

Collapse 251

Chapter 251 Everyone, Look! The Name of This Seems like '250'! _1

"Another one's gone! People are disappearing from here again!"

"Such a terrifying game! Why did they find a game like this?"

"Why am I seeing him again?!"

"We absolutely must not go near that door!"

This Chu Hang was quite reserved. Although the desk was covered in notes, he had only written these four sentences.

Fatty was somewhat mystified.

Luckily, Zi Liang, who excelled at writing supernatural novels, was beside him. Zi Liang had a knack for weaving scattered clues into a main storyline; it was how he'd made his living before this cursed game began.

"'Another one's gone' likely refers to the players of this little game of ours. Didn't someone tell us before that the students who played this game mostly disappeared later? Chu Hang was in their class," Zi Liang continued, frowning, "Moreover, he must be someone with a natural ability, like Yin and Yang Eyes, allowing him to see ghosts."

As for the line, Why am I seeing him again?!

Fatty anxiously plucked a strand of hair. "This sentence ends with an exclamation mark, indicating surprise. Does it mean he saw someone who shouldn't have appeared?"

Did he see someone already dead, or... someone who was supposed to have disappeared?

A chill ran down Zi Liang's spine at this realization.

Fatty had already turned his attention to the last sentence. "I think this last sentence holds the most significance out of the four."

Zi Liang nodded in agreement, the hairs on his own scalp prickling. "I think so too."

They both focused on the final sentence.

"Do not go near that door." Which door is it talking about?

Everyone knows schools have no shortage of doors. The sheer number of classroom and dormitory doors alone could be overwhelming. Finding one specific dangerous door among them would be quite difficult.

At that moment, Zi Liang suddenly reached out and touched the desk before him. "People who should have disappeared have reappeared, and it seems only Chu Hang can see them. There's a door in the school closely connected to this terrifying game that makes people vanish..."

The "door" mentioned in the last sentence must be extremely dangerous. Approaching it would very likely lead to peril. But what connection does this door have to the game?

While Zi Liang was lost in thought, Fatty's neck suddenly stiffened. "Speaking of which, the Key the Doctor obtained... it's for opening doors, right?"

Duh, what else are keys for? Opening skulls? Zi Liang was about to retort, but the words caught in his throat as a realization struck him.

That's right, the Key the Doctor got is for opening doors.

That door could very well be the one Chu Hang mentioned in his fourth sentence!

Although its true purpose is still unclear, approaching it definitely means trouble!

With this in mind, Fatty stood up, intending to head towards the dormitory. "It's already past four-thirty. It'll be harder to find people after dark. I need to notify the Doctor quickly."

Zi Liang quickly prepared to follow.

But just then, he noticed something propping up a corner of Chu Hang's desk. A piece of paper?

The legs of desks from that middle school period were often uneven. Even a slight difference in length could make a desk wobble, which was quite annoying. Zi Liang himself had used this trick back in his school days, folding paper to wedge under a short desk leg.

Although it might just be an ordinary piece of paper, genuinely used only to level the desk, Zi Liang still squatted and pulled out the dust-covered scrap. It was evident this piece of paper had been propping up the desk leg for quite some time, as the entire sheet had turned black.

Zi Liang carefully unfolded the almost misshapen paper. It was, indeed, just a plain piece of paper, with nothing on it but dark dust, completely blank.

Fatty had already pulled open the door and was looking back. "What are you looking at?"

Zi Liang tucked away the blackened paper. "Nothing, just a worthless scrap."

As he said this, he prepared to stand up and leave this wretched place. But just as he rose, his peripheral vision caught something under the desk. Zi Liang instinctively looked over and saw, beneath this desk, a line of deep red writing...

Fatty saw Zi Liang still squatting, showing no sign of leaving, and was about to ask him what was wrong.

But just as Fatty lifted his foot, Zi Liang, who had been squatting, shot up like a mad rabbit and bolted towards him.

Before Fatty could react, Zi Liang grabbed him by the collar and started sprinting, dragging Fatty wildly along.

"Wait! Wait!" Fatty yelled, being dragged by Zi Liang. "What the hell are you doing?"

Zi Liang shouted back without turning his head, "Run!"

What the hell...?

Fatty was still confused when he suddenly felt his scalp tingle with dread, as if something malevolent was staring at his back.

While being dragged by Zi Liang, he managed to glance back.

He saw a twisted, human-shaped figure in a school uniform right behind him. No, there were two!

How did two ghosts suddenly appear?!

Just then, Fatty noticed Zi Liang pull out his phone. Normally, looking at a phone while walking, let alone running, was dangerous. Fatty had heard a case where someone walking and playing with their phone tripped and impaled their eyeball on a stone. But this was a special situation, so checking his phone while running wasn't an unforgivable sin.

Being so close, Fatty instantly saw the image on Zi Liang's phone screen.

Upon seeing it, he gasped, "Holy hell!"

Can someone tell me why our registered characters can transform?!

They hadn't turned into superheroes to fight the two ghosts chasing them; their own little avatars had turned into ghosts!

Even though it was a pixel game, Fatty could still sense the horror emanating from those two transformed figures.

"So, you're saying these ghosts have been following us ever since we entered this instance?" Fatty asked, his mind reeling.

Zi Liang, sprinting desperately, nodded. "I saw a line of text under the desk, written by Chu Hang! It said: They are right behind you."

The moment he saw that line, he understood everything.

Having immersed himself in supernatural fiction for years, Zi Liang could extrapolate countless possibilities from a single sentence and then pick out the most plausible and accurate one.

"What the hell?" Fatty panted, struggling to keep up. "They've been right behind us all this time but didn't do anything... until now..."

Why? Why didn't they attack before, when they had plenty of chances?

As he said this, a thought suddenly struck Fatty, and he asked with dread, "Could something have happened to the Doctor or Brother Chu?"

Chapter 252 How Lonely It Is to Be Invincible_1

On Gu Mian's end, there was indeed a small anomaly—a very small one, as small as it could possibly be. Compared to Fatty and Zi Liang, he was relatively safe, for now...

Meanwhile, Fatty and Zi Liang were running for their lives.

Fatty cursed the Doctor. "No wonder we were all students when we entered—it's because those ghosts are also students! We all wear the same uniform, which made us mistake those ghosts for our own characters. It was all a ploy to confuse us." As he spoke, he quickened his pace, trying to run even faster.

"In theory, we shouldn't need to run if we encounter a ghost," Zi Liang, gasping for breath, called from up ahead. "Brother Fatty, you've never heard of anyone outrunning a ghost in a race, have you?"

Fatty shot him a cold glance. "Stop spouting nonsense. Believe it or not, this stupid game will throw you into a sports meet instance next, specifically to race against ghosts."

Zi Liang pursed his lips. Even though he was somewhat glib, his body stayed honest. He ran forward for all he was worth, despite knowing he couldn't outrun these ghosts.

The two ghostly figures behind them were closing in, now almost within five meters. If they stretched out their arms just a little further, they would be able to touch them...

Just then, an idea struck Zi Liang. "Right, the traps! The traps in the game must be for them!"

As soon as he yelled this, Fatty also understood.

The little figures represented the ghosts. So, if they lured the little figures onto the traps, wouldn't that be perfect?

They hadn't dared to step on the traps before, fearing that if their characters died, they themselves would be affected. Little did they suspect that there was no necessary connection between them and their characters. If there was any connection at all, it was that their characters were out to take their lives.

Fatty found his courage growing. In such a dangerous moment, he was still able to think of such things.

Unfortunately, even if they tried to lead the ghosts onto the traps now, it was uncertain if those ghosts would follow. The ghosts chasing them already seemed out of control.

As he frantically fled up ahead, Zi Liang griped, "It definitely has to be your unreliable Doctor, or that unreliable Four-Eyed Boy who did something!"

Fatty retorted, "You're a damn Four-Eyed Boy too!"

Running like a bat out of hell, Zi Liang yelled, "Never mind that now! Let's head towards the traps! Even if those things behind us don't step on them, they wouldn't dare to pass through them, right? We can use this to shake them off!"

His point made sense. Fatty began to think about where the nearest trap in the game was.

As chance would have it, it was in the First Year High School Building, two buildings away from them.

They would probably be caught and torn limb from limb by the ghosts before they could even get there.

Fatty had no intention of experiencing being torn apart. If he had the chance, he'd rather be disco dancing on someone's grave...

Zi Liang, unaware of Fatty's thoughts, kept anxiously glancing back.

Closer... even closer!

The ghosts behind them only needed to reach out to touch them!

"It's over, it's over..." Zi Liang almost screamed.

He had gone through many instances with his handcuffs and had barely accumulated any resources. He didn't know how much would be deducted if he died this time. The real world had already changed. If he didn't have enough resources, he was likely to be eliminated—to put it bluntly, left without even his underpants when he died.

Just then, he heard Fatty's voice, filled with delighted surprise.

"Doctor!"

Delighted? At this moment? Zi Liang was sure that no matter who showed up, he wouldn't feel any delight in this life-or-death situation. Even if his long-dead grandfather suddenly popped out of his grave, jumped in front of him, and affectionately called him 'Grandson,' he wouldn't be overjoyed. Yet, right now, Fatty sounded even more delighted than if he had seen his own deceased grandfather.

Upon hearing Fatty, Zi Liang immediately looked up but saw no sign of the Doctor. He skeptically glanced at Fatty. Was Fatty seeing things?

But then he noticed that Fatty wasn't looking ahead; he was staring at the smartphone in his hand.

Seeing this, Zi Liang slowly shifted his gaze to his own phone...

An additional little figure had appeared on the screen, unnoticed until now.

[Gu Mian: Damn it, why have I turned into a pixel person?]

[Gu Mian: Damn it, why did I become so flat?]

[Gu Mian: Damn it! What are those two things rushing towards me?]

Gu Mian?

The name flashed through Zi Liang's mind. He thought for half a second, then realization dawned. "I remember you guys!"

"Remember my ass!" Fatty slapped Zi Liang on the head, then pushed himself to run even harder. "Wait, how did the Doctor get into this game? I need to find a safe place to check this out!"

At that moment, Zi Liang was staring blankly at his phone screen.

On it, the [Wang Panzi] and [Liang'er] figures that had been chasing them from behind had just collided head-on with the approaching [Gu Mian].

The Gu Mian in the game didn't seem to realize that Fatty and he were running for their lives in reality.

[Gu Mian: Why do these two figures look distorted? I don't think they look like the characters Fatty and the others registered...]

While the Doctor on screen voiced his doubts, his body acted decisively, pulling out the chainsaw.

That ferocious, meter-long chainsaw looked terrifying even in its pixelated form. Zi Liang felt as if the chainsaw might just burst out of the screen and lop his head off.

The images on the screen continued to change.

Fatty stole a glance back and saw that the two ghosts chasing them had vanished.

He checked the screen again. Sure enough...

[Gu Mian: Why did you two just rush at me like that! So scary!]

[Gu Mian: Hey, why are you turning around and running away now?]

Fatty: "..."

Zi Liang: "..."

Fatty swallowed, then cautiously spoke to the phone screen, "Doctor?"

Zi Liang chimed in with him.

The Gu Mian on the screen didn't react.

[Gu Mian: I just opened a door, and I didn't expect to encounter something this bizarre. Speaking of which, is this inside that God Hidden game?]

Zi Liang was devastated. "He really did open that terrifying door Chu Hang warned about!"

Fatty started to argue, "If you had that dormitory key, you would have opened the door too, wouldn't you?"

Zi Liang closed his mouth, falling silent.

"Did the Doctor enter the game world through that dormitory door?" Fatty pulled out a strand of his hair in frustration. "Did the missing folks disappear because they were dragged into the game? But just now, those ghosts were able to come into the real world..."

Even though the ghosts chasing them were gone, things seemed to have become even more bizarre.

Zi Liang stared fixedly at the screen, his eyes unblinking, as if trying to deduce Gu Mian's three-dimensional form from the flat, pixelated figure.

Chapter 253 My Cell Prison Looks Great! _1

It was a shame that this Paper-Man was too flat to make any speculation about its dimensions.

Back in the day, Zi Liang had his own Paper-Man wife, but now he could never consider Gu Mian, the Paper-Man in the game, as his wife.

"I say..." Zi Liang looked at the chainsaw-wielding little figure in the game and swallowed. "Is that the one worth 30,000 Game Coins?"

Of course, he was referring to Gu Mian, who was running riot on his mobile screen.

Fatty, who was anxiously glued to the screen, heard him and turned his head. "I've realized you really do love to come up with nicknames for other people." The nickname was indeed quite fitting.

If they were lucky, stabbing Gu Mian once meant 30,000 Game Coins, so it was reasonable that anyone would want to run up and take a few stabs at him.

Sometimes Gu Mian would even have the sudden thought, I'll kill myself, but his rationality wouldn't allow him to do so.

At this moment, Zi Liang was still looking at Gu Mian's figure, lost in thought.

He wasn't sure how this green-clad Doctor had gotten into the game. Nor did he understand why the Doctor could pull out a chainsaw to chase ghosts after entering. He was utterly bewildered.

Just then, Zi Liang heard a sound coming from the corridor ahead.

He looked up blankly and saw a familiar figure slowly approaching. It was Chu Changge!

The man, who wore glasses, was slowly walking towards them, adjusting his glasses. His face was expressionless, showing no awareness that he was in a terror-filled instance.

Zi Liang remembered that this person should have entered the art museum with Willow not supporting wind. He should still be in the museum right now, so how did he get out?

Could it be that the museum exploration is complete? Is that why he came out to find them?

But if so, where did Willow not supporting wind go?

Zi Liang pondered this, looking confusedly at Chu Changge's back, but there was nothing behind him.

Fatty, also confused, now asked, "Brother Chu, where's the person who was with you?"

Chu Changge lowered his hand and shook his head slightly. "I don't know."

Zi Liang was stunned. What does he mean, 'I don't know'?

Chu Changge continued, "We split up in the art museum. Later, she disappeared."

Hearing this, Zi Liang didn't dare to question further and kept quiet.

But he noticed Fatty's expression seemed a bit off, as if something had occurred to him.

Before Zi Liang could get a good look at Fatty's expression, Chu Changge suddenly spoke. "I found some paintings in the art museum. They had some clues, but they were too troublesome to carry, so I didn't bring them. I do, however, remember their content."

He seems completely unconcerned about his teammate's disappearance.

Hearing this, Zi Liang couldn't help but feel a chill run down his spine. If I disappeared, would Fatty also forget me so callously?

Chu Changge continued, "All the paintings I saw were by an artist named Chu Hang. Apparently, students have gone missing playing this game before, and Chu Hang seems to have painted those very students who disappeared after playing this game..."

"The paintings often depicted two identical people—one chasing, the other fleeing... I take it you two have already figured something out?" Chu Changge suddenly stopped and turned his head to look at Fatty and Zi Liang.

Fatty's expression didn't change much; he seemed to have already figured it out.

Zi Liang, however, still looked dazed, as if he were thinking about something else.

Neither of them had been listening attentively to Chu Changge.

Fatty snapped back to reality and nodded. "Yes... Just a little while ago, we discovered that the characters we registered aren't really *our* registered characters!"

His statement was a bit convoluted.

But Chu Changge understood his meaning and nodded. "Correct. Based on my deductions, of the two small figures—the pursuer and the pursued—the one fleeing is, in all likelihood, us players. The one chasing is our registered character. Or perhaps, these characters already existed and weren't created by our registration at all."

"Furthermore, these ghosts disguised as characters will constantly follow our movements and then strike when they have an opportunity. That's why we mistakenly assumed these ghosts were directly related to us."

"Speaking of which," Chu Changge adjusted his glasses, "since you already know the in-game characters are ghosts, you must have been chased by them, right?"

"Indeed," Fatty swallowed. "Just a short while ago, they almost caught us and tore us to pieces."

Chu Changge glanced at Fatty, then at the still-dazed Zi Liang. "But looking at you two now, it seems you feel you have nothing left to worry about. What about the two ghosts that were following you?"

Fatty sniffed. "Brother Chu, your eyes are really sharp. Yes, just now, when we were running for our lives, we saw the Doctor... but in the game..."

As he spoke, he pointed to his phone screen. "Right here! In the game, the Doctor turned into a Paper-Man!"

Fatty didn't need to say more; Chu Changge could already guess most of what had happened.

It was simply that Gu Mian, having turned into a Paper-Man, had run into the two approaching ghosts and then pulled out his chainsaw...

That explained why the two of them could now be idly spacing out here.

"In the art museum, I also saw two such paintings," Chu Changge said, pausing for a moment before continuing, "where someone was dragged by a hand into a room through a door. After they were pulled inside, the door shut, and then blood began to seep out from the crack beneath it."

Chapter 254 My Cell Prison is Super Good Looking! -2

Going in means death.

Fatty silently nodded. "The door you saw in the painting is probably the dormitory door the Doctor was looking for. We both guessed something bad would happen if that door was opened. The Doctor must have opened it..."

Then he was pulled through the door, but there was no bloodshed. No, there might be blood in the future, but it certainly won't be the Doctor's, Fatty thought.

At that moment, Chu Changge continued, "I suspect that the door is the boundary between the real world and this 'Vanishing Game'. Those who have played this game before have all disappeared, and no one has ever seen their bodies. So I suspect that the people who disappeared before were all pulled into this pixel game, through that door."

Of course, they were still alive when they were pulled into this pixel game, but once in, there was essentially only one path left: death. Later, the people who were pulled into the game became ghosts, continuing to draw subsequent players into the game.

Fatty asked thoughtfully, "Since the people who disappeared before were pulled into the game, would we players also be pulled into the game if we encounter any accidents?"

At this moment, Gu Mian, as an instance player, was indeed in the game, but he likely hadn't been pulled in...

Chu Changge shook his head. "Probably not, because I saw the corpse of one of our players in a very remote place."

Fatty touched his nose. "Brother Chu, you didn't come straight from the art gallery, did you?"

Chu Changge didn't answer but continued, "Apparently, the ghosts in this game also know we're different. I suspect the ghosts kill people to inject a constant stream of fresh spirits into this game. This is because even if we players die in an instance, we can revive in the real world, so it's impossible for us to become ghosts in the instance. Of course, we can also be pulled through that door, but even if we die, we won't become ghosts, which makes us useless to the ghosts in the game."

So if it comes to killing, they just kill directly... Fatty thought.

Chu Changge then brought the topic back: "Theoretically, if we were pulled into that door, we should be killed by the ghosts immediately."

At this, Zi Liang, who was beside them, suddenly spoke up: "But Gu Mian didn't die!"

Chu Changge glanced sideways at him, then turned back to Fatty, seemingly asking something without words.

Fatty, of course, understood what Chu Changge meant. He wiped the sweat from his forehead. "When the Doctor passed us just now as a pixelated figure, his own name was hovering above his head... That's how Zi Liang knew Gu Mian's name."

Gu Mian's name had always been a taboo. Fatty and Chu Changge had intentionally avoided mentioning his name in front of others, and they hadn't expected such an unforeseen event in this instance. Meanwhile, Gu Mian was still running around in the game with his name hovering over his head.

"This won't do!" Fatty slapped his thigh. "We can't let the Doctor run around with his name hovering above his head. I have to stop him! It'll be bad if others see it!"

At this moment, Chu Changge suddenly grabbed Fatty. "Right now, besides him..."

As Chu Changge spoke, he glanced at Zi Liang beside them. "Besides him, all the other 'people' are dead."

Upon hearing this, Zi Liang felt a chill run down his spine. These words were terrifying at first listen, and even more so upon reflection. It sounded as if they planned to get rid of me!

He drew in a sharp breath and looked at Chu Changge in front of him. Why does this man speak so terrifyingly? And how does he know the 'others' are all dead?

Thinking this, Zi Liang subconsciously glanced at his phone screen. He had been clutching his phone tightly, not daring to put it down even though he knew he was probably completely safe now. He looked at his phone screen, only to see it was completely blank. Not only had their registered characters disappeared, but even Chu Changge's character in front of him was gone.

"Um..." Zi Liang stuttered. "Our characters disappeared because we just escaped together. What about yours?"

No wonder Chu Changge had been so unhurried and calm from the start. It turned out the ghost following him was long gone.

Chu Changge glanced down at Zi Liang's phone screen. "The ghosts have limitations. I told Fatty, but because I couldn't be sure if it was accurate, I didn't tell anyone else."

Zi Liang sniffed slightly. 'Anyone else'... it's always 'anyone else.' So now, among the 'others' still alive in this instance, only I am left? What is this 'last man on Earth' feeling?

While thinking this, Zi Liang looked at Fatty. Fatty grinned. "Brother Chu previously guessed that the ghosts' movements are restricted. For a considerable period, they have to move with us and can't do anything else. But for a small window of time, they can act independently. Of course, these were just speculations before."

While Fatty was speaking, Chu Changge took a few steps in the direction behind them and asked, "Did Gu Mian go this way?"

Fatty nodded and hastened to follow. Zi Liang, of course, also kept pace with them.

As they walked, Chu Changge began to explain, "Let me take it from here. When we entered this instance, we were still in class. When it was time for class to start, my registered character kept urging me to return to class.

"After I met up with you, I learned your situations were similar. Of course, at that point, none of us knew our registered characters were actually the ghosts.

"Later on, I noticed that the ghosts' appearances seemed to follow a pattern, roughly every forty-five minutes. So, I speculated that the ghosts in this game can only act once every forty minutes or so.

"But it was only when I found clues about the painting in the art gallery that I realized our registered characters were very likely the ghosts.

"Connecting that to the fact that the ghosts can only act every forty-odd minutes, and how our registered characters kept urging us to go back to class when it started, I deduced something. These ghosts must accompany us for a significant amount of time; they have to do whatever we do. However, they seem to be afraid of this, which is why they desperately urged us to stay put in the classroom and not move around.

"Do you remember the traps in this school? There are quite a few of them, but as players, we didn't dare to step on them."

Fatty nodded silently. "We figured that out when we were escaping. If those traps weren't meant for us, they must have been for the ghosts."

Actually, the method to escape the ghosts' pursuit was simple: if only a fearless person had dared to jump on those traps right at the start. But no one thought of that, and even if they had, they probably wouldn't have dared to do it.

Gu Mian had once entertained such a bold idea. But, cherishing his life, it remained just a thought. He certainly wouldn't have actually tried such a death-courting move. Besides Gu Mian, everyone else present was a sensible person and wouldn't have jumped on the traps to test them either.

However, it's worth mentioning that although Gu Mian didn't try this particular death-courting method, he accidentally discovered another one...

At that moment, Gu Mian, transformed into a pixelated figure, was walking through the pixel world carrying a chainsaw.

Gu Mian muttered, "Damn it, when can I change back?"

Meanwhile, Fatty, Chu Changge, and Zi Liang were rushing towards Gu Mian's location.

Chapter 255 Even if I am a Pigeon_1

Fatty jogged towards Gu Mian's direction and said, "Brother Chu, even if we go over now, the Doctor won't be able to see us."

He paused for a moment, then continued, "Since the Doctor went in through the door you mentioned, why don't we also go through that door to find him... But will we die if we go in?"

Chu Changge glanced at him. "Drop the 'will we'."

Fatty was speechless.

At this moment, Zi Liang was panting as he followed Chu Changge and Fatty. "To be honest, I still don't quite understand what's happened. How did everyone else die? Why is this Doctor worth thirty thousand Game Coins? And why can he run around chasing people with a chainsaw..."

He remembered that he was the one being chased and screaming as he fled just a moment ago.

Just then, Fatty patted his shoulder. "Theoretically, you could also run around chasing people with a chainsaw, but how many steps you could manage wouldn't be up to you."

Zi Liang flinched. Did that mean he'd be killed by a ghost after chasing for just a couple of steps?

Still, daring to follow a ghost for even a few steps was pretty awesome.

Just then, Zi Liang suddenly saw something appear on his phone screen. Looking closely, it was a menacing chainsaw. Looking even closer, there was a small figure carrying the chainsaw.

Above the small figure's head were the brightly shining words 'Gu Mian,' seemingly boasting, "Kill me and get thirty thousand Game Coins!"

Of course, Zi Liang didn't have the guts to kill anyone. Even if he did, he wouldn't know how.

He couldn't possibly rush into the phone screen and drag out this chainsaw-wielding Doctor.

At that moment, Fatty noticed a line of text suddenly appear at the bottom of the phone screen.

Because this was a silent game, sounds within it were presented as subtitles. When there was a 'THUD' sound in the game, the subtitle 'THUD' would naturally appear at the bottom of the screen.

And right then, the subtitle 'THUD' appeared at the bottom of the screen.

[A strange 'THUD' sound is coming from the corridor ahead]

People outside the game could only discern in-game sounds through subtitles, but Gu Mian, who was inside the game, genuinely heard a sound coming from the corridor ahead in this crappy little game.

He touched the chainsaw in his hand and walked towards the corridor from which the 'THUD' sound originated.

Zi Liang watched the phone screen and couldn't help but shiver.

You see, the real world and the game world were synchronized. Since the corridor ahead in the game was producing the 'THUD' sound, it meant the real-world corridor ahead must also be making that sound; they just couldn't hear it...

And this sound was just like the one made by the upside-down female ghost they'd heard in the laboratory before!

Thinking of this, Zi Liang shivered violently and then grabbed Fatty's sleeve. "Wait a minute!"

To know there's a tiger on the mountain yet still choose to venture forth—that's either heroism or idiocy! And what lay ahead was far more terrifying than a tiger; it was a ghost.

Just as Zi Liang hesitated, wanting to tactfully say something like, "Maybe we should observe from here for a bit," he felt Fatty suddenly grab his wrist. "Stop dawdling like a sissy! Hurry up and keep pace."

The moment he heard this, Zi Liang was dragged forward by Fatty like a dead pig.

Because Gu Mian on the phone screen had already rushed ahead.

Zi Liang wasn't as strong as Fatty and didn't dare to act alone, so he was half-reluctantly dragged forward by Fatty.

As he was being dragged, his mind was filled with thoughts like, 'It's over, I'm going to die.'

After being dragged for a while longer, Zi Liang suddenly felt a sense of resignation. Oh well, everyone's together. Dying together might be a little warmer...

Fatty, who was rushing forward while staring intently at the phone screen, didn't hear Zi Liang clearly and turned his head to ask, "What?"

Zi Liang quickly shook his head. "Nothing..."

Just then, Chu Changge, who was beside them, suddenly spoke, "Gu Mian seems to be looking for a way to leave this game. It looks like he can't get out through that door."

Because Chu Changge rarely spoke, Zi Liang always listened very carefully whenever he opened his mouth.

After listening intently, Zi Liang subconsciously glanced at the phone in Fatty's hand and then saw an astonishing sight.

[Gu Mian: From the sound, it should be a ghost that's banging its head on the ground. But I've been walking for so long, where's the ghost?]

Where's the ghost? Is that something a human would say?

Meanwhile, the text at the bottom of the phone screen continued to update.

[The strange 'THUD' sound seems to be getting farther away]

This isn't right! Zi Liang stared at the screen, frantically shaking his head. This was different from the script they were expecting.

Last time, in the science building, when this sound appeared, they had to flee for their lives, running so desperately they didn't even dare to glance back.

Why was the script different now?

And Fatty, the person in question, was still earnestly pulling him forward, as if he'd completely forgotten how he was fleeing in utter disarray, scared out of his wits, not long ago.

What on earth was going on? For a moment, Zi Liang's mind went blank.

Chu Changge continued, "I guess Gu Mian can't return to this world through that door, so he thought of another method. He probably doesn't want to be a paper person for too long."

Once Chu Changge said this, Fatty immediately understood.

If this instance disappeared, wouldn't Gu Mian be able to get out? And he wouldn't even need to return to the world they were in; he'd go directly from this crappy game back to the real world.

Zi Liang, next to him, was still confused. "What's wrong? That Doctor thought of another way to leave the game? True, being a paper person all the time must be pretty uncomfortable... But can we please not keep going forward? I remember the two ghosts that were following us ran this way!"

"Don't be such a coward," Fatty said, pulling Zi Liang. "Relax, nothing will happen."

Zi Liang didn't understand why Fatty would suddenly become so confident, and so seriously confident at that.

Like now, how could he so earnestly say 'nothing will happen'? Zi Liang blurted out, "Where do you get this confidence from?!"

Fatty finally turned his head to glance at Zi Liang. "Speaking of which, you seem really timid."

Zi Liang ducked his head. "Duh! Anyone would become timid if they encountered terrifying ghosts. Even though I used to be a great supernatural writer..."

While hurriedly following Gu Mian's movements on the phone, Fatty asked, "So, you entered this game to train your courage?"

Train my courage? My ass!

Zi Liang ultimately didn't voice those harsh words. Instead, he paused before saying, "Right now, the situation in the real world is power outages and no food. If I don't enter an instance, am I supposed to just wait to starve to death?!"

Even if he didn't starve, just the lack of electricity was unbearable enough.

Not lingering on this topic, Fatty looked at his phone again. "Man, you've got it rough."

Zi Liang was speechless.

That didn't sound like something a player suffering from hunger and power outages would say at all. This Fatty seemed loaded!

Just then, Zi Liang noticed that Gu Mian on the phone screen had stopped. He was standing at the door of a classroom, seemingly the one at the very end of the corridor.

[Gu Mian: The sound is getting fainter and fainter, then it disappeared. I didn't hear any sound of going downstairs. The ghost must be in here!]

Zi Liang stared wide-eyed at the screen as Gu Mian's small hand, after hesitating over where to place it, finally landed on the classroom doorknob, poised to act. He then looked up at the classroom door at the end of the corridor right in front of them. "Holy crap! What are you doing?!"

Chapter 256 The Terrifying Game That Drives You Insane_1

Zi Liang swore that he had never seen someone so utterly unhinged in his entire life.

The moment he saw Gu Mian on the screen reach out to open the classroom door at the end of the hallway, he suddenly understood why Gu Mian, and Gu Mian alone, was on the game's massive wanted list.

The door was pulled open. As expected, two startled little figures burst out from the classroom. Liang'er and Wang Panzi, resembling impoverished students cornered by bullies, shot out like lightning the instant Gu Mian opened the door and sprinted nimbly down the hallway. It was as if they'd be forced to pay protection money to a vicious thug if they were a second slower. Zi Liang even felt that these two ghosts were fleeing faster now than they had been when chasing *them*!

As the two on-screen ghosts dashed past their location, the group felt a distinct chill sweep by.

Zi Liang stared at the screen and gasped. Even the partially removed handcuffs on his wrists clinked softly. "What happened?"

The ones who ran away were the ghosts? Who got the script wrong? Or am I hallucinating from sheer fright? A human chasing ghosts with a large saw! This hallucination is certainly showing some initiative!

Seeing Gu Mian in the game give chase with a chainsaw, Fatty quickly ran several steps in Gu Mian's direction. "Clearly, that was a Doctor chasing two ghosts past us just now."

I get the gist, but why 'chasing'? Zi Liang's mind was reeling, yet his body mechanically followed Fatty's footsteps.

At this moment, Chu Changge, who was also staring at his phone screen, stated, "Gu Mian is chasing ghosts."

Fatty pursed his lips. "I saw."

Chu Changge continued, "Gu Mian must have realized he can't leave the game, so he's trying to employ special measures to get out."

Fatty nodded as he walked on.

Special measures... Fatty had seen this sort of thing countless times before, so seeing it again wasn't surprising. The Doctor has another legitimate reason to wreak havoc in this instance now... Fatty mused silently.

Zi Liang asked uneasily, "What are you two talking about? What 'special measures'? It doesn't sound like anything good!"

He felt that ever since that green-clad Doctor sawed off his handcuffs, he'd been dragged into something truly extraordinary.

Chu Changge didn't answer him, instead pondering another matter. "I don't quite understand why Gu Mian turned into a paper cut-out figure. Theoretically, that shouldn't happen."

Zi Liang was thoroughly confused but didn't press further. He just stared blankly at the phone screen, remaining silent.

He noticed Gu Mian's figure reappear on the screen. This time, it was different. There was a corpse at Gu Mian's feet... A corpse...

Zi Liang sniffled twice, his expression like he'd just eaten shit. Who am I? Where am I? What in the world happened here?

The ghost lying on the ground, labeled [Liang'er], seemed thoroughly dead. They hadn't even managed to see how this pitiful ghost had met its end. It was a shame the game's resolution was so low; otherwise, they might have seen streaks of blood and tears on the ghost's face...

The Gu Mian in the game moved slightly.

[Gu Mian: One step closer to leaving this crappy game.]

Zi Liang's mouth fell slightly open; he was now beyond words. He'd never imagined that he would one day encounter such an unorthodox Doctor in an instance. This Doctor completely defied the norm of humans screaming and fleeing from ghosts; instead, he was the one brandishing a chainsaw and wildly swinging it at them! The most shocking part was that he'd actually managed to kill a ghost like that.

One dead, one fled.

Zi Liang recalled that the previous few instances he'd experienced were mostly related to puzzle-solving, but he hadn't experienced any of that puzzle-solving fun in this current instance!

"What's going on? Have instances been downgraded after the event? From puzzle-solving to brawlers?" Zi Liang muttered, still staring at the little figure lying dead on the phone screen.

Just then, Fatty was already tugging him along, continuing to follow Gu Mian.

Zi Liang noticed that just as the in-game Gu Mian took a few steps past [Liang'er], the small figure, which had been playing dead, suddenly sprang to its feet. It was reminiscent of a villain in a TV show who, not properly finished off by the hero, suddenly leaps up for a sneak attack from behind.

He instinctively yelled, "Watch out!" Even though he knew the person on the screen couldn't hear, he yelled anyway.

Unexpectedly, this suddenly reanimated figure had no intention of counterattacking at all. It just leaped up and bolted off, as if a ghost was chasing it.

Wait, it *is* a ghost...

Zi Liang silently watched the on-screen ghost disappear, then couldn't help but purse his lips. "Is that guy in the game some kind of deity?"

Gu Mian seemed to sense the movement behind him. He glanced back, only catching a glimpse of the ghost's rapidly vanishing figure. He paid it no mind and continued onward.

And so, Chu Changge and the other two followed Gu Mian as he made a full circuit of the school. Wherever Gu Mian went, utter chaos ensued—so much so that even pregnant old hens would nearly miscarry from fright. (Of course, the pregnant old hens were a product of Zi Liang's imagination.)

At this point, Zi Liang finally understood what a supremely wise decision it had been to follow Gu Mian. At the very least, there wouldn't be any "ghost sightings" within a several-hundred-meter radius.

During this time, Gu Mian also came across numerous treasure boxes. He opened every single one without exception. However, given his abysmal luck, none of them contained anything good. Moreover, since Gu Mian had no inventory—not even as a paper cut-out figure—he had no choice but to hang the opened items all over himself. Before long, the three watching from outside the screen saw Gu Mian transform into a mobile, chainsaw-wielding Christmas tree.

By now, dusk had fallen. Summer days were long, with darkness only setting in after seven in the evening. It was now nearly eight o'clock. Nighttime was prime time for ghosts and monsters, the most dangerous period in any horror instance. It was indeed very dangerous now, but who exactly was in danger remained to be seen...

Just as the energetic Gu Mian, adorned with flashing neon lights from the items he'd collected, was preparing to make a second round, the game finally seemed to have had enough. A line of text appeared at the bottom of the screen:

[There doesn't seem to be anything left in the school. It's time to end this bizarre game.]

Fatty and Zi Liang exchanged glances.

They must be the first players ever to see this line of text. It made sense. If Gu Mian were allowed to continue, the game would probably lose its shirt. They figured the treasure boxes in the school weren't

infinitely respawnable; once they were gone, they were gone for good. The game even called itself bizarre; it must be on the verge of a complete meltdown...

Chapter 257 Diligent Gugu_1

Just then, the few people staring at their phones saw the game screen suddenly go dark with a "BIU" sound, as if it had given up entirely...

Fatty: "..."

Zi Liang: "..."

Although the game screen had gone dark, Gu Mian had not yet emerged.

Fatty stared blankly, waiting for a long time, but the blasted game didn't spit the Doctor out.

He was dumbfounded. "Where is my Doctor? My great big Doctor..."

He said this while gesturing, spreading his arms wide like a fat chicken attempting to stretch its wings.

"Did this game eat my huge Doctor?"

And then, those present heard an unusual commotion.

The sound was exceptionally strange, seeming to surge from all directions, unceremoniously flooding their ears.

"The wailing of ghosts and howling of wolves" was the most fitting idiom to describe it.

The instant this peculiar sound echoed through the corridor, Fatty almost thought a pack of wailing wolves had rushed into the school. He even pictured a pack of wolves huddled together, weeping. He couldn't understand why the face of Grey Wolf was gradually forming in his mind...

Before long, other sounds began to mix into the ghostly wails and wolfish howls.

Sounds like old electrical wires CRACKLING with sparks, like the static from an old CRT television screen from his childhood.

The ROAR of a motorcycle, the WHIRR of an electric fan, and, not to be outdone, the piercing SCRAPE of chalk on a blackboard.

Listening to such sounds in the summer heat was incredibly agitating. The cacophony of noises seemed to twist into a tangled mess, forcibly stuffed into their ears until their minds were filled with the screech of chalk on a blackboard.

Fatty felt like his brain was being turned into a blackboard constantly being scratched by chalk.

Zi Liang felt nauseous. He propped himself against the wall with one hand, a sound like a strangled retch escaping his throat. "This is disgusting... I'm going to puke..."

Fatty was also struggling. Fortunately, he hadn't eaten much for breakfast, so the urge to vomit wasn't overwhelming, but his face was deathly pale. "Did this stupid game launch a sonic attack? My stomach hurts."

At this point, both of them were pale-faced and leaning against the wall.

These sounds, forcibly crammed into their minds, seemed to possess immense destructive power, causing them both to twitch uncontrollably. An indescribable sensation wracked their bodies from head to toe, making it impossible to think.

Zi Liang swore this was the first time in his life he had felt so utterly miserable!

Even when he was caught and handcuffed by the anti-vice squad back then, he hadn't felt this miserable!

But with the sliver of rationality he had left, Zi Liang noticed that Chu Changge, standing nearby, seemed completely unfazed.

Chu Changge was as cool and collected as ever, his expression unchanged, as if entirely unaffected. He even had the presence of mind to look at his phone, apparently analyzing something seriously.

Seeing the unresponsive Chu Changge, Zi Liang couldn't help but dry heave again.

The one trapped in the game was a deity; this one in front of him was probably a ghost!

He didn't dwell on it for long, soon resuming his battle with his rebelling stomach. The feeling of wanting to vomit but being unable to was truly agonizing.

To make matters worse, Chu Changge actually began to analyze the situation calmly. "Look at this phone screen."

As he spoke, he turned the phone screen towards the two of them.

The previously dark phone screen had started flickering again. Game images flashed by intermittently, but the periods of black screen were longer.

It resembled a television screen with poor signal reception.

By now, Fatty and Zi Liang were so overwhelmed they were gasping for breath. They had no energy to comprehend what Chu Changge was saying, nor to examine the strange state of the phone screen.

Chu Changge, realizing they were likely unable to communicate at the moment, withdrew his hand and stopped trying to talk to them. Instead, he began to mutter to himself, "The game screen is flickering. It's as if something is forcibly trying to reopen the game, but the attempt is being obstructed, hence the screen's current state."

By this time, Zi Liang had slumped to the floor, trying to draw some coolness from the tiles.

However, the corridor tiles had been baked hot by the relentless sun. While not hot enough to fry an egg directly, they weren't far off.

Prostrating himself like this only made him feel worse.

Fatty was still barely on his feet, his gaze drifting towards Chu Changge now and then, as if wanting to affirm his words—though Fatty probably hadn't heard a thing Chu Changge said.

Chu Changge glanced at the two, who seemed to have lost all strength. "Just hang on a little longer. I suspect this situation won't last too much longer."

As he spoke, he shifted his gaze back to the phone screen, which was still flickering with game images as before.

Chu Changge watched the screen. "I suspect two forces are currently clashing within the game. One is trying to force it to reopen, while the other wants to prevent it from restarting. This intense conflict must be what's causing these changes in the instance."

"Have you read fantasy novels? What about wuxia novels?" he asked, turning again to Fatty and Zi Liang.

Naturally, neither of them had the strength to answer.

But Chu Changge continued as if he understood, "When two distinct powers clash, the consequences can be severe. It could very well lead to self-destruction in the end."

This instance was clearly on the brink of self-destruction already.

Judging by the current situation, this pixel game clearly doesn't want to be reopened. Its message before the screen went black—"It seems there's nothing left in the school. It's time to end this bizarre game"—had already made that clear.

So, where does the force compelling the game to reopen come from? Could there be more than just the pixel game's faction in this instance?

Just then, Chu Changge suddenly noticed a few flickers beside him, like a white shadow.

He glanced to the side. The flickering repeated a few more times, and then a familiar, comical figure materialized there.

It was Gu Mian, dressed like a Christmas tree.

He had finally been spat out by the pixel game.

For some reason, Gu Mian was no longer in his student uniform. He had reverted to his appearance from his mid-twenties, not the high school student he'd been upon entering this instance. The others, however, were still in their high school student disguises.

Before Chu Changge could think too much about it, Gu Mian, who was dressed as flamboyantly as a Christmas tree, moved.

Gu Mian also seemed taken aback by the bizarre sounds.

Zi Liang lifted his head to see Gu Mian, now back in his Doctor's attire, wearing an odd expression. Gu Mian glanced around and then asked, "What's all this wailing and howling?"

Then, the Doctor apparently noticed Zi Liang sprawled on the ground in agony. His expression grew even more peculiar. "What's wrong with you?"

Apart from finding the noise a bit grating, this Doctor seemed completely unaffected.

A wave of nausea churned Zi Liang's stomach again. He was utterly exasperated. He no longer wanted to vomit food; he wanted to vomit blood.

Chapter 258 Instance Evaluator No. 10065 at Your Service_1

Chu Changge glanced at the two collapsed figures on the ground. "It seems like two types of energy are fiercely colliding in this instance, producing this lethal sound. One type of energy wants to shut down the game, while the other wants to keep it running."

As he spoke, he lifted his hand slightly.

At that moment, Gu Mian, dressed rather flamboyantly, also noticed a constantly flickering mobile phone screen.

Meanwhile, Fatty and Zi Liang beside him looked ashen, as if they might pass out at any moment.

Gu Mian looked at them, thought briefly, then pulled a pair of earplugs from his white coat pocket. "I'm not sure why only you two are affected but, as a doctor, I can't just stand by and do nothing."

Chu Changge glanced at the object in Gu Mian's hand. He remembered Gu Mian's white coat pocket hadn't contained such a thing before they entered this instance.

He raised his eyes and asked, "A special item found in this instance?"

Seeing Gu Mian take out the earplugs, the other two cast hopeful glances his way.

However, Gu Mian shook his head. "This item was indeed found in this instance, but it doesn't seem to be anything special. In short, if I'm the one opening boxes, don't expect anything useful."

[Ordinary Earplugs]

[A second-hand item, apparently used many times. The quality is dubious; it can't even block faint sounds. Perhaps wearing it in a noisy environment offers a sliver of psychological comfort?]

This item was almost as useless as the [roll of paper towels] Gu Mian had drawn the first time.

Since there were no trash cans nearby, Gu Mian couldn't simply toss this useless special item.

He squatted down, looked at the pale-faced Fatty and Zi Liang, and extended his hand. "One for each of you."

Fatty clearly wanted to complain, but his physical discomfort made him clamp his mouth shut, leaving him no energy to utter a sound.

Gu Mian continued, "These things are useless even if you wear both, so take one each for psychological comfort."

Zi Liang just wanted to roll his eyes.

At that moment, Gu Mian, holding an earplug in each hand, was already stuffing them into their respective ears.

These things were even less effective than cupping their hands over their ears.

However, neither Fatty nor Zi Liang had the strength to cover their ears right then.

Chu Changge's voice came from behind them. "If I'm not mistaken, this sound won't last long. It should stop in a few minutes."

While speaking, he looked up, as if considering something.

Chu Changge seemed to have figured something out, but this fellow disliked sharing his analyses, always maintaining a taciturn demeanor.

Sure enough, not long after he finished speaking, an even more intense sound reverberated, shaking the entire building they were in.

The moment this intense sound hit, Zi Liang, who had been struggling to stay conscious, finally passed out completely. Fatty, still somewhat conscious, even reached out to check Zi Liang's breathing before sighing in relief.

It seemed Zi Liang was still alive, just unconscious.

Shortly after the sound echoed, the entire corridor suddenly fell silent.

One moment, a deafening, lethal sound; the next, an eerie silence, as if every sound in the world had vanished.

Chu Changge beside them showed no reaction, but Gu Mian could practically read 'Just as I thought' on his face.

The stark contrast left Fatty momentarily unable to react. The moment the sound stopped, he even thought he had gone deaf.

The two forces seemed to have ceased their struggle, perhaps now signing some kind of peace treaty.

It was unclear which side had been the first to wave the white flag.

Not long after the terrifying sound ceased, the instance, as if conceding, suddenly made an announcement.

A panel popped up before everyone present; even Zi Liang, unconscious on the ground, was no exception.

Moreover, Gu Mian found the format of the panel's content somewhat familiar.

[Warning!]

[Critical unit shutdown detected in 'High School Ghost Story: Mystery Game' instance. Instance can no longer operate.]

[Player Instance Evaluation will now commence. Upon completion, players will be forcefully ejected from the instance...]

Even though Zi Liang had passed out, the Instance Evaluator was still methodically analyzing his performance data from this instance.

Gu Mian paid little attention to Zi Liang on the ground, instead turning his gaze to his own panel.

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

Gu Mian stroked his chin, reading the line. Why does that ID number seem so familiar?

It was the same last time: a sincere wish for a pleasant life before the evaluation. Gu Mian guessed that if Fatty had any strength left, he'd probably be cursing up a storm by now.

[Game Nickname: Undetectable]

[Game ID: '1'. Current Instance: 'High School Ghost Story: Mystery Game']

[Evaluating performance in instance. Please wait...]

[Player: ???]

Role-playing (Student): Poor. Instance Score: -50 points.

Located 'Boundary Point' between real and game worlds in student dormitory. Instance Score: +56 points.

Opened 14 chests in-game. Instance Score: +140 points.

Provided minimal aid to two other players. Instance Score: +2 points.

Participated in cracking the game's secret (34% contribution). Instance Score: +59 points.

Violent intimidation of game NPC: Behavior not rated (marked as '?').

Pursuit of NPC disrupted game progression: Behavior not rated (marked as '?').]

[Player ??? Total Instance Score: 207 + '?' + '?']

[Instance Evaluation Level: S]

[At this evaluation level, player will receive all special items obtained by game characters within the instance.]

So, this means I can take all the stuff I found in the chests?

However, it seemed Gu Mian hadn't found anything particularly good.

Either ordinary earplugs or expired Vitamin C tablets...

If Zi Liang and Fatty had the strength to see his evaluation panel now, they'd surely be jumping up and down, exclaiming something like, "Utterly terrifying!" Unfortunately, neither of them could muster the energy to even twitch.

Gu Mian sneakily glanced at Chu Changge's panel, but he only saw one line before Chu Changge closed it.

[Successfully verified conjecture using existing resources. Instance Score: +50 points.]

That was the only line Gu Mian saw. He stroked his chin. Had Chu Changge used something in this instance to verify a conjecture?

Just then, the farewell message finally appeared on the panel.

[Instance Evaluation for all players complete. This instance will now enter a dormant period. All players will be ejected from the instance shortly. Please prepare.]

For some reason, Gu Mian detected a hint of eagerness in that line...

Chapter 259 Meiren Chu_1

Frankly, though Gu Mian was loaded up like a Christmas tree, there wasn't much of any use on him. Because everything his cursed hands opened turned out to be junk. For instance, there was a "Regular Neon Charging Lamp," a "Watermelon Knife Covered in Cream," and a "Meat Floss Rice Ball"—stuff like that with no real use. So, other than for display, they didn't really have any other function, though some were edible.

However, among them, a "Mini Notebook" showed some usefulness.

"Mini Notebook"

"Description: A small notebook used to document daily life."

"Function: Fill in a time period and a character, and the notebook will automatically generate actions that the character carried out during that period."

"Tips: Can only be used once a week. The larger the date range filled in, the more simplified the generated character actions will be. Can only generate actions that have already happened."

This meant if the time entered was only an hour, the notebook might generate very detailed actions, right down to the exact second they started eating, what they ate, how it tasted, even the color of their poop. But if the filled-in time frame was a year, then the character's actions generated by the notebook might be extremely brief, something along the lines of "Nothing extraordinary happened that year."

「By this time, the group had returned to the Spirit Car.」

Because this was a special instance, they were returned to where they had started. The wind was still howling outside the car, and the temperature was extremely low.

Fatty, having regained consciousness, was still in a daze. Chu Changge seemed to be pondering something.

Liu Ruyan glanced at Gu Mian, then turned her head away, appearing rather disinterested. Come to think of it, Gu Mian hadn't seen her in the previous instance.

But now was not the time to think about these issues.

Gu Mian nudged Fatty, who was closest to him, "Got a pen?"

Only then did Fatty snap out of it. He fumbled awkwardly in his pocket, seemingly still lost in the frightening sound they had just heard.

Next, Gu Mian saw Fatty pulling out a nearly dried-out pen refill from his pocket.

Oh, well, a refill can still be used.

Gu Mian took the refill from the dazed Fatty, thinking it would suffice, and looked at the "Mini Notebook" in his hand.

The design of this thing was very simple: just a plain white cover with a few words printed at the bottom.

[Time:]

[Character:]

These labels had blank spaces after them for Gu Mian to fill in.

Gu Mian looked at the cover for a while, then turned to Fatty. "I want to peek into your past."

It was unclear whether Fatty heard him or not, but he nodded his head anyway.

So, Gu Mian filled in "Fat Kid Surnamed Wang." This was Fatty's game nickname.

He wanted to see if he could use a player's game nickname to generate their events.

Out of everyone present, except for Fatty, everyone else used their real names as their game nicknames, so for now, he could only input Fatty's.

Then Gu Mian casually filled in the date "March 13th, 2016, entire day."

It turned out the notebook could indeed use a player's nickname to retrieve information from before this global game had even begun.

Gu Mian flipped open the notebook and read:

"[March 13th, 2016, 00:13...]"

00:13? Could it be documenting Fatty sleep-talking?

"[March 13th, 2016, 00:13. Puts down the folder, picks up the framed photo of himself and his father from the table. Fat Kid Surnamed Wang: 'I found it...']"

Just then, Fatty, who was nearby, suddenly leaned over and glanced at the content in the notebook.

His face instantly turned red, and he promptly snatched the notebook away.

Gu Mian looked at him, puzzled. "What's wrong?"

Fatty looked nervous, stuttering for a moment before finally blurting out, "What if... what if you find out something like me soliciting prostitutes and getting caught?"

Gu Mian: "..."

He hadn't known, but now he did. Really shot himself in the foot. But... had Fatty really been caught by the vice squad?

Gu Mian was about to say something more when Chu Changge suddenly approached, holding out his hand as if to show Gu Mian what he was holding.

Gu Mian glanced at Fatty one more time before shifting his gaze to what Chu Changge was holding.

It was a school badge.

Gu Mian remembered that Chu Changge's little figure had received two items from the chest. One was the "Number One Cafeteria Goer's School Uniform," and the other was the "Blood-stained School Badge."

But it looked like the "Number One Cafeteria Goer's School Uniform" was not in Chu Changge's possession now.

Sure enough, Chu Changge continued, "My evaluation for the instance was A, so I could choose two-thirds of the items I got from the chest to take with me."

However, Chu Changge only got two items in total. Rounded off, he could only take one.

What he chose was this badge.

"Blood-stained School Badge (Incomplete)"

"Description: A school badge, half of its surface soaked in blood. It records information like the holder's photo and name. The holder's photo is now obscured, only allowing one to vaguely discern that the badge's owner is named 'Meiren Chu'."

Seeing this, Gu Mian suddenly recalled that the name of a female ghost in a horror film seemed very similar to the name of this badge's owner.

He continued reading. Below was the function of the "Blood-stained School Badge."

"Function: Hides the player's nickname. When this school badge is worn, the player's nickname will be overwritten, displaying as 'Meiren Chu'."

"Note: This item is incomplete and thus has limited functionality. All its functions can only be activated after all bloodstains are completely removed."

Gu Mian looked at the badge in Chu Changge's hand.

Choosing this thing really wasn't a bad deal. Changing player nicknames might seem like a trivial function to other players, but for the three of them, it was extremely useful. Gu Mian no longer had to worry about being suspected of being 'Gu Sanwan' when walking with Chu Changge. It was only when he was with Fatty that things might still be a little troublesome.

As Gu Mian thought this, he glanced at Fatty, only to see the guy furtively trying to hide the notebook, almost stuffing it down his pants.

Seemingly noticing Gu Mian's gaze, Fatty finally looked up, gave a sheepish grin, and then decisively stuffed the poor "Mini Notebook" down his pants.

Gu Mian: "..."

What on earth is he trying to hide?

At this moment, Chu Changge had already pinned the "Blood-stained School Badge" to his jacket.

Gu Mian checked Chu Changge's player information. Sure enough, his name had changed from the cool "Chu Changge" to the lovely "Meiren Chu."

More functions could be unlocked after the bloodstains were removed; that was great. However, these bloodstains didn't seem easy to remove. Gu Mian thought he had just seen Chu Changge try to wipe the badge a few times, but the stains hadn't diminished at all. It looked like something else was needed to clean them off.

He retracted his gaze as he pondered this and then said, "Speaking of which, I opened over ten chests and didn't get anything useful, but one chest directly yielded 10,000 Game Coins..."

Chapter 260 Chu Changge's Flirting_1

However, that ten thousand Game Coins seemed to have been snatched up by some cute little ghost as soon as they had appeared.

Gu Mian thought about this as he put his hand into his pocket, fiddled with something for a while, and finally pulled out a piece of paper, already somewhat wrinkled from being rolled up.

It was an IOU.

[A Huge IOU]

[Description: A huge IOU. It reads: "The player who holds this IOU owes the Nine-headed Baby ten thousand Game Coins. Non-transferable."]

Before the debt was paid off, the player could face the wrath of the Nine-headed Baby at any time. If the debt was paid, however, they would receive "The Nine-headed Baby's Appreciation."

Come to think of it, the Game Coins that the Nine-headed Baby swallowed in the instance just now seemed to be exactly ten thousand. Shouldn't this IOU have turned into 'The Nine-headed Baby's Appreciation' by now?

However, reality proved that Gu Mian was being far too optimistic about this world.

This lousy IOU hadn't changed at all.

Gu Mian looked at it from left to right, top to bottom, repeatedly turning it over and examining it.

There wasn't the slightest change. It hadn't evolved from an IOU into "The Nine-headed Baby's Appreciation"; not a single word had changed, no, not even a punctuation mark.

Just then, Fatty, who had already hidden the [Small Notebook], leaned over. "Doctor, what are you looking at?"

Gu Mian glanced at Fatty's pants and said, "The Nine-headed Baby gulped down the ten thousand Game Coins I just got in the instance, but this IOU hasn't transformed."

Fatty clutched his pants. "Speaking of... Doctor, did you actually get the coins back then?"

Gu Mian paused, slightly stunned.

No. Back then, I didn't actually get the coins. The one who got them was my registered character, [Gu Gu].

Theoretically, items in a character's possession couldn't be considered owned by the player because items from the instance were only distributed to players at the very end.

So, the Nine-headed Baby was stealing right under my nose! How desperate for money must it be to act so shamelessly...

A bit irritated, Gu Mian stuffed the IOU back into his pocket. Next time I see the Nine-headed Baby, I'm definitely going to give that kid a good thrashing.

As he thought about this, he placed his hands on the steering wheel.

They were still parked in the middle of the road. The roads in this city had been cleared, but for some reason, not many people were driving.

However, even if there were no other cars, blocking the road is unethical. We need to get moving.

Just as this thought occurred to him, Fatty's voice suddenly came from the side, "Hey, Doc, don't you feel like we're missing something?"

It really did feel like something was missing.

The scent of her shampoo was missing, and so was the cascade of beautiful hair by the window. Right, when we entered the special instance, we left Xiao Hong here by herself... Where is she now?

Thinking this, Gu Mian opened the car door. The moment it cracked open, a cold wind blasted in, making Fatty, who was beside him, shiver.

He wrapped his blue jacket tighter around himself. "Damn, this weather is brutal! Why doesn't it show any signs of warming up at all?"

On the contrary, it was getting colder.

At this moment, Chu Changge also looked out the window, seemingly deep in thought.

Gu Mian had already gotten out of the car. He was wearing calf-high boots to prevent the cold wind from seeping up his pant legs. Although Gu Mian wasn't particularly afraid of the cold, he still rejected the idea of being "passionately caressed" by it.

The moment he stepped out, his sturdy, calf-high boots, which kept his pant legs snugly tucked in, landed on something.

Gu Mian looked down and saw a spill of hair, emitting the fragrant scent of shampoo.

This cascade of hair emerged from beneath the car, looking like a gruesome accident scene where some beautiful woman had been run over by a heartless driver and was trapped underneath.

He paused for a moment, then squatted down, peering under the car's chassis.

Then, he came face-to-face with an incredibly ugly face.

Xiao Hong seemed to have known Gu Mian would look down at her; she was now grinning idiotically at him. The [Thought Transmitter] around her neck dangled to the ground, emitting a HEH HEH HEH sound.

He'd never seen such an idiotic ghost.

Gu Mian reached out and with some effort, pulled Xiao Hong out from under the car, then stuffed her inside.

He couldn't just let her stay on the roof; it was far too conspicuous.

With the opening and closing of the door, Fatty's nose began to run profusely.

Even Chu Changge noticed that after last night's typhoon, the temperature seemed to have dropped to a terrifying level, which was why the streets were nearly empty today.

One would probably freeze solid even if wrapped in two quilts.

"It's freezing!" Fatty said, pulling out a tissue and wiping his nose hard. "The coldest part should be over by now, right? But why does it feel even colder than the coldest winter I've ever experienced?"

He seemed to be catching a cold, which wasn't good at a time like this, but it wasn't something Fatty could control.

Presumably, quite a few people had already started to fall ill, and some might have even developed the flu, given how terribly cold it was.

If one gets sick, it's best to take medicine, especially for something like the flu.

Chu Changge glanced at Xiao Hong, who was clinging to the car window, then at Fatty, who was continuously wiping his nose with a tissue, and said, "When we get to the supermarket, we should buy a thermometer and some medicine."

Fatty nodded in complete agreement.

Gu Mian rubbed his chin. "The medicine in hospitals and pharmacies is probably under military control by now. If there's a large-scale flu outbreak, would they distribute it?"

There were medicines in the supermarket, but they were extremely expensive.

Chu Changge spoke, "In theory, they definitely would. But I suspect there's a high chance an accident might occur. As for what kind of accident, we'll only know when the time comes."

As he spoke, he looked out the window.

A severe shortage of medicine would likely occur soon.

Just then, Liu Ruyan's voice suddenly came through, "Did you know, most of the original resources on Earth before the game seem to have disappeared."

Fatty looked at her in confusion, not quite understanding her meaning.

"The roads have been cleared, but there are still very few vehicles," Liu Ruyan continued. "As far as I know, it's because all the gasoline fuel evaporated... or rather, it disappeared. Most likely, there isn't a drop of oil left in gas stations or in the fuel tanks of abandoned cars by the roadside. Of course, some might have survived, but it's extremely rare."

"And from what I know, the same has happened to crops; they've mostly all died. So, it's best not to hold out much hope for things like medicine."

Fatty fell silent.

The chilly wind was still howling, a sound that could make one instinctively huddle for warmth.

Gu Mian had already stepped on the accelerator, and the Spirit Car started moving.

He glanced in the rearview mirror at Liu Ruyan, who was sitting in the very back, and said, "Get off at the supermarket. I don't want you unscrewing my gas canister anymore."

Though, to be fair, what Liu Ruyan had messed with back then wasn't actually a gas canister, and you couldn't keep something like that in the Spirit Car anyway.

Liu Ruyan, however, didn't refute. "Honestly," she said, "your gas canister really is a pain to unscrew..."

She paused there, not continuing her previous thought, and instead changed the subject. "Alright, goodbye."

They weren't far from the supermarket and reached it while they were still talking.

Liu Ruyan didn't linger. She immediately opened the car door, got out, and walked off in the direction opposite to the supermarket. As the door opened and closed, Fatty sneezed again.

He pressed his nose and muttered, "This damn weather."

"Speaking of which," Fatty said, holding a tissue and watching Liu Ruyan's retreating figure, "it doesn't seem like she did anything particularly useful by hitching a ride with us..."

Wait, Fatty paused his train of thought. She did flirt with Brother Chu.

He remembered Chu Changge and Liu Ruyan talking for a bit before they entered that last special instance. He had no idea what they'd discussed.

"Could they have been discussing the shape of the Doctor's gas canister?" Fatty mumbled to himself.