

Collapse 28

Chapter 28: Struggling Author Online Update_1

Truth be told, plenty of people had shopped at a supermarket late at night. But under the current circumstances, not many dared to stroll through a newly opened one at this hour. So, when Gu Mian and his group appeared at the ticket booth, the NPC was somewhat surprised.

Fatty was terrified and had even brought a kitchen knife from Gu Mian's kitchen for self-defense. "Doctor, can't we just go tomorrow? Do we really have to go this late at night..."

"Didn't they say the monthly supply of supermarket tickets is limited?" Gu Mian looked like he was here to grab tickets.

Chu Changge adjusted his glasses. "Apparently, you're the only one desperate enough to rush for tickets at this hour."

Gu Mian spread his hands and looked at the NPC behind the ticket window. "Three supermarket tickets, please."

The NPC in this ticket booth was female, with an ordinary face and her hair in a ponytail.

She looked up at Gu Mian. "One supermarket ticket costs fifty points. Three will be one hundred and fifty."

As she spoke, she pushed forward a device resembling a cafeteria card scanner. "Place your hand on it to automatically deduct the points. Are you paying together or separately?"

Gu Mian looked at the card scanner. It was quite advanced.

Fatty was a little surprised. "That expensive?"

He had only earned ten Game Coins from completing the first instance.

Now, any Game Coins Fatty had were earned by tagging along with Gu Mian. Thanks to Gu Mian destroying the special Spirit Car instance, he had received a compensation of one thousand Game Coins.

Calculated normally, if one instance awarded ten Game Coins, a player would need to clear five instances to afford a single ticket, and still need money left over to buy things in the supermarket.

The NPC patiently explained, "Since the game has just launched, players won't start with many Game Coins, but it will get slightly better later on."

"If you don't have enough Game Coins, you could clear an instance first..."

As the NPC spoke, a glint appeared in her eyes, as if she eagerly hoped they would enter an instance.

Gu Mian knew these ticket sellers also had performance quotas; their performance was probably related to the number of players participating in instances.

"No need." Not wanting to lead her on, Gu Mian interrupted her. "Just deduct it all from my account."

Deduct it all from your account? The NPC's expression turned strange. Surely that's not enough?

The game had just started, and it was difficult for one player to buy a single ticket, let alone for one person to buy tickets for three.

She looked suspiciously at the card scanner, which, to her surprise, displayed a successful deduction of 150 points.

Despite the NPC's perplexed expression, Gu Mian received the three tickets.

He looked down at them—

[Game Supermarket Ticket]

[This ticket grants access to the game supermarket. This ticket is a single-use item.]

[Valid: During January 2019.]

It was a single-use ticket that couldn't be stockpiled. It had to be used in the month of purchase.

Chu Changge took a ticket from Gu Mian. "Actually, one would have been enough. As long as one person enters the supermarket, they can buy what all three of us need."

Gu Mian was slightly stunned. "I understand the logic, but don't you two want to browse the supermarket?"

Fatty shifted uncomfortably. He finally understood what it meant to be so rich you could act on a whim.

The NPC behind the window seemed unable to watch any longer and stuck her head out. "You'd better save up some Game Coins first. Enter the supermarket at the end of the month when you have more money. Otherwise, even if you get in, you won't have money to buy anything. There should also be more people at the supermarket at the end of the month, so you'll be less likely to be targeted..."

"Targeted?" Fatty was a bit confused by this. "What does that mean?"

Chu Changge, however, glanced towards the entrance with a knowing look. "There should already be some small groups forming."

Even before this game began, such groups existed in the world.

These groups were full of idle individuals who spent their days trying to profit from others.

Of course, that was a euphemism. To put it bluntly, they were petty crooks—or more precisely, highway robbers.

In the past, these groups faced some constraints. But now, with the entire world in chaos, no one had the time to deal with them.

They banded together, forming groups much like gangs in games.

As Gu Mian exited the ticket booth, he noticed a fleeting figure in the distance, likely a lookout.

Fatty wasn't the sharpest, but even he could guess what was going on.

He shuffled nervously closer to Gu Mian. "Doctor... I just saw someone dart past over there. Could it be... a robber?"

Fatty was an avid reader of post-apocalyptic novels on web novel sites, so he was familiar with many of their common tropes.

"I bet it's a scout. They saw us buy tickets and will report back to their leader. Then the leader will bring a gang to rob us..."

As he spoke, he seemed to scare himself and shivered.

Gu Mian didn't seem too concerned about such things. He glanced at a nearby supermarket. "Don't worry about that. Let's go in and take a look first."

Fatty was dumbfounded.

At that very moment, not far from the ticket booth, two figures were crouched in the darkness.

One of them, slightly thinner, was facing a panel, apparently communicating with someone.

"Boss, Wang Xiaolong here. Three fat sheep at the Driver's Test Center. Look loaded."

A reply came quickly.

"Only three? What do they look like?"

"Yeah, Boss, just three. One's a big fatty, looks strong. The other two... one's a doctor, and the other looks frail. Shouldn't be much of a threat. They bought tickets and went straight into the supermarket near the Driver's Test Center."

"Keep an eye on them. I'm bringing people over."

Receiving the reply, Wang Xiaolong felt somewhat relieved.

In the darkness, he lit a cigarette and looked at his companion. "The boss said he's bringing people over soon. Told us to keep a close watch."

The person beside him looked nervous. "Xiaolong, don't you think... what we're doing is a bit dishonorable?"

Wang Xiaolong immediately rapped him sharply on the head.

"Are you still worried about honor at a time like this? Survival comes first! We need to eat. Besides, my middle school history teacher used to say... what was it again? Oh yeah, 'Chaotic times create heroes.' We gotta pick the right side. What if our boss is the next big hero? As for those we target, it's their own fault for being weak. If we don't rob them, someone else will. So it might as well be us."

By now, Gu Mian's group had presented their tickets and entered the supermarket.

Of course, Fatty's kitchen knife wasn't allowed inside, so it was stored in a locker.

The game's newly built supermarket was no different from any large, real-world one: brightly lit, spacious, with smiling clerks.

The only difference was that it was very quiet, with just the three of them inside.

Gu Mian noticed the letters "NPC" floating above each employee's head.

The first floor housed the daily necessities section, further divided into many smaller areas like kitchenware, adult products, and even an anime merchandise zone.

The variety of sections was impressive; they had everything imaginable.

Prices were clearly marked above all goods, and the salesclerks in each area were incredibly enthusiastic, greeting them like saviors after a long drought.

"Come, come, young mister Fatty! Look at this blanket here—thick, soft, and only ten Game Coins!"

It seems these salesclerks also have sales rankings.

Fatty and Chu Changge were being eagerly competed for by the clerks.

Gu Mian, however, was left alone. Perhaps these NPCs have a natural instinct for danger.

Gu Mian didn't mind. He wandered around the first floor, eventually strolling into the most remote section.

"Mechanical Tools Section..."