Zi Liang was clutching his phone tightly, listening intently to the sounds outside the restroom door.

The sounds outside progressed very slowly. Zi Liang felt as if they would reach the restroom door any second, yet it also seemed like they were still a considerable distance away... But it's definitely getting closer, he thought.

Regardless, the sound was drawing nearer.

THUMP. THUMP. THUMP.

Slow, dull thumps echoed from outside until, finally, the heartbeats of the two men inside the restroom began to synchronize with that sluggish THUMPING rhythm. As the sound drew nearer, they both heard a noise like hair being dragged across the floor.

That was it—the ghost's hair was dragging on the ground, trailing far behind it. That was the sound its hair was making. Fatty suspected, If Gu Mian were here, he'd probably take the chance to stomp on its hair. Unfortunately, Gu Mian wasn't there, and neither of the two men present had any inclination to step on the female ghost's hair.

The noise was getting closer...

The muffled thumping finally reached the outside of the door. Fatty heard a louder thump than before from outside, followed by an eerie silence. But this peaceful silence didn't last long, as a rustling sound soon followed. It seemed the thing outside was moving its head, drawing closer; it was looking inside.

In their cramped corner, Fatty and Zi Liang huddled tightly together. Fatty sucked in his stomach until it was flat, like a deflated ball that had been pricked by a needle. Unconsciously, both men held their breath, almost feeling a malevolent gaze sweep in from outside the door.

During these silent few seconds, Zi Liang even suspected, We've been seen. Fortunately, the thing outside took no further action. Just as the two were on the verge of suffocating from holding their breath, the THUMPING resumed.

It had left.

Only then did Zi Liang begin to take small, cautious breaths, like a shy young woman. It wasn't until the sound from outside grew more distant, finally disappearing completely, that the two men in the restroom dared to make any noise.

"Did we manage to hide from it?" Zi Liang asked, glancing nervously at the ventilation window under the door; now he could only see the floorboards.

We should be safe... Fatty thought, wiping the sweat from his forehead and also looking towards the air vent. "As long as we don't follow the clichés from horror stories when we leave..."

Zi Liang was all too familiar with horror story clichés: being chased by a ghost, thinking you've escaped, then turning around to find it right behind you. The thought sent chills down his spine. Subconsciously, he pressed himself closer to the wall behind him. Even though the wall was grimy with some unidentifiable substance, this wasn't the time to be picky. With his back still feeling cold, he glanced at his cell phone. The screen still showed the inside of the restroom, but the two small figures on it seemed to have calmed down.

[Wang Panzi]: It looks like it's gone. Let's get out of here, quick.

[Liang'er]: Yeah... but this restroom is filthy. Looks like something happened here. Should we stick around and investigate?

An option then appeared at the bottom of the screen.

[Explore the 'Filthy Restroom'? This exploration will take twenty minutes.]

Fatty glanced at Zi Liang. "Are you planning to explore?"

Zi Liang eyed the phone screen. "Theoretically, yes. But damn, this exploration time is way too long!"

God knows if that damn thing will suddenly come back to search again, he worried.

"Let's get out of this damn place first. That ghost sounded like it went upstairs," Zi Liang suggested, hesitating. He knew full well that choosing to explore might be better than leaving, but twenty minutes was a daunting amount of time.

Fatty clearly wasn't keen on staying in this place for twenty minutes either. He nodded in agreement. "We can explore this damn place properly when the Doctor gets here."

The Doctor... The name echoed in Zi Liang's mind. Perhaps it was Gu Mian's doing, but now, the mere mention of "Doctor" immediately filled Zi Liang's mind with the sound of a chainsaw. He still remembered the crisp snap as his handcuffs were sawn apart. In all the instances he'd experienced—not a few, though not many either—it was the first time he'd ever known handcuffs could be opened like that.

"Alright," Zi Liang said, selecting 'No' on the screen. He then glanced towards the door. "Let's go first..." As he spoke, he put his phone back in his pocket. Zi Liang was still afraid that opening the door would reveal something unexpected, so he remained poised to flee.

Meanwhile, Fatty had already taken a deep breath and reached for the restroom door. Fortunately, the restroom hadn't been used for a long time, so even a deep breath didn't bring any nauseating smell. Zi Liang clutched his pocket tightly, his gaze fixed on Fatty pushing the door.

Then, with a CREAK, Fatty pushed the door open. After cracking the door open, Fatty first peeked outside cautiously. Seeing nothing, he then boldly pushed the door fully open.

The lab was now empty; not a single ghostly shadow remained.

Seeing it was safe, Fatty stepped out. Zi Liang quickly followed. Since the door panel always creaked when moved, he carefully closed it behind him after stepping out.

Fatty rubbed his hands. "Let's check the other door on the first floor to see if it's locked." If both doors were locked, their only choice would be to escape by jumping from a second-floor window. Bashing the door down was out of the question. Who knew how fast the ghost could move? If it heard the noise and instantly appeared on the first floor, they'd be done for.

Fatty spoke as he prepared to leave. Just then, Zi Liang suddenly bent down as if he'd discovered something, staring at the ground with a strange expression.

"What is it?" Fatty, who had just lifted his foot, lowered it again and turned to look at Zi Liang. He saw Zi Liang staring intently at the ground beneath his feet, an utterly baffled expression on his face.

Fatty also bent down, following his gaze, and saw that a bloody footprint had appeared on the ground not far from the restroom door. It was a vibrant red, as if freshly made.

Fatty was certain. This wasn't here when we ran in. And it definitely wasn't left by that female ghost. I remember it moved by thumping its head; there's no way it could have left this.

What is this...? Fatty frowned. Then, he noticed something was wrong with the footprint's direction.

Its toes were pointing towards the restroom!

Fatty, still bent over, instinctively glanced towards the restroom. He saw a face pressed tightly against the air vent, staring fixedly at him.

Chapter 242 The Terrifying Doctor_1

"Holy shit!" Fatty shouted, but only in his mind, as he feared that the female ghost who had just departed might be attracted back by his voice.

While cursing inwardly, Fatty quickly grabbed Zi Liang. "Fucking run!"

Pulled like that, Zi Liang also frantically turned and ran.

The two of them hurriedly dashed through the now somewhat messy laboratory, heading for the main door.

But just as they opened the main door, the two of them suddenly saw a white figure at the entrance.

Zi Liang was aghast. He desperately tried to turn and flee, but twisted his back in the process and nearly passed out.

Not only did he wrench his back, but he also slammed his head into a nearby lab bench with a loud BANG.

Just as he was desperately scrambling to get up and escape, a familiar voice suddenly came from the entrance: "What are you doing?"

It was the Doctor with the chainsaw!

Zi Liang instinctively looked up towards the door. He saw the Doctor who had sawed off his handcuffs standing there, a peculiar expression on his face.

Behind the Doctor was a poker-faced man with glasses, and a girl who looked rather cute...

Seeing this, Zi Liang clutched his back and stood up. "It's nothing... nothing serious. I just slipped a moment ago."

Doesn't really look like you slipped...

But Gu Mian ultimately didn't say anything that would make Zi Liang lose face. He looked up at the clock hanging above the laboratory's blackboard; it was now 1:10.

Upon seeing Gu Mian, Fatty heaved a sigh of relief and even considered completing the earlier twenty-minute toilet task.

But before Fatty could speak, Chu Changge, who was beside them, interjected, "What are you two doing in this place?"

Fatty, still shaken, took out his phone. "After class, I originally wanted to find you, Doctor. But the little character I registered started moving for no reason, so I had no choice but to follow it."

As he said this, Fatty glanced at Zi Liang beside him. "I ran into him on the way."

This whole affair was quite bizarre.

Fatty continued, "The moment we entered this lab building, the door locked behind us. Then, from the stairs behind us, we heard the sound of a ghost chasing us, so we ran up to this third floor... That ghost that was chasing us is still lingering outside our door..."

"Let's not talk here anymore," Zi Liang said, now standing straight while holding his head. "Let's leave this place first!"

That one glimpse into the toilet earlier had scared him half to death. Even if he had ten times the courage, he wouldn't dare to continue dawdling and chatting here.

Seemingly recalling the earlier scene, Fatty also looked a bit unnerved. He flinched slightly and said, "We were hiding in the toilet at first. We only came out after the female ghost left... But right after we came out, we casually glanced over there and saw a face..."

Chu Changge also glanced towards the toilet. "Was it the female ghost that was chasing you?"

"No." Fatty shook his head, a bewildered expression on his face. "No... that face didn't look female. I don't think it was the one chasing us earlier. What do you think, Zi Liang?"

Zi Liang, his face pale, shook his head. "I only caught a quick glimpse. I just saw a face, a mouth, and nothing else... Are we really going to keep chatting here? This is far too dangerous!"

Zi Liang was surprised to see that Fatty, who had been whimpering and wailing in fear just moments ago, had suddenly perked up.

Fatty immediately said, "Doctor, we triggered a twenty-minute task in the toilet earlier."

"You can't be serious..." Zi Liang's face turned even paler. "You want to stay here and do the task?"

Although there were more people now, giving them a slight sense of security, everyone knew that these kinds of supernatural games weren't won by sheer numbers.

Even if one or two thousand people were thrown into a game like this and they all stuck together, those fated to die would still die—they'd just die together...

But the few people present seemed to have no such awareness at all.

Except for the cute-looking girl at the very back, who seemed a little scared, the other three actually began to consider the feasibility of this task.

Gu Mian rubbed his chin. "Actually, twenty minutes isn't that long. Does the task have any other conditions?"

Fatty shook his head. "It didn't say. It just said to explore the toilet, duration twenty minutes. It didn't say what would happen if we left midway, nor did it mention any other conditions."

Zi Liang watched, dumbfounded, as the three people in front of him discussed for a while and then made a decision.

Gu Mian stroked his chin, looking at Zi Liang and Willow not supporting wind. "Logically, it should be safer with more people going in, but this toilet can't fit that many... The first-floor door was locked when we arrived, but it's open now. You two can leave first if you want."

Hearing this, Zi Liang hesitated for a good while before finally making a decision. "Since the three of you have decided to stay here, at most only two of us would be leaving. Although having more people doesn't necessarily offer any advantage in a supernatural game, at least being with many people provides some peace of mind... I'll stay here. But let me make it clear, I'm not going into that toilet!"

He had a strong feeling that he would likely encounter something on the path from the third floor down to the first. On second thought, it seemed safer to stay here with everyone else.

At least if we die, huddling together might provide a little warmth.

Since Zi Liang wasn't leaving, Willow not supporting wind couldn't leave alone either. The final decision was that Gu Mian, Chu Changge, and Fatty would go into the toilet, while Zi Liang and Willow not supporting wind would stay outside.

Gu Mian watched as the two of them found a hidden lab bench, dove underneath it, and then pulled a stool in front of the bench to block themselves in securely.

"You guys go on in," Zi Liang said, poking his head out from a gap by the stool. He still seemed worried. "The ghost we saw earlier... it might still be inside..."

But the three of them seemed to completely ignore his concern.

Fatty had long since lost his earlier fear. Zi Liang watched as, after the Doctor carrying the chainsaw entered the toilet, Fatty also cheerfully dived in, looking as joyful as a student who hadn't had a day off in eight hundred years finally returning home.

Has Fatty been possessed by a ghost? Zi Liang wondered for a fleeting moment.

Twenty minutes isn't particularly long, nor is it particularly short.

Gu Mian and the others had entered the toilet at 1:15.

Considering there was still a female ghost upstairs, Zi Liang didn't dare to loudly ask the people inside what they had discovered.

He and Willow not supporting wind hid nervously under the lab bench for a long time. Because they didn't dare to peek out, they couldn't see the time on the clock above the blackboard.

They felt as if they had been waiting for a very long time.

So long, in fact, that they began to suspect Gu Mian and the other two might have died silently in the toilet.

Just as Zi Liang was growing restless in the cramped space, Willow not supporting wind, who was beside him, suddenly whispered, "It's been a long time, hasn't it?"

Zi Liang paused for a moment, then nodded.

Time always seems to pass exceptionally slowly when one is waiting. In truth, he didn't know exactly how long it had been.

"Should I stick my head out and see?" he suggested after a moment's thought.

Willow not supporting wind nodded. "Alright, but be careful."

Zi Liang listened intently for a long while. Once he was sure there were no sounds nearby, he nervously poked his head out from the gap by the stool.

The blackboard wasn't far from them; he could see it by tilting his head slightly.

Zi Liang looked at the time on it. It was now 1:33.

Twenty minutes aren't up yet! Still two minutes to go!

Only after seeing the time did Zi Liang let out a sigh of relief. He then prepared to pull his head back in.

But just as he was pulling his head back, he suddenly sensed that something wasn't quite right...

Chapter 243 Laboratory and Doctor_1

Zi Liang slowly turned his neck to look up.

He saw a face pressed tightly against the glass of the window above, grinning and staring at him.

The windows on the classroom wall facing the corridor were more than a person's height from the floor; a normal person wouldn't be able to press their face against the glass up there.

The moment he made eye contact with the face, Zi Liang immediately withdrew his head and ducked under the table.

Seeing this, Willow not supporting wind seemed to understand and subtly raised her head, glancing in the direction Zi Liang had just been staring.

However, the space beneath the table was too cramped for two people. With several chairs blocking their view, Willow not supporting wind couldn't see outside either.

"What is it?" she mouthed at Zi Liang.

In the cramped space, Zi Liang pointed upward with a stiff hand and mouthed, "Over there..."

Even if Zi Liang didn't elaborate, Willow not supporting wind could guess what was there from his expression.

At this thought, Willow not supporting wind involuntarily shrank back, trying to make herself even smaller.

Just then, however, Zi Liang, who was in front of her, moved again. He mouthed slowly, enunciating each word—"It saw me."

Willow not supporting wind's pupils abruptly contracted.

It saw them!

Just then, they heard a noise coming from the entrance.

Gu Mian and the others hadn't closed the laboratory door after entering, so this wasn't the sound of a door being pushed open.

Instead, it was the extremely faint sound of footsteps, barely audible. If he hadn't seen Willow not supporting wind's face turn pale, Zi Liang would have thought he was imagining things.

It was coming in... The grinning ghost face from the window—it was coming in.

The two of them huddled together tightly, as if shrinking themselves down would prevent the ghost from finding them.

Zi Liang couldn't understand. Why do these things always happen to me?

It had been the same earlier with Fatty, when he had practically curled himself into a ball.

And it was happening again now.

Why are there so many ghosts in this laboratory building!

Theoretically, their current situation was even worse. When they were hiding in the restroom, at least there was a chance they wouldn't be found, protected by the dilapidated restroom door. But now, the ghost had spotted them from the outset; it had entered the classroom specifically for them! And here, there was only a pile of rickety chairs that could be easily pushed aside.

The footsteps outside were faint and indistinct.

The two hiding under the table heard the footsteps only once before a long silence descended, as if whoever made them had long since departed.

Zi Liang was covering his phone screen, peeking at it through a tiny gap.

When the upside-down female ghost appeared last time, a warning had shown up in the game. This ghost with the faint footsteps should, theoretically, also appear on the screen.

However, the screen left him dumbfounded. The display only showed the table they were hiding under and a few nearby floor tiles, not a full view of the laboratory.

There were also several lines of text at the bottom of the screen—

"[Faint footsteps echo in the classroom. It seems someone is walking around outside. But this classroom has been abandoned for a long time due to past events. Who would come here?]"

"[Willow not supporting wind: ...]"

"[Liang'er: ...]"

Perhaps their game characters had also sensed the danger, so they didn't dare make a sound.

The screen, showing only their hiding spot under the table and the nearby floor, made Zi Liang frantic with anxiety.

Just then, Willow not supporting wind, opposite him, suddenly looked over and mouthed, "It seems like the noise has stopped."

Has the noise stopped? Zi Liang listened carefully, and indeed, not a single sound came from outside.

But even so, they didn't dare peek out.

Better to wait for the others to come out of the restroom... if they even can come out... Why are two minutes taking so agonizingly long!

Zi Liang had never felt time pass so agonizingly slowly. He gripped his phone tightly, his eyes peering through the gaps between the legs of the chairs in front of the table, fixed on the restroom door not far away.

He even found himself thinking, 'It's warmer if we all die together.'

Then, just as he was lost in these morbid thoughts, he suddenly heard soft footsteps nearby. Very close! They were almost right in front of the table!

Zi Liang blanched and instinctively looked up at Willow not supporting wind across from him.

But as Zi Liang raised his head, he saw Willow not supporting wind staring back at him, her expression even more terrified than his own.

Zi Liang's scalp prickled. He followed Willow not supporting wind's gaze and looked behind himself.

A deathly pale face had somehow squeezed through the gaps between the chairs. It was almost touching his own, its mouth stretched into a wide grin as it stared at him.

"It's over..." Zi Liang choked out.

Just after Zi Liang's despairing cry, another sound suddenly echoed.

It was the sound of the dilapidated restroom door being abruptly pushed open, followed by Fatty's disgusted "PTOOEY! PTOOEY!"

"That place is disgusting. The more I looked, the sicker I felt. I think some little flies flew into my mouth," Fatty said, glancing towards where Zi Liang and Willow not supporting wind were hiding.

After exiting, his first instinct was to check if his teammates were still there.

However, when he looked over, he saw Zi Liang with his eyes closed, the picture of someone resigned to death. Such an expression might have befitted a hero on a battlefield, but here and now, it just looked pathetic.

"What are you doing?" Fatty strode over and yanked away the chair blocking the front of the table.

Only then did Zi Liang open his eyes. He twisted his neck to look around and asked, "Am I not dead?"

Gu Mian observed him carefully. "You appear to be, for now," he replied.

Just then, Willow not supporting wind scrambled out from under the table, gasping for breath. "We just saw a ghost!"

Saw a ghost? Gu Mian rubbed his chin. This spot wasn't that close to the restroom door, yet they should have heard if anything happened outside.

"Just now," Willow not supporting wind gestured wildly, "a huge face nearly touched me! But when I closed my eyes and opened them again, it was gone. Then, suddenly, I saw you guys come out."

Gu Mian lowered his hand. "Was it the same female ghost as before?"

"No." Zi Liang weakly shook his head. "It wasn't."

He had been closest to the face, so he had the most authority to speak on this.

"It wasn't the female ghost, nor the male ghost we saw in the restroom earlier. It was a new one, a ghost we've never seen before..."

Hearing this, Fatty couldn't help but shiver. Just how many ghosts are in this laboratory building?!

Chu Changge's voice suddenly came from the side, "Did it touch your face just now?"

Chapter 244 A Key Pulled Out From the Latrine _1

Chu Changge pushed his glasses up and voiced his conclusion, "Logically, it's so close to you by now. We shouldn't be looking at a living person."

"I'm really alive!" Zi Liang pinched his hand and then squeezed his face vigorously. "See, it's still warm!"

As he spoke, he stretched out his hand, as if inviting everyone present to feel it.

Chu Changge, of course, wasn't going to pinch him to see if he was warm.

Fatty, however, stared at Zi Liang's hand for a few moments before giving it a hard squeeze. "It's really hot," he concluded.

Perhaps because he had been too tense earlier, Zi Liang was now sweating all over, his hands clammy.

At this point, Chu Changge had already changed the subject. "We made some discoveries in the toilet earlier," he said. "Would you like to come and see?"

Zi Liang wasn't very enthusiastic about staying long in this ghost-filled laboratory building. However, he had just been frightened into a sweat and couldn't run far at the moment. So, he nodded in agreement with Chu Changge's proposal.

Gu Mian was holding a phone.

Zi Liang noticed that the screens on Gu Mian's, Chu Changge's, and Fatty's phones were different from his own. Three different options had appeared on their phones.

Gu Mian explained, "Since the three of us searched different places in the toilet, the triggered choices are also different."

Zi Liang first looked at Chu Changge's phone screen.

[Chu Changge thoroughly searched the 'broken mop handle']

[There seem to be marks from a small knife on the break. This kind of knife is only found in the art gallery]

[Go to the art gallery?]

[If you abandon this, you cannot explore it again]

Next was Fatty's screen.

[Wang Panzi thoroughly searched 'the filthy ground and walls']

[There's an unknown yellow liquid sprayed on the walls, along with traces of chalk. Could the chalk have been brought from a classroom?]

[Go to the classroom?]

[If you abandon this, you cannot explore it again]

Finally, it was the Chainsaw Doctor's. His screen was the most outlandish of all.

[Gu Gu thoroughly searched 'the squat toilet pit']

[A key was pulled out from the pit, coated in some yellow solid substance. The number '4473' is written on the key. It seems to be a dormitory key]

[Go to the dormitory?]

[If you abandon this, you cannot explore it again]

"I can tolerate the others..." Zi Liang pressed his lips together, but in the end, he couldn't hold back. "But Doctor, what's the deal with yours? Pulling a key from a squat toilet pit is really going too far!"

He still remembered that the characters in this game followed the actions of the real players.

Gu Mian spoke very sincerely, "I just clicked 'search squat toilet pit.' The character in the game dug out the Key on its own."

That little character is surprisingly smart, then. Zi Liang swallowed.

"Now we have three directions," Chu Changge suddenly interjected from the side. "My suggestion is that we explore all three."

Zi Liang nodded. "Indeed, it says that once you give up, you can't explore it. So, we need to split up?"

Gu Mian suddenly spoke up, "Of course, if everyone present could split themselves into three, we wouldn't need to separate."

Zi Liang chuckled, thinking the joke was a bit lame.

Chu Changge continued, "Our mission in this instance is to survive for four days. Since the instance is time-based, we can imagine that the danger will increase as time goes on. So, it's best to resolve this instance as soon as possible, ideally by tonight."

Resolve? Zi Liang silently touched his ear. Did he just say "resolve"? He had only ever seen instances "resolving" players, never players "resolving" an instance. No... he seemed to recall seeing players "resolve" an instance, but only in game announcements.

As he thought this, Zi Liang suddenly realized that Fatty's and Chu Changge's nicknames seemed familiar.

But before he could dwell on it, Chu Changge's voice interrupted his thoughts, "The three of us will, of course, go to these three different places."

Zi Liang noticed Fatty's spirits droop again; he looked like a student forced back to school after a hard-earned two-day break.

"What are you two planning to do?" Chu Changge asked, looking at Zi Liang and Willow not supporting wind.

Zi Liang shifted his feet; his legs weren't as wobbly as before. "Of course, we can't just do nothing. Doing nothing is basically asking for death... I'll go with Fatty!"

Fatty seemed the most reliable of the three. Zi Liang suspected the Doctor with the chainsaw might suddenly go berserk and start hacking. He also suspected Chu Changge was a vicious beast in human skin. Fatty seemed the safest; besides, they had already spent some time together, even if it was only for about an hour.

Willow not supporting wind, standing nearby, obviously didn't want to just sit around waiting for death either. Between the unreliable-looking Doctor and the seemingly reliable guy with glasses, her choice was naturally the latter.

So Gu Mian was left to go it alone again.

"I'm so pitiful, truly..." Gu Mian sighed, glancing at the time on the blackboard. It was already 1:40.

After checking the time, he turned back. "Let's go downstairs first."

Naturally, Zi Liang couldn't wait to leave this laboratory building.

But for some reason, the three who came out of the toilet moved downstairs at an extremely slow pace, as if they were leisurely strolling through the laboratory building. Fatty was still constantly looking at his phone, further slowing their descent.

Luckily, no mishaps occurred. The female ghost who was bashing her head on the ground, the male ghost in the toilet, and the white-faced ghost at the window all failed to appear.

By the time they reached the building's entrance, it was almost two o'clock.

The iron chain on the door had already been sawed off by Gu Mian with his chainsaw. Although the lock was on the inside of the laboratory building, Gu Mian, from the outside, had still been able to reach his chainsaw through.

Fortunately, no security guard came by during this time; otherwise, Gu Mian, chainsaw in hand, would have been apprehended long ago.

Zi Liang scrambled out of the laboratory building and into the brilliant sunlight. The summer sun was scorching, but Zi Liang found it incredibly comforting, as if bathing in its rays could dispel all evil spirits and ghosts.

Gu Mian glanced at his phone screen; the options were still displayed there.

Similarly, Chu Changge and Fatty hadn't made their choices immediately either.

In the sunlight, Zi Liang saw the three of them exchange a few words before they simultaneously pressed the options on their screens.

At the same time, different messages appeared on their screens.

[Chu Changge: There seems to have been a fierce fight in the toilet. The mop handle has marks from a utility knife. Perhaps I should go take a look.]

Chapter 245 I Want to Brownnose_1

[Wang Panzi: The pale yellow chalk on the wall seems to be only found in Year 1 classrooms. Maybe I should go investigate the Year 1 building.]

[Gu Gu: An unidentified key pulled from a latrine pit. The key, still stained with some unknown yellow substance, has '4473' inscribed on it. It seems to be a dormitory key. Perhaps I should go check the dormitory building.]

The three thus went their separate ways.

Under the blazing sun, Zi Liang wiped the sweat from his forehead. "Are we supposed to explore all three directions this afternoon?"

It sounded quite exhausting.

Chu Changge nodded slightly. "We have ample time. As long as none of us meet with any fatal accidents, we should be able to explore everything."

Zi Liang pursed his lips. "You're putting it quite bluntly..."

At this point, Zi Liang was probably also feeling the heat. Silently, he moved to a shady spot and furtively wiped the sweat from his forehead.

The destinations for all three were quite clear.

Chu Changge was heading to the art gallery.

Fatty was heading to the Year 1 building.

And Gu Mian needed to go to the dormitory.

Fortunately, there were signposts at regular intervals in the school, saving them the awkwardness of having to ask for directions.

How could high school students not know where their own school's buildings and dormitories were?

They soon arrived at a fork in the road.

A signpost stood beside the junction.

Gu Mian looked up.

To the left was the art gallery. To the right was the Year 1 building. Straight ahead lay the dormitories.

Fatty glanced at Gu Mian, hesitated for a moment, then headed right with Zi Liang towards the Year 1 building.

Chu Changge, without much hesitation, set off to the left. Willow not supporting wind hurriedly followed.

A few minutes later, Gu Mian was the only one left at the junction.

He looked around.

It was probably just after two in the afternoon. Because of the afternoon break, the students were all napping, and the teachers had likely gone home. He was the only one on the wide road.

Gu Mian glanced at the blazing sun overhead, then set off straight ahead.

Chu Changge was incredibly swift. He was nearing the art gallery in just a few minutes. Willow not supporting wind struggled to keep up. She didn't dare ask him to slow down and could only jog behind him.

This is terrifying! He looks so thin and weak, yet he has such incredible stamina!

To adapt to the instance environment, Willow not supporting wind had specifically increased her stamina, but she still couldn't keep pace with Chu Changge.

Is it because the difference in our initial stats is too large?

Muttering to herself, she panted and finally caught up to Chu Changge.

By then, Chu Changge was already standing before the main entrance of the art gallery, lost in thought.

Willow not supporting wind gasped for breath a few times, leaning on her legs as she looked at the massive building before her.

The art gallery was roughly circular, somewhat resembling a minimalist version of the Bird's Nest stadium. Of course, this art gallery lacked the scale and intricate design of the actual Bird's Nest, but there was a slight resemblance.

The center seemed to have an open-roof design, the kind that would let rain in.

Seizing the opportunity while Chu Changge was stationary, Willow not supporting wind hurriedly asked, "By the way, we've been in this instance for so long, but I don't think I've seen the other three people yet."

The instance had eight people.

But she had only met four of them. Including herself, that made five.

She hadn't seen the other three at all.

On the way, Willow not supporting wind had paid special attention, but she hadn't spotted any players other than their group.

Chu Changge glanced at her. "There's one among them whom you'd be better off not meeting."

What? Willow not supporting wind didn't quite understand what he meant, but just as she was about to ask, Chu Changge turned his head away, apparently unwilling to discuss it further.

Chu Changge observed the circular building before them. After confirming its general dimensions, he began to walk in.

Willow not supporting wind, already drenched in sweat from the sun, was desperate to get into the art gallery. Seeing Chu Changge step inside, she quickly followed.

The two small figures on the screen also entered the circular building.

There was also an exchange between the two small figures:

[Willow not supporting wind: This building looks a bit ominous. I heard someone went missing here before.]

[Chu Changge: I've heard about that too. But there should be some good things inside, so let's go in and take a look.]

A line of text also appeared at the bottom of the screen:

[Strange whimpering sounds echo through the silent art gallery. Is someone crying?]

Willow not supporting wind looked at the screen, swallowed hard, and stared at it with some apprehension.

Unexpectedly, the young man with small eyes beside her wasn't fazed at all. He merely glanced at it and then prepared to walk straight in.

Willow not supporting wind instantly regretted her decision.

She had initially followed this young man because he seemed relatively reliable. Now, it looked like he might be even more unreliable than that green Doctor with the chainsaw!

Unreliable or not, she had no choice. After all, they had come this far. She couldn't possibly turn back to find the Doctor, who was probably long gone, could she?

I'm so miserable... I really am...

Muttering, I'm so miserable, over and over, Willow not supporting wind followed Chu Changge into the art gallery.

True to its name, upon entering the art gallery, they found themselves in a circular corridor. Paintings were hung on the walls and even displayed on the floor.

However, these looked like student works. Although Willow not supporting wind wasn't an art connoisseur, she could tell the brushwork was quite amateurish, with many signs of corrections and overpainting.

Chu Changge crouched down to inspect a painting near his feet.

The signature read: "Year 1, Class 12, Su Ruirui."

He stared at the signature thoughtfully for a moment. "I remember Fatty went to the Year 1 building."

Although Chu Changge was speaking, Willow not supporting wind felt he was more likely talking to himself, as he showed no indication that he expected a reply from her.

He's completely putting on a one-man show.

Willow not supporting wind had no chance to interject. She could only trail diligently behind Chu Changge, hoping to slip in a compliment or two. However, Chu Changge seemed to give her no such opportunity.

Her attempts at flattery having failed, Willow not supporting wind shut her mouth and obediently followed Chu Changge.

Chu Changge was walking along the first floor's circular corridor.

He had estimated the building to be about three stories high, and this first floor seemed to be entirely dedicated to artwork by Year 1 students.

Willow not supporting wind also browsed the paintings on the walls and floor. It had to be said, these artworks were truly abstract—so abstract that perhaps even the artists themselves wouldn't recognize what they had painted.

At that moment, the two little figures on the screen suddenly stopped.

[Chu Changge: This painting looks a bit strange.]

Chapter 246 Chu Changge Eating Painting_1

[Willow not supporting wind: This painting is indeed a bit strange. Let me see who painted it. It seems the first floor is full of art from freshman students...]

As their two game characters stopped, Chu Changge and Willow not supporting wind, who were walking, also halted and looked at the painting before them.

This painting was truly a bit strange...

While the other paintings on this floor were all rather peculiar and highly abstract, if one had to pick the most abstract of them all, it would definitely be this one.

The others comprised sketches, ink wash paintings, and watercolors. This one, however, was drawn with colored pencils.

It wasn't that Willow not supporting wind was bragging, but she hadn't used colored pencils for drawing since leaving kindergarten.

And it was even rarer for high school students to use colored pencils.

The overall tone of the painting was warm, its palette dominated by bright red, orange, and tangerine, with a touch of black.

On the large sheet of paper, there was only a single head in the center, depicted entirely in shades of red. Its mouth was wide open, as if letting out a painful wail.

The eyes were hollow black pits, as if the eyeballs had vanished.

Despite the artist's mediocre skills, Willow not supporting wind still broke out in a cold sweat.

"Come to think of it, I think I've seen a similar painting online before," Willow not supporting wind murmured, taking a step back.

Chu Changge didn't make a sound; instead, he squatted down to inspect the rather unattractive painting. He placed his phone on the ground beneath him, where he could easily see the screen.

Willow not supporting wind saw him extend his hand, pick up the painting, and begin to inspect it carefully.

Front, back, not even sparing the frame—to Willow not supporting wind, it looked as if Chu Changge wanted to devour the painting.

After examining it for a while, Chu Changge finally spoke, "The artist is Chu Hang, from Class Eight of the first years."

Accustomed to Chu Changge's habit of talking to himself, Willow not supporting wind didn't respond.

Sure enough, after a brief pause, he continued, "This painting is a few years old."

After saying this, Chu Changge fell silent.

Slightly bewildered, Willow not supporting wind finally asked, "What do you mean?"

Chu Changge looked at her. "Judging by the colors and the age of the paper, this painting must be at least two years old. The art gallery appears to have three floors. The game character mentioned earlier that the first floor displays works by freshman students. By that logic, the second and third floors should feature art from sophomores and juniors, respectively."

Willow not supporting wind still didn't understand.

Chu Changge continued, "Chu Hang created this piece during his freshman year, which was at least two years ago. Later, he became a sophomore, and then a junior. If he didn't die midway through..."

Willow not supporting wind finally caught on. "You mean we might find other works by Chu Hang in this art gallery?"

If he was alive during his sophomore and junior years, then his other works should be on the second and third floors.

"I'll go to the second floor; you stay here," Chu Changge said, seeming as if he wanted to check the time.

However, there were no clocks in the vast art gallery corridor, so neither of them knew what time it was.

Willow not supporting wind took a deep breath. "Split up?"

Chu Changge nodded. "Time is tight. We have to split up."

Without too much hesitation, Willow not supporting wind, feeling somewhat nervous, nodded. "In that case... what should I do if I stay on the first floor?"

"Look for paintings," Chu Changge said simply. "There might be other abnormal paintings on this floor. As soon as you find one, run up and tell me immediately."

It sounded like a physically demanding task...

Willow not supporting wind nodded, looking somewhat nervous.

She never expected her attempt to curry favor would not only fail but also backfire so spectacularly. Willow not supporting wind was thoroughly exasperated by this.

"Look at these paintings carefully. Remember that," Chu Changge added.

"These corridors make it easy to find people. I'll generally be on the second floor for now. If you don't find me on the second floor, then go up to the third," Chu Changge paused here. "If you can't find me on either the second or third floor, you can call out my name, though it's best not to."

"Oh, right. Sometimes you might find treasure boxes in this mini-game. I suspect the treasure boxes contain special items that can be taken out of the instance."

Willow not supporting wind nodded, feeling incredibly flattered.

She never imagined this guy, who usually just mumbled to himself, would actually say so much to her.

But before she could even finish her astonished nodding, Chu Changge had already turned and headed for the stairs.

The CLACK, CLACK, CLACK of footsteps echoed through the vast first floor, making Willow not supporting wind feel a bit apprehensive.

Only when Chu Changge's figure disappeared at the top of the stairs did Willow not supporting wind apprehensively withdraw her gaze. "Find paintings..." she muttered. She spun around on the spot, then bent down to examine the paintings on the floor. "I haven't finished searching the first floor yet. I'll start here. Maybe I'll even find a treasure box or something..."

「Meanwhile, Fatty and Zi Liang had successfully infiltrated the freshman academic building.」

Due to the afternoon break, there weren't many people in the building.

Only a few students keen on self-study remained in the classrooms, but this didn't hinder their actions.

Zi Liang looked a bit dazed, as if he hadn't been near anything related to studying for a very long time.

The two had snuck into a large office and were rummaging through the chalk in the cabinets.

The items found in the restroom were related to chalk, so it made sense to look for chalk first—that was Zi Liang's line of thinking.

Apparently, Fatty shared Zi Liang's thoughts too.

The two felt a sense of camaraderie, clearly on the same wavelength.

At this moment, Zi Liang noticed a line of text appearing at the bottom of his game screen.

[You found a small box while rummaging through the storage cabinet. Open it?]

As an experienced gamer, Zi Liang was instinctively about to choose "yes."

However, Fatty suddenly snatched his phone. "Don't open it."

Zi Liang was slightly taken aback. "Why?"

Fatty coughed, then said secretively, "What if it's like Pandora's Box and unleashes some monster..."

Zi Liang nodded understandingly. "That makes sense!"

Fatty: "..."

At this moment, Zi Liang noticed another change on his phone screen.

[Something seems to be pinned under the box.]

[Spend ten minutes to move the box?]

Fatty uneasily glanced at the wall clock in the office. It was two-forty...

He stared at the office clock for several seconds, then lowered his head to look at his phone. "Ignore this option for now. Let me think for a moment."

After saying this, he genuinely lowered his head and remained motionless, as if deep in thought.

Zi Liang looked at Fatty strangely. Why did it feel like Fatty had been acting more and more peculiar ever since they entered the classroom building?

Chapter 247 If we round up, everyone's a ghost!_1

Zi Liang also wasn't sure how Fatty managed to stare motionlessly at his phone for nearly twenty minutes. For a few minutes, he even suspected Fatty was possessed by a ghost. Fortunately, Fatty's occasional blinks made Zi Liang give up the idea of shaking him awake.

Whenever Zi Liang grew eager to ask something, Fatty would wave his hand, signaling him not to talk.

Zi Liang had been holding back for twenty minutes before Fatty finally pulled his eyes away from the phone screen. It was almost three o'clock by then.

Seeing Fatty look away from the phone, Zi Liang carefully asked, "Brother Fatty, can we look at what's under the box now?"

Hearing this, Fatty stared at the screen for a few more seconds, then nodded. "Be careful."

Zi Liang then carefully tapped [Yes] on his screen. He didn't quite understand the difference between 'tapping carefully' and 'tapping recklessly.'

Could he accidentally crack the screen?

While Zi Liang was still pondering, Fatty, who was beside him, suddenly said, "In the future, if boxes or other similar things appear, don't rush to open them."

Zi Liang nodded, though he didn't fully understand.

Ten minutes didn't pass by too slowly. Zi Liang hadn't waited long before the little character on the screen finished exploring what was under the box.

[A tattered old roll call book]

[This roll call book is very tattered, as if it has endured many years of damage. The words on the cover are almost illegible, but the numbers 'one' and 'eight' can be vaguely discerned.]

Zi Liang stared intently at his screen, almost wanting to bury his head in it.

But no matter how hard he looked, he couldn't make out what was written on the small, tattered book on the screen. He had no choice but to rely on the on-screen description.

[Opening the roll call book, the writing inside seems to have been damaged by water; it's almost illegible.]

[Only the class log written by the class leader on duty can be faintly read.]

[January 18: Another one missing today. Why have things become like this?]

[February 27: We can't lose any more!]

[April 4: Chu Hang seems to know something. I should go ask him!]

The text on the screen ended there. Zi Liang glanced nervously at Fatty. "Brother Fatty, this class log seems to be about the mysterious disappearance of people in a class..."

Moreover, the class log specifically mentioned the name "Chu Hang."

Fatty nodded. "Since this person was specifically named, we should focus our investigation on him."

"Since this is a roll call book from years ago," Zi Liang paused, "Chu Hang should have graduated long ago, or at the very least, he'd be in his third year of high school."

Fatty glanced at the wall clock. "Don't worry. Since this item specifically mentioned Chu Hang, he must have left some clues in this school. Didn't the book say you could see the numbers one and eight?"

Hearing this, Zi Liang looked down at his phone screen. "Yes, those two numbers are there. Combined... could it be First Year, Class Eight?"

"It's unlikely to be Year Eight, Class One," Fatty mused for a moment, "or First Year, Class Eighteen, or First Year, Class Twenty-eight, and so on. Though, I doubt there's a Class Twenty-eight in the first year here."

As he spoke, Fatty looked towards the office door. "Anyway, let's find First Year, Class Eight first and take a look. We might discover something."

Saying this, he started pulling Zi Liang towards the door.

By this time, Zi Liang had already put the roll call book into his little character's backpack.

Although the roll call book existed in the game's office, it wasn't there in reality. There wasn't even a single piece of paper in the actual office, let alone a roll call book. The cabinet was covered with a thin layer of dust; it seemed nothing had been placed there for some time.

Just then, Zi Liang noticed that Fatty, who was still pulling him, had suddenly stopped.

He looked at Fatty in confusion, only to see him staring at the door with a strange, somewhat terrified expression.

Zi Liang turned to look as well.

The office door had been stealthily pushed open a crack at some unknown point, and now a pair of terrifying eyes was peeking at them through the gap.

For a moment, Zi Liang was ready to jump out the window to escape.

But this was the ground floor, and the burglar-proof bars were solidly welded to the window frames, making it impossible for anyone to get through.

Fatty stumbled back several steps, swallowed hard, and kept his eyes glued to the eyes outside the door.

Normally, in a situation like this, they should have turned and fled immediately, but they were trapped in the office with no way out.

Fortunately, the eyes outside showed no intention of entering. After just two seconds, the terrifying eyes vanished from the doorway. The two inside the office waited a few more seconds before daring to move slightly.

Zi Liang gripped his phone tightly. "Brother Fatty, that thing's gone, right?"

Fatty nodded nervously. "Yeah, gone."

As he spoke, he didn't forget to glance down at his game screen. It showed no changes; the game hadn't mentioned the terrifying eyes at all.

Strange. The game had always given a warning the previous times a ghost appeared.

Zi Liang moved closer to Fatty and said, "Brother Fatty, look. So far, in our game screens, besides our own characters and ghosts, no other characters have appeared."

No matter how many classmates they'd brushed past, the only characters on screen had always been just them.

Zi Liang continued his analysis, "Since only we and ghosts have appeared in the game so far, and that thing peeking at us just now didn't show up in the game, doesn't that mean it isn't a ghost?"

Fatty clapped his hands. "That's a good point! Since the game screen has only ever shown us and ghosts, then by that logic, wouldn't we be ghosts too?"

Zi Liang looked at Fatty silently. "Why does your tone make me feel like you're mocking me?"

Fatty puffed out his chest slightly. "Not at all!"

After puffing out his chest, Fatty craned his neck again to look towards the door. Just then, a gust of wind blew in from the window, pushing the door open a little wider.

It seemed there was nothing outside.

Seeing this, the two of them stealthily pushed the door open and slipped out into the hallway. The "open-door kill" common in horror stories didn't happen, and they were safe for the moment.

Zi Liang even craned his neck, looking around, apparently trying to see where the thing that had been watching them had gone.

Fatty patted him. "Stop looking around. Class Eight should be on the top floor, or the one just below it. We still have to climb."

Climbing stairs on such a hot day was no pleasant experience, but the two of them had to keep forcing themselves upward.

「Meanwhile, in the art gallery, Willow not supporting wind discovered another [Strange Painting].

Chapter 248 Pink Hello Kitty Mini Pants_1

This painting was identical to the one they had found earlier, even bearing the same signature: Chu Hang, Senior Year One, Class Eight.

But a closer look revealed that this painting differed slightly from the one they had just seen.

Unfortunately, Willow not supporting wind couldn't make an accurate comparison now because Chu Changge had already taken the previous painting upstairs.

Remembering Chu Changge's instructions, she quickly ran upstairs with this slightly different painting to find him.

When she arrived on the second floor, Chu Changge was standing in the corridor, holding a painting and seemingly lost in thought.

Willow not supporting wind approached and saw at a glance that the painting he was holding wasn't from the first floor. This painting was a group portrait, incomparably better than the abstract demons and monsters from the first floor; at least one could make out human figures.

But these human figures were also terrifying.

The painting appeared to be a class group photo, but Willow not supporting wind had never seen any class photo like it.

Over forty twisted human figures were on the paper, their bodies contorted as if melted by fire, filling every part of the canvas.

In the lower right corner was a signature: "Senior Year Two, Class Eight - Chu Hang."

"Look," Chu Changge said, not paying attention to the new painting in Willow not supporting wind's hand, but instead pointing to the one he was holding. "The head in this painting looks very similar to the head in the painting we found earlier."

Willow not supporting wind followed his finger and saw that it was indeed the case.

Although the heads in this painting were all very abstract, a careful comparison showed that the head from the portrait was indeed very similar to one specific head in the group painting.

"But the strange thing is, everyone in this group portrait is doubled," Chu Changge said, pushing up his glasses.

Doubled? Willow not supporting wind didn't quite understand.

Chu Changge explained, "It means there are two identical figures for each person. Look, there seem to be over forty people on this canvas, but if you compare them carefully, you'll find that there are always two figures that are identical."

Willow not supporting wind looked carefully and found that it did seem to be the case. "I've basically finished exploring the second floor," Chu Changge continued. "I'm going to the third floor now. Are you coming with me?"

Willow not supporting wind furrowed her brows. "But I haven't finished searching the first floor yet..."

Chu Changge interrupted her, "There's no need."

Willow not supporting wind pursed her lips awkwardly. What did he mean by 'no need'? She hesitated for a moment, then said, "I'm not one to have strong opinions. Okay, then let's go to the third floor..."

Thus, the two of them set off for the third-floor stairs without further disagreement.

Willow not supporting wind felt very uneasy the entire way. She couldn't figure out Chu Changge's intentions, and she herself lacked any strong opinions.

Up to this point, everything she had done involved following other players, reliable or not, randomly around the instance. Sometimes she would stumble her way to clearing the instance, but other times, she would stumble her way to death.

Overall, the latter happened more often.

The person in front of me seems quite reliable, but after getting a better understanding, he doesn't seem that reliable after all...

While Willow not supporting wind was still lost in her thoughts, the two of them had already gone halfway up the stairs.

Chu Changge suddenly asked, "Did you find anything else on the first floor?"

Willow not supporting wind wasn't really comfortable talking to Chu Changge. He clearly wasn't a talkative person, so every time he spoke to her, she became nervous.

"Yes," Willow not supporting wind answered immediately, "I saw a 'trap' on the first floor."

Chu Changge didn't make a sound, continuing to listen to her.

"On the game screen, it looked like the mouth of a well. But I guessed that there might be sharp daggers or swarms of poisonous snakes underneath."

"My registered character said something like, 'This thing is too dangerous; it's best not to go over there,' or something similar," Willow recalled after thinking for a moment. "Then I took a detour. Oh, right, I also opened a treasure box earlier..."

Chu Changge glanced at her. "The treasure box contained an item called 'Sturdy Hairband from a Female Student.'"

[Sturdy Hairband from a Female Student]

[A long, sturdy hairband. Besides binding hair tightly, it seems it could also be used to bind other things.]

As Willow not supporting wind spoke, she took out her phone to show Chu Changge. But he only gave it a quick glance before turning away.

Willow suspected, He probably didn't even see the phone screen clearly.

At this point, Chu Changge spoke again: "When we get to the third floor, we'll still split up. The corridor is circular, so you take one half, and I'll take the other. Find all the strange paintings. Be thorough."

Willow not supporting wind nodded very seriously. She had always been stingy with her thoughts, often hoping to be given perfectly clear instructions.

Unfortunately, the players she teamed up with in previous instances never had the time or energy to arrange things for her. This wish was only fulfilled today.

At this time, the two of them had already arrived on the third floor.

As far as the eye could see, there was a circular corridor, and the third floor had a great many paintings.

Willow visually estimated that there were not only works by third-year high school students, but also some by teachers and unknown artists. Consequently, the cheaper student works were mostly placed on the floor.

"You go left," Chu Changge also arranged the search areas very clearly. "I'll go right. This time we're on the same floor, so you don't need to look for me too often."

Speaking up to this point, Chu Changge paused for a moment. "We'll meet up in about thirty minutes. There's no clock on the third floor; you'll have to estimate the time yourself."

Willow not supporting wind looked at him a bit anxiously. "Do you have a watch?"

Chu Changge pushed up his glasses. "No."

"Alright..." Hearing this, Willow not supporting wind didn't delay further and set off to the left.

Chu Changge watched her figure disappear from view, then turned and walked back.

Meanwhile, Gu Mian had already arrived at the dormitory building; however, he encountered a slight problem.

It was 3:15 PM, and the students who had been taking an afternoon nap were already awake and wandering about. Usually, at this time of day, you could barely see a student's shadow in the dormitories, but now they were overcrowded.

Due to it being summer, many male students were shirtless.

In the corridor, Gu Mian witnessed many bizarrely shaped underpants.

The most eye-catching was a pair of pink Hello Kitty women's mini briefs. Gu Mian couldn't help but look a few more times.

And now, he was standing at the entrance of Dormitory 4473, watching the students come and go.

This dormitory door had a seal pasted on it, which looked like an old, aged paper seal. A large lock was also on it.

Although Gu Mian had the key to Dormitory 4473 in the mobile game, he didn't have it in reality.

And there were far too many people coming and going here. Gu Mian didn't know what would happen if he opened the door in the game.

It wasn't that he was afraid of harming innocents or anything like that; rather, he was afraid that if he caused too big a commotion, he'd be the first one arrested and taken to the police station.

Chapter 249 Purple Shorts and Game Coin_1

Gu Mian had lingered for only a moment when a figure, notable for his flamboyant purple underwear, approached him.

"Hey," the figure in flamboyant purple said, slinging an arm over Gu Mian's shoulder. "Classmate, dressed so thickly in the middle of summer, aren't you hot?"

Gu Mian was still in his school uniform. Since most others were either shirtless or wore tank tops, his full uniform stood out prominently in the dormitory building.

The dormitory had no air conditioning, and with people constantly coming and going, the temperature was far from ideal.

Gu Mian privately acknowledged that his own attire wasn't as flamboyant as this guy's. He simply shifted his shoulder without saying anything.

"Look at this dormitory," the figure in flamboyant purple said, also glancing at Dormitory 4473 not far across from Gu Mian. "This dorm was locked up with a CLICK years ago. They say it's supposed to be used as a small storage room."

He continued, chuckling to himself, "Who would believe that, though? So many years have passed, and no one has used this room. There's even a seal on the outside..."

As he finished speaking, the figure in flamboyant purple turned to Gu Mian. "Speaking of which, pal, are you thinking of going in?"

Gu Mian glanced at him. Theoretically, this flamboyant purple guy is an NPC in the instance, but this NPC is a bit too flamboyant.

This person seemed overly familiar. Gu Mian didn't speak, yet he kept rambling on by himself.

"I heard someone say that a patrol teacher doing night rounds found this door open on its own once. He went in and never came out. But that's just a rumor..." he continued.

As Gu Mian listened intently, another voice suddenly interrupted the figure in flamboyant purple, "Zhao Zi, aren't we supposed to go play ball soon? Hurry back and put on some clothes! Cover up those flamboyant-ass underwear of yours!"

Hearing this, Zhao Zi gave an embarrassed laugh, then clutched his underwear and sprinted towards his dormitory.

There was no one else around Gu Mian now.

Watching Zhao Zi, still a flash of flamboyant purple, run towards his dorm and disappear through the doorway, Gu Mian took a step forward and looked at the seal on the door of Dormitory 4473.

The seal had presumably been affixed by the school.

A patrol teacher went in and disappeared? Gu Mian stroked his chin. Although the final outcome for most students who download this 'mysterious game' is usually disappearance, the missing teacher probably wasn't a player of this game, right?

He muttered to himself while looking at the large door before him.

Perhaps this is a trap; entering might mean an instant game over.

I probably need more clues to assess the danger of this door.

Just then, Gu Mian suddenly noticed something at the edge of his phone screen. He shifted his character over a couple of steps and saw what appeared to be a treasure box.

Without hesitation, Gu Mian maneuvered his little character to the treasure box and opened it.

[Game Coin * 10,000]

Units, tens, hundreds, thousands, ten thousand...

Gu Mian counted carefully; it was indeed 10,000 Game Coins.

As expected of a special instance, it was quite generous with Game Coins. With real-world resources now extremely scarce, Game Coins had become increasingly sought-after. The output rate of Game Coins in instances should have been adjusted accordingly.

But to give 10,000 Game Coins all at once like this was still...

Just as Gu Mian was marveling at the generosity of the special instance, he suddenly noticed something else appear on his phone screen.

A little green figure, huddled in a corner... an infant?

Gu Mian glanced at the screen, then looked up at the spot in the corridor where the infant should be. There was nothing there.

But when he looked back down at the screen, the infant moved.

It suddenly leaped up from the ground, moving so fast it even left an afterimage.

Gu Mian actually didn't quite understand how a pixel game could produce an afterimage effect.

The infant in the game made a beeline for the treasure box. It darted past the avatar named "Gu Gu" and pounced onto the box.

Immediately after, the [Game Coin * 10,000] notification vanished.

Gu Mian: "..."

Did that thing just eat it?

How truly strange—a baby that eats money! Judging by its urgency, it's as if I owe it eight million...

Wait a minute?

As this thought struck him, Gu Mian frowned, staring at his phone screen.

An infant, an IOU?

Thinking of this, he frowned. "Nine-headed Baby?"

Is this the creditor from the IOU I drew? How is it in this game too?

Gu Mian pondered this as he glanced at the door of Dormitory 4473 not far away.

How could the Nine-headed Baby appear in this pixel game? Theoretically, that shouldn't happen...

Meanwhile, in the art museum, Willow Not Supporting Wind had discovered several rather unsettling paintings.

Without exception, these paintings were all by "Chu Hang." The artistic skill displayed in the paintings on this third floor was much higher; one could at least make out some facial features now.

Willow Not Supporting Wind held two paintings, observing them closely.

Both paintings were by Chu Hang, and their content was similar: each depicted two people fleeing down a long corridor.

To say "fleeing" wasn't entirely accurate; the scenes looked more like one person was running away while the other pursued.

Notably, the pursuing and fleeing figures in each painting seemed identical, like twins playing a game of chase.

Willow Not Supporting Wind felt somewhat uneasy holding the paintings. The thirty minutes she had agreed upon with Chu Changge were almost up. There were no clocks on this third floor, so she had no way to be sure of the time.

Anyway, it doesn't hurt to be a bit early... Willow Not Supporting Wind thought as she headed towards the corridor where Chu Changge was.

Due to her nervousness, she almost broke into a jog.

But after running for a short while, she realized something was amiss.

Willow Not Supporting Wind clutched the paintings in her hand and looked at the empty corridor, swallowing hard. That's not right. I've been running for so long; I should have seen someone by now...

But there was no sign of Chu Changge, as if he had already left this floor.

Willow called out softly, her voice a little faint, "Brother Chu? Chu Changge? Brother Chu?"

Not even an echo replied.

The third-floor corridor was eerily silent; only her own footsteps and breathing echoed.

Willow Not Supporting Wind clutched the items in her hand. Even though my voice is quiet, this is just one long corridor. He should be able to hear me in here.

Could he really have gone downstairs?

As she thought this, she planned to go downstairs and check.

But just then, she suddenly saw that the door of an office up ahead was, at some point, cracked open.

There were many offices on the third floor. Willow Not Supporting Wind had tried to open them, but all were locked and couldn't be opened at all.

Yet, an office door ahead was open—one that was within Chu Changge's designated search area.

Could it be that he's in there and didn't hear me?

Mulling this over, Willow Not Supporting Wind took a couple of steps forward, intending to reach the office door.

Chapter 250 Illiterate in Tears_1

Her sixth sense told her that Chu Changge probably wasn't in this room.

But Willow Not Supporting Wind wanted to see for herself. Only by doing so could she put her mind at ease; otherwise, she would feel as if something was missing.

As she was thinking this, she slowly approached the slightly ajar door and peeked in.

It seemed there was nothing inside. At least, looking through the gap in the door, it appeared empty.

Everything in the office looked like it had been cleared out long ago, leaving only a worn-out table with peeling paint. Sunlight streamed in, and through it, a thick layer of dust was faintly visible on the table's surface.

"Is no one inside?" Willow Not Supporting Wind clung tightly to the paintings in her hands.

Despite her extreme tension, she didn't discard the paintings, even though holding them made it very inconvenient for her to move.

The thick dust on the floor billowed up when she suddenly opened the door, and Willow Not Supporting Wind couldn't help but cover her mouth and sneeze.

After sneezing, she quickly glanced around. Seeing no unusual movements, she relaxed a little.

Willow Not Supporting Wind withdrew her gaze and muttered to herself, "Brother Chu probably isn't on this floor. I should go downstairs to look for him."

Of course, it was also possible he'd been silently killed by a ghost. But Willow Not Supporting Wind preferred the former assumption. If Chu Changge had been killed by a ghost, there would be no one to arrange things for her.

As she was thinking this, she shifted her feet slightly.

Then, Willow Not Supporting Wind suddenly remembered something.

In her rush to find the paintings, she hadn't paid much attention to her smartphone. She hadn't checked the game screen for a considerable period.

Maybe there were new clues in the game now? Maybe they were related to Chu Changge's disappearance?

Thinking this, she managed to free a hand to take out her phone.

The phone was in her jacket pocket, so it wasn't too difficult to retrieve. Within a couple of seconds, Willow Not Supporting Wind was looking at the game screen on her phone.

In the game, only the character representing her stood alone in the corridor, facing the open office door.

The office door in the game was also open.

But something seemed different...

Willow Not Supporting Wind frowned as she looked at the game screen's depiction of the floor near the office doorway. In this pixelated game, the office interior wasn't empty at all.

There was something just inside the entrance.

[A huge bear trap.]

This thing was right by the door, enormous—it looked like it could clamp half a person. If she hadn't checked the game screen and had carelessly stepped on it, she'd be crippled, if not dead.

"Luckily I didn't step directly in," Willow Not Supporting Wind sighed with relief. "This trap is so treacherous! You really have to keep an eye on your phone while walking. What if there's an invisible trap somewhere on the path?"

Letting out a slight sigh of relief, she took a small step back.

But after stepping back, she suddenly realized something was wrong.

The sense of unease didn't stem from the trap in front of her, but from behind her.

Clutching the paintings in her hand, she swallowed hard and slowly began to turn around.

But before she could fully turn around, her throat tightened abruptly...

「Meanwhile, Fatty and Zi Liang had found Year 1, Class 8.」

At this moment, Zi Liang was sitting on a high stool before the teacher's desk, looking utterly bored. For some reason, after Fatty entered this classroom, he had reverted to his dazed mode.

He stared at his phone screen without blinking, as if he could make flowers bloom from it. He stared for a good few minutes. Zi Liang noticed he didn't shift his gaze from the phone screen until four o'clock.

"Fatty, it's really unnerving when you suddenly stare at your phone screen without blinking like that!" Zi Liang swallowed hard.

Fatty retorted, "What do you know? I'm staring at the screen because something's fishy."

Hearing this, Zi Liang couldn't help but recall Fatty and that Doctor whispering to each other when they had parted ways. He asked curiously, "Did that Chainsaw Doctor tell you something?"

Fatty shot him a sidelong glance. "That's a rather fresh and unconventional nickname you've come up with. Alright, I'm done with the chitchat. We're at Year 1, Class 8. Let's first look for anything related to Chu Hang. We can check the seating chart or things like that to see if we can find this person."

Unfortunately, the two of them couldn't find anyone named Chu Hang.

The seating chart for Year 1, Class 8 was clearly posted on the teacher's desk. Fatty and Zi Liang searched it thoroughly multiple times.

Never mind Chu Hang; they couldn't even find anyone with the surname Chu!

In the game, [Wang Panzi] and [Liang'er] showed no reaction, just mechanically following the two of them as they moved around.

Fatty, refusing to accept it, meticulously checked all the textbooks on the desks, the names on the stools, and the graffiti scrawled with correction pen in the desk cubbies, but still found no trace of Chu Hang.

The desks and chairs in the Year 1 classroom looked like they had all been replaced; they were brand new, with few signs of carvings or graffiti.

"What's going on?" Zi Liang was dumbfounded.

At this moment, Fatty, standing beside him, suddenly spoke, his expression a bit strange. "Speaking of which, that attendance register we found in the office was from many years ago, wasn't it?"

Zi Liang nodded.

Fatty turned his head, looking out the window at the Year 3 teaching building directly opposite. "If Chu Hang was in Year 1 many years ago, wouldn't he be in Year 3 by now?"

Zi Liang also realized. "Not just Year 3, he'd practically be about to graduate!"

Still, searching the Year 3 classrooms was a better bet than here, as Chu Hang might not have graduated from Year 3 that long ago.

Realizing this, the two of them hurried down the stairs and ran towards the building opposite them.

"By the way, Fatty," Zi Liang said, panting heavily as they ran, "shouldn't we really check the Year 2 classrooms too?"

Fatty smacked him. "See what? Let's check Year 3 first, then decide."

They really found something in Year 3, Class 8!

In this classroom, Fatty still couldn't find Chu Hang on the seating chart. However, he resorted to his old trick, scouring all the graffiti on the desks and chairs, and finally found Chu Hang's name.

Fatty found his name on a desk. Next to it was a class group chat ID. It seemed that when noting down the group ID, the person didn't have paper and had hastily scribbled it on the desk.

Zi Liang took a glance.

He didn't pay much attention to the group ID and continued to look at the other writing on the desk.

It was clear this desk was an 'heirloom,' having been used by who knows how many students, so the desk was covered in many different people's handwriting. However, it wasn't difficult to find what Chu Hang had written.

This was because this student had a habit of adding the name 'Chu Hang' beneath whatever text he wrote.

It seemed a bit narcissistic...

Fatty didn't care whether he was narcissistic or not; instead, he continued to examine the writing on the desk that belonged to Chu Hang.