

Collapse 301

Chapter 301 Gugu says there must be light_1

"It's been proven that ghosts don't necessarily appear when two players meet, unless they satisfy a particular condition."

Bai Qiong pinched the item in his hand. "Keke and I have been together since the start of the instance, but we haven't encountered any ghost. Is it because we didn't meet the condition for the ghost to appear?"

Gu Mian nodded. "I noticed that the previous two groups of players who met were from different factions. Then, not long after, the ghost would appear... I speculate that only when two players from different factions encounter each other and conflict arises will the ghost appear."

Both Bai Qiong and Keke belonged to the Hunter's Faction, so even if they were together, they couldn't play any game like an eagle catching chicks.

Without any conflict, a ghost naturally didn't appear.

Keke looked somewhat puzzled. "What's the point of the ghost doing this?"

Gu Mian shook his head. "I don't know. However, I previously speculated that the ghost in this instance, like the players, also has a faction..."

Bai Qiong was somewhat surprised to hear this.

He frowned and asked, "Does the ghost in this instance also have a faction?"

Gu Mian nodded. "Yes, the ghost in the instance belongs to the Survivor Camp, and it is constrained by the Hunters. If Hunters and Survivors split up and flee, the ghost wouldn't even spare the Hunters a glance. That's why we aren't in any immediate danger and could even play a crucial role at a critical moment."

Shocked, Keke pondered for a moment. "Does this mean the ghost is also afraid of being caught by us Hunters?"

"Although various clues indicate that the ghost is constrained by the Hunters, we still shouldn't act rashly," Gu Mian said. "Because right now, I still don't understand why the ghost always hurriedly appears whenever Hunters and Survivors meet..."

Is the ghost helping players who are also Survivors?

Unlikely.

At this moment, Bai Qiong suddenly spoke up, "Right, I thoroughly searched this street and found a phone that can dial a number. Although I don't know what this has to do with the game of hide-and-seek, you two should take a look."

As he spoke, he lifted his hand. Gu Mian saw the phone he was holding.

"I just used this phone to dial the only number we found at the service center. The call connected, but there was no voice... Well, it wasn't completely silent. In any case, you'll understand when you listen..."

As he spoke, Bai Qiong tapped the phone screen, apparently inputting a phone number, then switched to speakerphone.

After a brief BEEP, Gu Mian heard a sound like the call being answered, but the other end remained silent.

Only the WHOOSHING sound of wind came through.

Gu Mian listened to the sound of the wind for a good while before Bai Qiong quietly said, "Wait a moment, there will be other sounds soon."

Hearing this, Gu Mian listened carefully again.

Sure enough, after just a few minutes, the faint sound of flowing water suddenly reached him, like a BABBLING brook.

But this sound of water didn't last long before it vanished, and then the faint sound of wind once again dominated the line.

Gu Mian glanced at the time on his own phone and signaled Bai Qiong not to hang up.

The current time was 9:41.

Gu Mian listened for a while longer after the water sound, and found that around 9:48, the sound of water reappeared, with an interval of seven minutes.

Bai Qiong said, "When I first made the call, I also subconsciously timed the interval between the water sounds; it was also about seven minutes."

Keke asked, "Are we supposed to find the place where the call was answered? There's a sound of water every seven minutes... Could it be near a timed faucet?"

As she said this, there was a hint of sheepishness on her face; she probably also felt that a "timed faucet" was something unheard of.

Bai Qiong shook his head. "This sound isn't like a faucet. It's more like a river."

That was truly strange. What kind of river would make a sound and then fall silent intermittently? Moreover, the intervals were very regular, always seven minutes.

Both of them were immediately puzzled. Where on earth had the person on the other end answered the call?

Gu Mian was also stroking his chin, contemplating the clues in this instance. They were extremely strange.

On the surface, this instance seemed to be a struggle between players from two factions, yet a ghost had inexplicably been mixed in—a ghost from the Survivor Camp.

And the instance was littered with strange clues, all of which seemed to be guiding the players to find something.

As he pondered, Gu Mian looked at Bai Qiong, who was deep in thought. "You two had better be careful. Players have no absolute safety in an instance. The instance wouldn't let one faction be invincible from the start."

Bai Qiong snapped out of his thoughts and nodded.

The current situation was indeed too strange.

If it was really as Gu Mian speculated—that the ghost belonged to the Survivor Camp and Survivors needed to evade Hunters—then the Hunter players in this instance would face no danger.

The instance would absolutely not allow that.

Why?

Why on earth put a ghost belonging to the Survivor Camp in the instance?

And why did the ghost always appear just in time when Hunters were chasing Survivors?

What did the clues found in the instance actually mean?

Gu Mian hadn't figured any of this out yet.

As he thought, he glanced at Keke beside him. The high school girl seemed to be pondering something. As for what exactly—it definitely wasn't a math problem.

Gu Mian withdrew his gaze. "Also, there's one more thing you should be aware of. I don't know how many ghosts are in this instance, but I just received a clue—it concerns the time 9:15."

Chapter 302 Gu Gu Says Let There Be Light_2

"Not too long ago, a player named Ji Bie Li witnessed a ghost chasing an Evader from the top of the hotel building, until both the ghost and the Evader vanished from her view. The ghost disappeared shortly before 9:15."

"And around 9:15, I saw a figure standing on the roof of the school building. Undoubtedly, it was a ghost."

No player would be idle enough to run to the top of the school building in this terrifying instance just to take in the view.

The ghost that appeared later also confirmed that the figure standing there previously was indeed a ghost.

"If there were multiple ghosts in this instance, that would be one thing, but... if there aren't many ghosts, and there's only one..."

Gu Mian paused as he spoke.

He looked at the two people in front of him.

Bai Qiong and Keke clearly understood what Gu Mian was implying.

Bai Qiong furrowed his brow. "The distance from the hotel to the school roof must be at least several hundred meters, right?"

Gu Mian shook his head. "I observed the school's surroundings carefully. There are no hotels nearby, at least not within sight."

Bai Qiong's frown deepened. "If there's only one ghost in this instance, and you saw the ghost at almost the exact same time Ji Bie Li saw it disappear, does this mean... the ghost can teleport?"

As he said this, Bai Qiong himself drew in a sharp breath.

Keke, standing beside him, was clearly taken aback as well. She gritted her teeth and hesitated before asking, "Teleport?"

This was more terrifying than having multiple ghosts in the instance.

A ghost that can teleport could appear anywhere, anytime.

Whether one hid in a cupboard or under a bed, one might look up at any moment to be confronted by a terrifying face.

This would then be the most frightening instance she had ever encountered!

Gu Mian said, "Of course, the idea that there's only one ghost in this instance is just speculation, although the timing is somewhat coincidental... But taking a huge step back, even if the ghost really can teleport, it hasn't used this ability to do anything malicious so far, at least."

If suddenly popping out from some unknown corner to scare players counted as doing something malicious, then Gu Mian would already be an arch-villain, his evil deeds overflowing.

Gu Mian put away his phone. "I speculate that a Hunter and an Evader are encountering each other right now. I need to go check the situation immediately..."

As he spoke, he glanced towards the office building. The flashlight beam that was visible before was gone; Manjusaka, who was chasing the Evader, had turned off their flashlight.

Bai Qiong nodded. "Then let's first find the location where the other party answered the phone. The sound of flowing water every seven minutes is a very specific condition; it shouldn't be too difficult to find."

He paused for a moment before continuing, "Moreover, Doctor, you said the ghost in this instance is controlled by the Hunter. But if it can truly teleport, it will be very difficult for us to catch it if we really try. I suspect the clues this instance has given us are to help players capture this ghost."

Only by finding the location indicated by the clues can more critical clues be discovered there.

Gu Mian didn't linger. He simply said, "Be careful," and strode off towards the office building.

In the pitch-dark office building, Ji Bie Li was hiding under an office desk. This was an office not far from the staircase on the twenty-third floor. It was extremely cluttered; so much so that when she entered, she almost knocked over several chairs. Thankfully, her phone screen's low brightness provided some illumination. She wouldn't dare use a flashlight.

Ji Bie Li didn't dare to continue upwards, afraid the pursuing Hunter would catch her on the stairs, so she had to find a floor to hide on first.

There really weren't many good hiding places in the office building. Fortunately, the building had many floors, so the Hunter chasing from below had no idea which floor she was hiding on.

As she thought this, she quietly sighed in relief. Thankfully, she knew in advance that a Hunter was following her; otherwise, if she were eliminated, who knows how much she would lose.

After sighing in relief, Ji Bie Li paid close attention to the sounds from the staircase. As long as the Hunter didn't search this floor after a little while, she would immediately run out and leave the building.

She had originally chosen this place for the convenience of observing the situation, but a lookout point haunted by a ghost was hardly a good place.

It seemed like a long time had passed, yet perhaps it hadn't been long at all.

Footsteps came from the stairway.

Ji Bie Li held her breath.

Someone's coming up!

In the darkness, the sound of someone ascending the stairs grew louder, closer. Her heart pounded in sync, the heavy thumping echoing in her ears as if it would burst through her eardrums.

Not long after, the footsteps stopped at the landing of the stairs.

Ji Bie Li silently prayed to the heavens, but it seemed the heavens weren't buying her act.

The somewhat heavy footsteps started again, advancing down the corridor!

Someone's started searching the rooms on this floor!

Ji Bie Li's heart pounded wildly. At the same time, she was filled with regret. Why did I choose a room so close to this staircase!

If I had known that person would stop and search this floor, I should have stayed far away from the stairs and rushed to the opposite staircase to escape while they were searching other rooms.

But it was too late for regrets now. Even the omnipotent game supermarket didn't sell regret potions.

All Ji Bie Li could do was secretly pray that this Hunter wouldn't find her.

This office was exceptionally messy; if she hid well, there was a chance she wouldn't be discovered.

She clutched her heart, suppressing her gasps for air. Within a few minutes, the footsteps stopped right outside the office door.

Ji Bie Li held her breath. The night was profoundly silent.

It was so dark and quiet here, it made one suspect they had become blind and caged.

Therefore, a peculiar sound of a door being pushed open seemed exceptionally eerie.

"CREAK—"

The sound of the door opening was piercing, making her ears ache, but Ji Bie Li couldn't be bothered with that now.

She ducked her head, holding her breath, intently focused on every move the person outside made.

The footsteps were infinitely amplified in the dark and silent environment.

She heard the footsteps advance a few paces without any hesitation, then a chair was pulled out, as if someone was checking if anyone was crouching behind it.

Of course, there wasn't.

Then, the footsteps continued, accompanied by the constant sound of chairs or desks being moved.

Ji Bie Li's eyes widened as she listened to the sounds of tables or chairs being shifted outside.

It was still pitch black in front of her, without a sliver of light.

Wait!

No light!

Without light, how could the person outside move through such a cluttered room unhindered!

At this thought, her body couldn't help but tremble violently.

No... the person outside might not be a Hunter at all, but a ghost...

The footsteps continued, without a single stumble or collision.

The mechanical dragging sounds filled Ji Bie Li's ears. This terrifying sound made her brain tremble.

No, I have to run!

By now, the footsteps had reached the desk she was hiding under.

Even in the darkness, Ji Bie Li could imagine a pair of blood-drenched feet standing before her. Looking up, there would be a face, bending down, slowly approaching the underside of the desk.

If I don't run now, I'll die!

She suddenly slammed into the chairs behind her. The mountain of chairs piled there was heavy, but Ji Bie Li, as if by some superhuman strength, violently scattered them and then scrambled out.

Run!

Ignoring the pain in her body, she didn't dare pause after crawling out. She quickly switched on her flashlight to get her bearings, stood up, and dashed towards the door.

Run! Run fast!

The footsteps behind her resumed, but they were more hurried now.

Ji Bie Li ran frantically, wishing she could just jump out of the window on this twenty-third floor to escape the ghost's pursuit, but she knew jumping from here meant certain death.

She desperately ran to the staircase and then flew down the stairs.

She didn't know how long she ran. By the time she was completely out of strength and had to stop, the sounds from behind had vanished.

Ji Bie Li didn't dare to stop where she was. She glanced around, quickly hid behind a large door, and only then allowed herself to catch her breath.

Chapter 303 Behind the Head_1

Manjusaka huddled tightly inside a room, attentively listening to the sounds outside the door.

Not long ago, she had encountered Nine Lives, a fellow Hunter.

A Survivor connected to Nine Lives, known as "Safe Life 658," told Nine Lives that two other Survivors were being stalked by a ghost in an office building, hoping that he could alert them through another Hunter.

During their phone conversation, Nine Lives was on his way to Dajiale Supermarket. He had already guessed that the game of hide-and-seek might restrict the ghost, so his concerns were now centered on how to limit the ghost's power. The matter of capturing Survivors had been pushed to the back of his mind.

Naturally, he would not take the trouble to notify other Hunters to help pass messages. Even if all the Survivors within this instance ended up wiped out, it wouldn't be his problem. That's why Nine Lives completely disregarded this situation.

Although he had no plans to involve himself in the Survivors' affairs, coincidentally, Nine Lives ran into Manjusaka, who happened to be alone.

There was no harm in telling her about the situation, so Nine Lives casually relayed the news to Manjusaka without a second thought.

However, the Survivor connected with Manjusaka was a player named "This nickname is already taken," and was not one of the two being stalked.

Although she was unable to inform those two Survivors being followed by the ghost, she had a different idea in mind.

"I came here in such a hurry because I wanted to pick up some scraps... even if the ghost attacks, at least one Survivor should escape, right? If they escape, they'll definitely run downstairs," Manjusaka mumbled to herself, hiding in front of a room by the fifteenth-floor stairwell landing. "But why hasn't there been any movement upstairs after all this time?"

She had originally made it up to the nineteenth floor, but for safety, she descended several floors and finally chose to hide on the fifteenth floor.

She was hiding here to block any Survivors running downstairs.

There are two Survivors. If the ghost goes after one of them, the other Survivor should be able to escape. This is a golden opportunity. The ghost, busy chasing other Survivors, surely won't have time to bother with me. As long as I hide here, I have a great chance of catching my prey! Fortune favors the bold. Nobody would expect a Hunter to pursue Survivors while under threat from the ghost.

Manjusaka waited quietly. Could it be that the ghost already attacked the two Survivors while I was on my way here? No, I was fast enough... I even used a special item to get here quickly. That ghost shouldn't have made its move yet. I'll wait a bit longer...

While contemplating, she moved her head in the dark, bringing her ear a little closer to the door.

Sure enough, she did not wait long before the sound of hurried steps descending the stairs broke the silence.

Manjusaka perked up her ears, listening carefully to the commotion outside.

Ji Bie Li strained her ears, listening to the sounds above. There seemed to be no activity up there anymore. This meant whatever was there before hadn't followed her.

She heaved a sigh of relief and crouched slightly behind the door.

Good thing I ran fast...

As she thought this, her mind raced.

The Doctor who had just contacted her said a Hunter was following her.

I've run down so many floors now, why haven't I encountered the Hunter stalking me? Could the Doctor who just called have been lying? No, that's unlikely. If he were lying, he couldn't have guessed my floor so precisely. Wait, what floor am I on now?

Ji Bie Li peeked out to look at the sticker on the adjacent wall: sixteenth floor.

The sixteenth floor, huh... she thought, pulling her head back. I've only run down seven floors and I'm already exhausted. It must be because climbing the stairs earlier took so much energy... But why hasn't the Hunter the Doctor mentioned shown up yet?

Ji Bie Li remembered the person who had called her saying the Hunter had reached the nineteenth floor. But now she had descended to the sixteenth floor, yet that Hunter was nowhere in sight.

She quietly held her breath, listening to the sounds outside.

If that Hunter is still around, they should have reached above the nineteenth floor by now, right? There were still no signs of activity from above. And it's impossible that the ghost got rid of the Hunter; I speculated earlier that the ghost can't hurt Hunters. Why haven't I encountered anyone? It's strange.

Ji Bie Li had rested enough. She crept out from behind the door. "Leaving that Hunter aside for now," she muttered to herself, "the ghost upstairs could come down anytime. I need to get out of this godforsaken place..."

Murmuring to herself, she made her way towards the staircase.

But just as she took her first step, she suddenly felt that something was wrong.

I made such a commotion just now. If there's a Hunter nearby, they'd definitely follow the sound. But so far, I haven't heard anyone else moving. I made so much noise, and the Hunter didn't appear... That means... she's intentionally hidden herself! Why would she hide deliberately? A Hunter wouldn't fear Survivors or other Hunters; their only fear is the ghost. This means the Hunter following me knows there's a ghost in this building!

In an instant, Ji Bie Li realized why she hadn't encountered the Hunter following her, even after descending so many floors.

She looked at the pitch-black staircase in front of her. It was as if, in that moment, the staircase no longer led to another floor, but to the gates of hell itself.

Chapter 304 Behind the Head_2

"Since they know there's a ghost upstairs, the Hunter will definitely take a conservative approach and stay far away from it... The Hunter who made it to the nineteenth floor must have regretted it and retreated to a lower floor."

It would be fine if they just fled, but what if the Hunter didn't run away?

Moreover, Ji Bie Li hadn't heard any sounds of panicked fleeing before.

"That person might still be hiding in this building! Just on a lower floor, waiting for me to run downstairs and then catch me..."

No! I absolutely cannot go down!

In a flash, Ji Bie Li found herself in a dilemma.

Upstairs was the ghost, while downstairs was the Hunter's ambush.

Whether she went up or down, both paths seemed deadly.

The only difference lay in the manner of death. Going upstairs might lead to a gruesome one, while falling into the Hunter's hands downstairs might be somewhat more 'comfortable'.

But no matter how 'comfortable' it was, the end result was always death!

"Should I take a gamble? Gamble on whether the Hunter following me has left this building?"

Ji Bie Li took a deep breath, looking at the pitch-black staircase.

She realized she had little time to choose.

The ghost from upstairs could descend at any moment, and the hidden Hunter below could also come up to check at any moment.

Moreover, she had no idea which floor the Hunter was hiding on. It was entirely possible she'd run into that frightening Hunter just by turning a corner.

What to do? What to do?

Ji Bie Li wished she could ask someone for help.

But in this godforsaken place, there was no one to aid her.

The only way to communicate with the outside world was the mobile phone in her hand, provided by the instance.

She thought for a few seconds, then acted decisively. Grabbing her phone, she retreated into the hallway, randomly chose a room, entered, and huddled in a corner to make the call.

Just as Gu Mian rounded the corner of the office building, his phone in his pocket started ringing.

He didn't even have to look; he knew it was Ji Bie Li, as this phone could only communicate with her.

Without thinking too much, he answered the call.

Immediately, a very faint voice came from the other end.

It was so faint that Gu Mian almost thought Ji Bie Li was on her last breath.

But facts proved the player on the line was still very much alive. Whether she would remain so for much longer, however, was uncertain.

On the phone, Ji Bie Li succinctly described her current situation to Gu Mian. It didn't take long—just a dozen seconds or so.

Most people would stutter under such stress, but Ji Bie Li impressively didn't. Instead, she spoke clearly and methodically, allowing Gu Mian to quickly grasp her predicament.

In short, it was: "A silent ghost above, a silent Hunter below." She was asking him which path to death she should choose.

Gu Mian really wanted to offer her a third option, like jumping out a window. Of course, that would only work if she possessed the 'Protagonist Never Dies From a Cliff Fall' ability.

But clearly, Ji Bie Li didn't possess such a miraculous ability.

So Gu Mian sincerely offered his advice: "Go up."

As he spoke, he quickened his pace around the office building. Gu Mian had initially wanted to enter the building to get a look at the ghost on the upper floors, but upon arriving downstairs, he suddenly noticed an amusement center not far behind it.

A tall drop tower stood out, though it was obviously no longer operational for any free-fall descents.

"But going up might lead to encountering the ghost," Ji Bie Li said, taking a deep breath.

"You said the ghost suddenly stopped chasing you. I suspect it halted on a particular floor and is searching. This is the best time to go upstairs. The ghost would never guess you'd return to a floor where you were just being chased."

Ji Bie Li bit her lip. "Yes, that makes sense... But what if I go upstairs just as it finishes searching a floor and starts coming down?"

Gu Mian stroked his chin, not telling Ji Bie Li that ghosts seemed to be able to teleport.

In his experience, if a ghost suddenly stopped its pursuit, it had most likely teleported elsewhere. Which means the ghost might very well no longer be on the upper floors. But that was only a possibility, not a certainty.

As Gu Mian pondered, he said, "Aren't there always more than one staircase in office buildings? At least two."

Ji Bie Li had a flash of understanding. "You're suggesting I take the other staircase?"

"No," Gu Mian corrected. "Go up the same staircase you just came down."

Ji Bie Li was somewhat baffled.

"Since the ghost stopped to search floor by floor, it clearly suspects you're using a diversionary tactic. Moreover, judging from its erratic behavior in the instance, this ghost isn't stupid; it seems to be scheming. An intelligent ghost like that would definitely suspect you might have slipped onto another staircase to continue going down."

Gu Mian paused, then continued, "You're at the staircase you escaped down, right?"

Ji Bie Li nodded and hummed in affirmation, even though she knew he couldn't see her nod.

"That's right," Gu Mian said. "You've been there a while and haven't heard anyone coming down. That strongly suggests the ghost has moved to another staircase. So, you'd best move quickly. It could start searching your floor at any moment."

Ji Bie Li wasted no more time. After thanking him, she hung up.

She looked at the staircase before her, took a deep breath, then quickly started running upwards.

Watching as the other person hung up, Gu Mian put his phone back in his pocket.

Although the ghost had likely left this building, it was still wise to be cautious.

With this thought, he continued toward the Paradise in front of him.

Manjusaka waited for quite a while, but there was still no sign of anyone coming down from above.

Unable to stand the isolation, she slowly pushed the door open and looked outside.

The corridor was incredibly dark. A window at the far end let in a faint glimmer of light, barely enough for her to make out her surroundings.

Gazing at the empty staircase, Manjusaka frowned in confusion, muttering, "This isn't right. Someone should have run down by now. Could that ghost actually be strong enough to have killed both escapees?"

Just as she was muttering to herself, she suddenly heard footsteps on the stairs.

It was coming from above!

She tensed. Could the escapee upstairs have discovered I'm down here? There's a ghost up there! Would the escapee rather face the ghost and die than come down?

Just as Manjusaka pulled out her flashlight, considering whether to give chase, she heard another set of footsteps on the stairs.

This time, the sound was coming from below.

Manjusaka instantly took two steps back, eyeing the staircase in front of her with caution.

There were two people: one climbing the stairs above her, and another climbing from below—this one getting closer and closer!

On high alert, she strained her ears, listening to the sounds from below.

The footsteps from below sounded somewhat hurried, not like the sounds a ghost would make ascending stairs.

Manjusaka frowned, ducking behind the stairwell door to wait for the person below to ascend.

If it's an escapee, that would be perfect...

She silently prayed.

Even if I don't catch the one upstairs, getting this other one wouldn't be a bad trade-off.

Sure enough, the ascending footsteps grew closer. Only when they echoed on her floor did Manjusaka get a clear look at the newcomer.

It was a person, but not one she recognized. All Hunters knew each other by sight; a new face had to be an escapee!

The person furtively climbing the stairs was a young man. They were now very close, and Manjusaka could even see his player nickname.

"Username Already Taken"

It's the escapee I was on the phone with! What a coincidence.

She silently pressed herself behind the door, motionless, waiting for this unfortunate soul to draw nearer before she struck him down!

The escapee was getting closer, almost reaching the landing on her floor.

Manjusaka felt a thrill of excitement.

But at that very moment, she suddenly sensed something amiss behind her head.

Chapter 305 Extreme Survival_1

An inexplicable chill suddenly surged, instantly rising from the soles of her feet to her scalp and numbing the back of her head.

Manjusaka was hiding in the corner of the staircase entrance. The space behind the large door there was ample, enough to comfortably accommodate one person, perhaps even a few more...

Her neck stiffened as she slowly turned her head.

A pale face was floating right behind her.

"AH!"

Ji Bie Li, still fearfully climbing upward, heard a startling shriek from below; it was a woman's voice.

Because Ji Bie Li had deliberately lightened her steps, her pace was slow; she had only just reached the nineteenth floor.

Yet, the screaming seemed to be nearby.

Upon hearing the sound, Ji Bie Li immediately stopped.

She gripped the railing tightly and peered cautiously down through the gaps in the staircase. The stairwell wasn't as dark as the rooms, so she could make out some details even without lights.

Suddenly, a man's scream echoed as well.

She recognized the voice. The survivors had all met at the beginning of the instance, and this voice belonged to one of them.

Immediately afterward, she saw a hand suddenly grasp the railing on a lower floor. The hand's owner, seemingly panic-stricken, was scrambling wildly downstairs.

A few seconds later, she saw another hand grab the railing.

The person following was also frantically running downwards, as if both had encountered some terrible misfortune.

Ji Bie Li furrowed her brow. The two people fleeing wildly are definitely players, and one of them is likely the Hunter who was following me. They must have encountered a ghost.

Listening to the hurried footsteps from below fade away, Ji Bie Li felt a little strange.

Strange, are there really that many ghosts in this instance?

Just these few floors of the office building are home to two ghosts. Going by this density, there would have to be at least four or five ghosts on a single street.

But I haven't seen that many ghosts.

The sounds of frantic escape from the lower floors gradually faded. Ji Bie Li didn't linger; she decided to continue climbing.

Just then, she suddenly realized that the floors above had been eerily quiet.

Strange. If the ghost is looking for me, it's unlikely to be completely silent. There should at least be the sound of doors opening and closing, right?

But now, the upper floors seemed like a stagnant pool, utterly still.

Not a stir from above, yet players encountered a ghost below...

Connecting these two points, a daring idea suddenly formed in Ji Bie Li's mind.

Could it be... the ghost hunting me has gone downstairs?

Was the ghost that was just chasing those two players the same one that was after me earlier?

But in such a short time, how could that ghost have leaped over so many floors, bypassed me, and gone downstairs?

Thinking of this, Ji Bie Li's heart suddenly clenched. Could it... teleport?

If the ghost in this instance can actually teleport, then it's likely none of the ten players here will leave this instance alive!

Ji Bie Li's mind raced, but not for long. She quickly composed her somewhat horrified expression, lifted her foot, and continued upward.

The Doctor who called me said that a ghost who is also a survivor might not be able to kill. I should go to the rooftop first and check the city's situation... to see whether the ghost can teleport, or if there's more than just one ghost in this instance...

Reassured by this thought, she quickened her pace and hurried up the stairs.

Manjusaka had learned the hard way from the last chase, when they split up, that it was a bad idea. She definitely wasn't going to split up this time.

Upon discovering the ghost hiding right behind her, she immediately leaped out and sprinted towards the stairs.

The survivor named "This Nickname Is Already Taken"—whether scared by her or the ghost—sprinted even faster than she did, disappearing down the stairs in a flash. Manjusaka quickly followed.

The survivor in front, "This Nickname Is Already Taken," saw the danger, abruptly braked at a landing, and then dashed into the corridor.

Manjusaka hadn't expected him to stop so suddenly. With the ghost right behind her, stopping meant getting caught.

Her only option was to keep rushing down.

She clenched her fists and, using all her strength, shot down the stairs like a monkey with its backside on fire.

But Manjusaka was no nimble monkey. As she frantically scrambled down, her foot, unsteady from the excessive speed, suddenly twisted. This "monkey" instantly curled into a ball and tumbled down.

By the time she managed to get up, nothing but her own ragged breathing could be heard.

It... it didn't chase me? Manjusaka rubbed her aching joints, her wide eyes scanning her surroundings in bewilderment. Did it go after the other person?

The ghost had been so close it could have reached out and touched her. Yet, it had abandoned her to chase another survivor who wasn't even close to it.

Then, Manjusaka suddenly remembered something similar happening before.

Not long ago, because her mind wasn't clear, she'd practically thrown herself at the ghost when it was chasing her.

But that ghost hadn't seemed to appreciate the gesture; it too had been dead set on chasing a survivor...

Because I got a good look at the ghost just now, I remember its face. The ghost from moments ago and the one I encountered last time... they seem to be exactly the same!

Chapter 306 Extreme Survival_2

This ghost had abandoned her twice.

Once could be a coincidence, but twice? Doesn't this ghost pursue Hunters on its own?

Manjusaka did not stand still to ponder this; she was considering it while descending the stairs.

And each time, I was the closest to it, but it chose to abandon me and chase others...

There's something wrong with this ghost. It must be controlled by Hunters!

Manjusaka was quick. She had run down several floors just now, so in no time, she arrived at the bottom of the building.

She did not boldly stand at the entrance of the office building, nor did she leave directly. Instead, she found a slightly concealed corner nearby and hid there.

If the ghost is controlled by us Hunters, how is it controlled by us?

Frowning, Manjusaka squatted in the corner, lost in thought. Just then, she suddenly realized her phone had started vibrating at some point. Is that person calling me?

Wasn't he being chased by the ghost? How did he get out of danger so quickly?

Was the call from... the ghost?

Manjusaka hesitated for a moment and then answered the call. If the call is from the ghost, I'll hang up immediately!

Unexpectedly, as soon as the call connected, a flustered and exasperated voice came from the other end, "Sis, I kindly found you to pass on a message someone else gave me for you, so why did you set me up?"

Pass on messages?

Manjusaka was completely confused.

By this time, Ji Bie Li had also climbed to the rooftop. From over thirty floors up, her view of the ground below was poor. But she wouldn't have climbed so high without preparation.

After getting to the top, Ji Bie Li quickly took out a pair of glasses and put them on.

[Crew's Glasses]

[Introduction: "Time Escape" train workers received this award for their excellent service. Wear it and you become the most outstanding member of the crew.]

[Function: Greatly enhances vision upon wearing, allowing one to see small details a hundred meters away.]

[Aftereffect: Due to the excessive detail, extended use may cause dizziness. Use with caution.]

Streetlights still sparsely illuminated the city. After putting on the glasses, she could see clearly nearby with the help of the lights.

And as soon as Ji Bie Li put on her glasses, she saw Manjusaka below, crouched down and furtively talking on the phone.

I've never seen this person... She must be the Hunter who was secretly following me earlier.

Ji Bie Li squinted in Manjusaka's direction, looking like she was plotting something.

Is she contacting the Time Escape member she's paired with?

Seeing this, Ji Bie Li suddenly remembered the Hunter she was paired with. While scrutinizing the person below, she took out her phone and dialed a number.

The Hunter paired with me is clever. He might have found something by now. It would be better to exchange information. I should also tell the Hunter's Faction about the ghost's ability to teleport...

But this instance is really unfair to the Time Escape members. It seems like the Hunters are in absolutely no danger. Why would there be an instance favoring one side of players completely?

The call hadn't been answered yet. Ji Bie Li continued to scrutinize the person below, mumbling to herself.

The players in this instance are divided into two groups; it's similar to the group versus group instances I've participated in before. Players divided into groups were supposed to fight to the death, where one group's victory meant the others' defeat. But this instance doesn't seem to be like that. The phones, which allow both factions to communicate, even seem to be teaching the players the concept of 'mutual benefit.'

But is that really so? Is this instance really trying to let both groups of players win together?

Ji Bie Li clenched her hand. Whether it's mutual benefit or mutual destruction between the two groups, I absolutely will not be part of the losing group.

Just then, Gu Mian suddenly answered the call. He had picked up hastily and overheard the last part of what Ji Bie Li was saying.

Puzzled, Gu Mian asked, "What did you say?"

By now, he had already left the amusement park.

It was worth mentioning that some amusement park facilities still had power; Gu Mian immediately noticed the Ferris Wheel slowly rotating.

And just beneath the Ferris Wheel, a stream of water quietly flowed.

If one sat in one of the cabins of this Ferris Wheel, they would be able to hear the gentle sound of the water flowing as the cabin descended to its lowest point. At other times, all one could hear was the whooshing sound of the breeze.

Therefore, when Bai Qiong made that call, the person on the other end must have been in one of those cabins! There must be some clue in that cabin.

While calculating the time it took for the Ferris Wheel to make one full rotation, Gu Mian was also searching for the cabin from which the call had been made.

He was thorough, searching every cabin that passed the ground level.

Unfortunately, there was nothing inside.

Perhaps Bai Qiong and Keke have already found this place and taken the clues... That would be best.

At this point, Ji Bie Li's voice came through the phone, "I just discovered that the ghost seems to be able to teleport..."

Gu Mian had figured that out long ago. But he refrained from uttering a sarcastic comment like, You're so slow, you've only just figured that out? and instead just nodded, murmuring, "I see."

Ji Bie Li seemed rather curious as to why he wasn't surprised at all.

A somewhat strange tone came from the phone, "Aren't you surprised?"

"Ah, I'm extremely surprised," Gu Mian said dismissively.

Ji Bie Li was speechless. Looks like this person must have known long ago.

She took a deep breath and then continued, "Earlier, I heard the ghost chasing two people. It abandoned the Hunter again to chase Time Escape members."

"You needn't be so alarmed," Gu Mian said. "I suspect this ghost can't actually harm Time Escape members or Hunters for now. It possesses such a terrifying ability to teleport, yet so far, it seems no one has died. At least, not yet..."

But just as Gu Mian was speaking, Ji Bie Li, on the rooftop, suddenly heard an unusual noise. It sounded like a door being pushed open nearby.

A shiver ran down her spine, and she immediately hung up the phone, listening carefully to the sounds from outside.

That sound seemed to be coming from downstairs, very close to her!

What's going on? Are there other players in this building... or has the ghost returned? Wasn't it pursuing another Time Escape member just now?

At this moment, Ji Bie Li noticed that the woman downstairs suddenly stood up. She was still on the phone, but her expression had abruptly become serious.

Just then, another sound of a door being pushed open echoed.

Ji Bie Li diligently observed the expression of the person below. Each time the sound of a door opening was heard, the person below's expression became even more complex and inscrutable.

It seems the Hunter can also hear this terrifying sound of doors opening... and through her phone. It looks like the person she's talking to is the Time Escape member who was just being chased by the ghost.

At this thought, an idea suddenly flashed through Ji Bie Li's mind. Disregarding the risk of being discovered, she pressed herself against the edge of the building, carefully observing the expression of the person below.

Ji Bie Li had to confirm if the ghost truly wouldn't harm Time Escape members, as that Doctor had claimed.

But the outcome disappointed her.

Not long after, a scream echoed from the lower floors.

Ji Bie Li gripped the edge of the rooftop, paying no attention to the scream. Instead, she kept her eyes glued on the person below.

The woman below looked extremely anxious. Her call seemed to have been disconnected. She redialed multiple times, but it appeared no one was answering.

There was no one left on the other side to answer the phone... Seeing this, Ji Bie Li's legs suddenly gave out, and she knelt on the rooftop.

The Doctor was wrong. The ghost... will kill Time Escape members! From the looks of it, only the Hunters are absolutely safe!

After the scream, silence fell downstairs. Then, for some unknown reason, the woman below rushed back into the building.

Manjusaka flew through the stairwell.

"As long as the Hunters can capture the ghost, everyone in this instance will be safe!" – This was what the Time Escape member she had been talking to had told her before he died.

Chapter 307 Night_1

Even though she didn't know how that player had gotten the information, considering the previous two times the ghost ignored her, it was indeed afraid of the Hunter!

Manjusaka thought this as she charged up the stairs.

She wasn't running so fast out of an eagerness to eliminate the menace for the public good, but was considering the final instance score. The Hunter who eliminates the ghost would definitely get the largest score bonus!

With this in mind, Manjusaka quickened her pace, heading towards the upper floors of the office building.

Ji Bie Li watched Manjusaka's figure disappear downstairs. It seems she already knows the ghost can be countered by the Hunter. That's why she rushed up so eagerly.

Of course, I don't believe she's in such a hurry to eliminate the menace for the public good. She's most likely after the final instance score.

Thinking this, Ji Bie Li ducked back from the rooftop's edge. Now, all I have to do is wait for the Hunter to catch this ghost. That way, we can safely survive past midnight and finish the instance. However, in that case, the Survivors will definitely score lower than the Hunters. Strange, this instance doesn't seem to offer any way for Survivors to earn points...

The Hunter rushing up from below might discover me, Ji Bie Li thought. She quickly got up from the ground and hurried towards the rooftop door.

But just then, she suddenly heard heavy footsteps near the rooftop door.

Soon, the heavy footsteps grew closer and closer, as if something had already ascended the stairs leading to the rooftop.

That Hunter couldn't be moving this fast!

Ji Bie Li trembled violently.

Then... the only thing that could be moving around these floors right now... is that ghost! It's the ghost! It's coming up!

The rooftop is wide open. There's no cover, not even a small stone. If that single door opens, I'll be immediately exposed. I'm done for. I'm trapped now.

Ji Bie Li quickly hid in a corner, struggling to control her trembling body as she stared intently at the rooftop door.

The footsteps drew nearer and nearer, sounding as if they were right outside, about to open the door at the top of the stairs.

Ji Bie Li shuddered violently. No, I absolutely cannot die here like this.

But the only exit is blocked by the ghost. The only way to escape the rooftop now... is to jump.

As she thought this, she leaned most of her body out over the edge of the rooftop. This is a good thirty-odd floors high; a jump from here is certain death.

Just then, she heard the footsteps behind her stop—right outside the door.

Then, a strange sound came from behind her: the doorknob was turning. The door is about to open! I'm done for!

At the brink of life and death, countless thoughts raced through Ji Bie Li's mind. Then, she suddenly had an idea, quickly raised her phone, and hurled it at a window on a lower floor.

The phone fulfilled its mission, successfully shattering the glass of a window one floor below and falling into the room.

The loud CRASH from below echoed through several floors.

The sound of the doorknob turning stopped abruptly.

Then, Ji Bie Li, drenched in sweat, heard the footsteps resume—heavy, deliberate steps heading downstairs.

Only when the footsteps were no longer audible did she finally let out a long sigh of relief.

While that ghost is searching the lower floors, I need to get off this rooftop fast. If I'm discovered here, there'll be nowhere to run...

With this thought, she quickly walked towards the rooftop door, carefully peeked out, and after confirming there was no immediate danger, hurried down the stairs.

However, she didn't dare go too far down. Instead, she hid in a room on the top floor. I kind of regret throwing my phone away, she thought, but I don't dare go back to get it.

Meanwhile, Manjusaka, who was sprinting up the stairwell, also heard the loud CRASH. She redoubled her efforts and charged towards the upper floors.

Gu Mian was on his way to the office building. He had come via the main road, but now he'd found a narrow path and was rapidly advancing along it.

Notably, along this path was a dense residential complex. He happened to see a light on the first floor of a building near the road.

But the light moved quickly and vanished almost immediately. Looks like it went upstairs? Which player could that be?

However, Gu Mian couldn't dwell on it at that moment.

Ji Bie Li hung up on me just now. That means she encountered danger. Before hanging up, she told me the Hunter tailing her had reached the ground floor. So, the danger she just faced could only have been the ghost...

As Gu Mian was pondering this while heading towards the office building, a large dark figure suddenly leaped out from the bushes beside him.

Gu Mian had certainly seen this kind of setup before; back in his gaming days, he'd been ambushed from bushes countless times.

So, he agilely dodged the figure lunging at him.

Only when the figure missed and fell to the ground, crying out, "OUCH! OUCH!" did he recognize Fatty's voice.

"Doctor!" Seeing Gu Mian, Fatty was overjoyed, completely oblivious to his status as a Survivor.

Rubbing his backside, he scrambled up from the ground, his expression ecstatic in the darkness. "Brother Chu told me to wait for you here. Looks like I wasn't waiting for nothing!"

Gu Mian was somewhat surprised. "How long have you been waiting?"

Fatty pulled out his phone and examined it. "This instance started not long ago. Brother Chu pushed me in here to wait right after it began. It's 10:10 PM now... I've been waiting for almost an hour, haven't I?"

"Oh, right! When this hide-and-seek game started, Brother Chu seemed to find something in a run-down supermarket. But before I could get a good look, he shoved me into these blasted bushes. Brother Chu also told me not to make a sound if I saw anyone, unless it was you..."

A supermarket?

Gu Mian immediately thought of the Dajiale Supermarket receipt he'd pulled from the pocket of the clothes on the rooftop.

If Chu Changge took the clues from that supermarket early on, then Nine Lives must have come up empty-handed when he went there later, right? I can just imagine Nine Lives stomping around in anger, his swishing ponytail probably bobbing up and down too.

But how did Chu Changge know I would pass by here? Gu Mian furrowed his brows, finding it rather odd.

But there's no time to dwell on that now.

Keeping some distance from Fatty, Gu Mian asked, "Did Chu Changge say anything else when he stuffed you in here?"

Fatty patted his backside and pointed to a tall office building not far away. "Brother Chu said he was going up there to scout ahead. He said that when I met you here, I should take you to that building to find him."

Gu Mian pursed his lips. I completely missed this building earlier. And it seems there's still a ghost wandering around in that office building.

There was no time to lose. Gu Mian set off towards the nearby office building.

Fatty followed closely behind.

If other players had been present, they would undoubtedly have marveled at Fatty's sheer nerve. A mere Survivor, daring to trail casually behind a Hunter!

"Oh, right, Doctor! While I was hiding here, I saw a player pass by..." Fatty reported to Gu Mian, panting as he kept up. "Just a little before you came by, there was a man with a huge scar on his neck..."

As he spoke, Fatty spread his arms wide in a hugely exaggerated gesture, making a shape almost larger than himself.

"I don't know him. I just saw him holding something, and he went into that residential complex across from me."

That must be Bai Qiong, Gu Mian realized.

Thinking of this, he asked, "Was there anyone else with him?"

I remember Bai Qiong and Keke were working together.

Fatty shook his head. "Nope, just him."

That's strange. Could Bai Qiong and Keke have split up?

Gu Mian had no intention of turning back to find Bai Qiong.

He strode quickly towards the office building.

Fatty asked, "By the way, Doctor, I've been hiding here and haven't dared to move, so I have no idea what's happening outside. Are all the Survivors done for? Surely Brother Chu and I aren't the only ones left, right?"

Gu Mian glanced at the overly confident Fatty. "Not yet. In fact, it seems not a single Survivor has been eliminated."

Fatty paused, then asked cautiously, "Doctor, are your teammates that incompetent? This instance has been going for over an hour, and they seriously haven't caught a single person?"

"It can't be helped," Gu Mian said as he walked. "Every time a Hunter encounters a Survivor and starts a relentless chase, a ghost pops out in the instance to interfere."

Fatty seemed to have an epiphany. "So there really are ghosts in this instance! Good thing I've been lucky enough not to run into one... But Doctor, aren't we also a Hunter and Survivor pair? How come no ghost has popped out for us?"

Gu Mian thought for a moment. "It is strange. Our situation is indeed different from the other groups being chased by the ghost... Maybe it's because I'm not chasing you? Otherwise, how about you let me chase you and see?"

Fatty hurriedly waved his hands in refusal.

Seeing Fatty wave his hands in refusal, Gu Mian continued, "The ghost in this instance can teleport. And I suspect it knows everything happening in this instance—and by everything, I mean the exact location of every player."

Hearing this, Fatty shuddered violently. "No way!"

"It must know everything within this instance; otherwise, that ghost wouldn't always appear so punctually," Gu Mian said.

It's truly strange. I've never encountered a ghost this powerful. If it were to attack, the players in this instance would undoubtedly suffer devastating consequences. But this ghost seems to refrain from killing? Is it because rules prevent it from acting... or is the time not yet right? If it does decide to act later, it's hard to imagine any player surviving this instance.

Fatty's voice came again. "So, you're saying the ghost already knows that we—a Hunter and a Survivor—have met up, but it hasn't popped out because you're not chasing me?"

That's right. Fatty and I met, but the ghost didn't appear. This means it only shows up when a Survivor is being chased. But why?

Gu Mian suddenly had an epiphany.

This implies that if a Survivor is caught, it will put the ghost in a disadvantageous position! If a Survivor is caught, what happens then...?

At this thought, Gu Mian was startled.

So far, it seems no Survivor has actually been caught. That must be the ghost's objective! Damn it!

Chapter 308 The Book of Civilization is Really Good _1

Manjusaka, currently wandering in the office building, was approaching the room where the sound of shattered glass had originated.

"It seems like the sound came from around this floor. Maybe the ghost is nearby!"

Although she had been informed that ghosts could be eliminated by the Hunter, she was still somewhat uneasy.

What if this information isn't accurate? What if I rush up to catch the ghost, fail, and get killed by it instead?

These concerns made her slow her pace.

So much so that when she saw a strange shadow flash in the corridor ahead, she stumbled, and her courage instantly faltered.

But her hesitation didn't last long. She saw that the shadow seemed to have spotted her before it swiftly fled.

This discovery made Manjusaka's nearly wilted courage rapidly swell.

Since this damn game began, I've always been afraid of ghosts; never has a ghost been afraid of me!

As she thought this, her courage bolstered, she quickly ran in the direction the shadow had departed, attempting to catch up.

This was a deadly chase.

Manjusaka had to admit that she had used nearly all her strength in this grueling pursuit.

Even when the ghost was chasing me before, I never ran this hard!

She pushed herself, faster and faster, running for her life.

The shadow is just ahead!

If I can just catch it!

Her nostrils and throat burned from the intense exertion, as if one more deep breath would make them explode.

But the twisted shadow always remained distant, and the distance between them hadn't shortened in the slightest, despite Manjusaka's desperate sprint.

This just confirms it—the ghost is afraid of me!

The ecstasy and vanity welling up in her heart instantly drowned out her physical strain. In a daze, her speed seemed to increase, and the distance to the ghost ahead appeared to shrink a little.

Manjusaka was overjoyed.

Once I catch it, it'll be eliminated and disappear!

She watched the eerie shadow in front of her seemingly get nearer. She even held her breath, concentrating all her attention on running.

Closer, closer!

It's right in front of me!

Just then, the shadow ahead suddenly stopped for some reason.

With her eyes bloodshot, Manjusaka didn't hesitate to pounce forward, her hands tightly grasping the cold arm. She cried out excitedly, "I've got you!"

A sudden silence fell around her.

After a moment of silence, the cold touch still lingered in her hands.

The thing in front of her did not disappear.

How could this be?!

Astonished, she raised her head. A distorted face loomed larger before her until it filled her entire field of vision.

Meanwhile, Ji Bie Li, hiding on the top floor of the office building, also heard the commotion from downstairs.

The noise Manjusaka made was considerable. Her cry of "I've caught you!" was particularly clear; others could even hear the pride in her tone.

"Is it over?" Ji Bie Li murmured, sighing in relief as she moved closer to the door.

The ghost in the instance has been captured by the Hunter. So, the remaining players just need to wait until midnight to leave safely, right?

As she thought about this, she gently pushed the door open, hoping to see what was going on outside.

As the door opened, dim light spilled in from the hallway.

A ghastly pale face appeared in the crack of the door.

Ji Bie Li shuddered violently, nearly slamming the door shut. But at that moment, she suddenly felt that this deathly pale face was somewhat familiar.

It's him!

She finally recognized this face—it belonged to the player named "This Nickname is Taken."

Isn't this the Survivor who was just chased to death by the ghost? Why would his body appear at the door of my hiding spot? It definitely wasn't there before! Have I been discovered by the ghost?

No.

Thinking of this, she shook her head. The ghost was just dealt with by the Hunter. It shouldn't place this player's body at the entrance to my hiding spot... Then who put his body here?

As Ji Bie Li was thinking, she tried to step around the body and leave the somewhat creepy place as quickly as possible.

The ghost has been eliminated, but what's the deal with this body appearing out of thin air?

But at that moment, she suddenly noticed that the chest of this body seemed to be rising and falling.

Ji Bie Li stared in stunned silence at the chest that was still faintly moving.

Immediately, as if a thought struck her, she swiftly crouched down and tremblingly reached out to check for breath from the "body" on the floor.

"He's still breathing... He's still alive..."

Finding a living person was certainly a good thing, but at this point, a greater panic gripped Ji Bie Li.

"He's still alive, which means the ghost can't kill... At least before this, the ghost couldn't truly harm other Survivors or Hunters because it **was** a Survivor!"

It was being restrained!

But now... It's over. Everything is over.

The game rules had stated it clearly:

"During the game, the 'Survivor' needs to hide. If caught by the 'Hunter', they will be punished."

Because the horror instance was so peculiar, they had misunderstood the word "punishment" from the start of the game to mean direct elimination, overlooking the most crucial point:

In a normal game of hide-and-seek, if those hiding are caught by the "ghost" (the seeker), their punishment is to become the "ghost" in the next round!

And now...

The actual ghost has been captured by the Hunter. This means the ghost and the Hunter who caught it have swapped identities.

From now on, the entity that *was* the ghost, capable of teleporting anywhere at any time, will become a true ghost, free to begin a slaughter in the instance!

It's over... Everything is over...

But just as Ji Bie Li was lost in her thoughts, something suddenly occurred to her: Even if the ghost becomes a Hunter, it can't attack other Hunters, right? As long as I become a Hunter before the ghost finds me... Meaning, I need to be caught by a Hunter and swap identities with them... Right now, besides me, probably no one else has figured out the truth of this instance. I need to swap identities with one of the Hunters while they're still clueless!

Thinking of this, she staggered to her feet, then dashed towards the lower floors.

She remembered dropping her phone a few floors below.

The Hunter she had been matched with was undoubtedly the easiest to find now.

I'd like to recommend a book by a friend: **The Book of Civilization**.

The Six-Eyed Flying Fish Tribe, who live underwater yet love the sky; the Shuituan Tribe, mere water blobs who love sunbathing so much they evaporate.

Creating the internet in a Fantasy World, Su Bei watches as numerous powerful figures stay home, surfing the web and becoming otaku, finally realizing he has led them astray.

It's super good, everyone go check it out!

Chapter 309 Practice is the Only Standard for Testing Truth_1

By now, Gu Mian was not far from the office building.

He looked at the tall building not far away. "The ghost in this instance is much more powerful than in previous ones. Right from the start, it was in a very disadvantageous position but was able to mislead all players in the instance step by step..."

From the beginning, the ghost was part of the Survivor Camp, and as a Survivor, the ghost was unable to slaughter other players in the instance.

In this instance, the ghost was originally in a situation where it could hardly make a move.

But it repeatedly appeared when Hunters and Survivors gathered, never pursuing the Hunters. It used misdirection to make players believe it was afraid of Hunters.

And it probably had another purpose in doing this: to ensure that no other Survivors were caught before it was.

Because if a Survivor were caught before then, everyone would realize that the "punishment" for being caught wasn't elimination, but an identity swap!

And now, the ghost had successfully concealed this fact.

Probably, so far, not many players have discovered this, Gu Mian thought.

He shook his head and mused, "This is too devious."

He was certain that most players in the instance had already been misled by this ghost. Most of them would think they would be safe as long as they caught the ghost.

I wonder if any Hunters have already attempted to "capture the ghost," Gu Mian pondered, his temples beginning to throb slightly.

Just then, he unexpectedly received a call from Ji Bie Li.

Fatty, who was right beside Gu Mian, craned his neck to look at the caller ID on Gu Mian's phone. "So, it's this Ji Bie Li who's connected with the Doctor. That little girl looks pretty enough, but I always feel she's a bit scheming..."

Ignoring Fatty's comments about her being scheming or not, Gu Mian answered the phone.

A voice immediately came from the other end.

"I just hid on the rooftop. I didn't encounter any ghosts on the way up, but shortly after I hid, I heard other players being chased by the ghost on the lower floors... I suddenly hung up on you earlier because I heard the ghost's sounds."

Wind, somewhat cold, gusted in through the windowpane her phone had shattered. She had already found the room her phone had crashed into.

Glass shards were scattered on the floor. Ji Bie Li glanced at the large hole in the window in front of her, then spoke into the microphone, "But I heard the ghost didn't chase them for long; it just fell silent."

"It seemed a Hunter came up, and the ghost immediately fled upon hearing the Hunter's movements... It turns out our previous guess was correct: the ghost is afraid of Hunters; it can't resist at all..."

"The Hunter who came up seems to have also discovered that the ghost can be eliminated by Hunters, so he's still searching for the ghost in the office building. But one person is far too few. Can you contact

some more Hunters? Quick, have them come to the office building here. The person who catches the ghost should get a very high instance score in the end."

Ji Bie Li spoke quickly, uncertain when or where the ghost might suddenly appear behind her.

She had to hurry, not wasting a second. Only by becoming a Hunter sooner could she be safe sooner!

Ji Bie Li knew the Hunter she was connected with must already know her general location. But he hadn't come to capture her directly; this Hunter wasn't interested in capturing Survivors.

So, this time she didn't use her own location as bait but directly pitched the ghost as the target.

For the players still alive, the final instance score was the greatest temptation.

After saying all this, Ji Bie Li stopped speaking and held her breath, waiting for his reply.

She was afraid her overly eager tone might scare off the Hunter she was connected to.

On the other end, Gu Mian frowned as he listened.

He heard her voice suddenly cut off; even the sound of her breathing had disappeared.

Fatty's large face, who was beside him, leaned closer. Gu Mian saw his face was filled with a puzzled expression, and he seemed eager to speak.

But before Fatty could open his mouth, Gu Mian replied to Ji Bie Li, "Alright, I'll head to the office building where you are right away."

The puzzled expression on Fatty's face deepened.

Gu Mian heard Ji Bie Li seem to let out a sigh of relief before she continued, "By the way, when you come, if you see a suspicious figure lurking furtively in the dark, then it's nine times out of ten the ghost that's being chased."

The office building was pitch-dark. At first glance, it was impossible to tell a person from a ghost. I could pose as the ghost and let a Hunter catch me!

Gu Mian agreed as he hung up the phone.

As soon as he hung up, Fatty asked curiously, "Doctor, didn't you just tell me that Hunters should absolutely not catch the ghost?"

If the ghost is caught by a Hunter, their identities will be swapped!

Then the ghost will become a Hunter, and the Hunter who caught it will become a Survivor...

He could guess what would happen next.

Why did the Doctor cheerfully agree to Ji Bie Li's request to catch the ghost?

Fatty scratched his head as he pondered.

Gu Mian nodded. "Of course, I'm not going to catch the ghost. I'm afraid the ghost has already been caught by someone else..."

What the hell? Fatty's eyes widened.

If that ghost, the one who can teleport and knows all the players' locations, became a Hunter, the consequences would be unimaginable!

"I wasn't sure before, but when she made this call, I guessed it," Gu Mian glanced at his phone. "She was too eager, as if desperate to find other Hunters. I guess she's in such a hurry because she's looking for a Hunter to swap identities with..."

Chapter 310 Practice is the Only Standard for Testing Truth_2

This instance seems to favor the Hunters excessively, mainly because there's no definitive line between Hunters and Survivors. Their identities could swap at any time. As long as a player is smart enough, they can secure a relatively safe identity.

The existence of the cell phones is presumably to facilitate communication between the two roles and promote identity swapping.

Unfortunately, the Survivors viewed the Hunters as formidable foes from the start. They had trouble even making a call, let alone getting close.

Fatty frowned. "Doctor, are you suggesting that Ji Bie Li has also discovered the true nature of this instance?"

Gu Mian nodded. "She was in the office building where the ghost resided. That's why I suspect she overheard when the ghost was captured."

It's highly likely that she heard the ghost being captured, and then heard the sound of its captor, a Hunter, being killed by the ghost in retaliation. That's how she discovered the truth about this instance.

Then, Ji Bie Li thought of me and wanted to swap identities with me, a Hunter.

"Let's head to that building first," Gu Mian said as he started to move.

Fatty, somewhat anxious, closely followed Gu Mian.

After hanging up the call, Ji Bie Li felt as if a heavy stone had been lifted from her heart.

She planned to wait on the first floor, ready to jump out and catch the Hunter's attention as soon as she saw him.

As long as he takes the bait and comes to capture me, I'll be safe.

Luckily, this Hunter has no idea that the ghost can swap identities with a player...

Oh, if I hadn't found out that the Survivor chased by the ghost, the one called "Username Taken," hadn't died, I probably wouldn't have known how deceptive and cunning this ghost was, to have deceived everyone.

With this thought, Ji Bie Li became puzzled again.

I discovered the ghost's scheme through the still-living "Username Taken."

But this surviving player was later dragged to the front of my room. It seemed like someone deliberately did that, as if they wanted to pass this information to me.

It wasn't the ghost, and it didn't look like the nearly-dead Survivor crawled over here himself... So who dragged him to my doorstep?

Another player?

Had someone already found out that the ghost was tricking the players, so they dragged the living "Username Taken" over to warn me?

Strange. If they wanted to alert me, why not just tell me directly?

So strange...

Just why did that person do that?

At that moment, as Ji Bie Li was engrossed in her thoughts, she suddenly heard a faint noise—the vibration of a phone from behind her.

It was almost touching my back!

My phone is still in my hand. Then whose phone is vibrating...?

Taken by surprise, Ji Bie Li barely had time to react before her throat tightened violently. A choking sensation overwhelmed her, and her consciousness blurred.

Just before she blacked out, she thought she saw another person's reflection in the broken glass window before her...

After Gu Mian led a trembling Fatty into the office building, the first corpse they found belonged to Manjusaka.

The girl with the high ponytail, her face no longer able to hold its usual icy smirk, lay horizontally in the hallway, her eyes wide open in anger.

Even her cherished fruit knife lay discarded to one side.

Hidden behind Gu Mian in the darkness, a frightened Fatty watched Manjusaka, who looked like a hanged ghost.

Gu Mian picked up the fruit knife from beside the wall, slid it into the girl's pocket, and continued forward.

He spoke as he walked, "I guess it was her who captured the ghost. She was quite the heroine."

Fatty peeked his head out, then quickly pulled it back. "But Doctor, if the ghost has turned into a Hunter, won't it swap identities with a Survivor when it catches one?"

Gu Mian replied, "That depends on the definition of 'catching.' If the ghost doesn't actually 'catch' you, but just stares you to death, that can't be considered 'catching,' so naturally, there's no swapping of identities."

Stare to death...

Upon hearing this, Fatty suddenly remembered something.

It seemed like ghosts in horror movies didn't usually strangle their victims themselves. Most of the time, they only needed to glare menacingly or reveal a ghastly pale face. Or else, they'd extend a hand to drag people into the darkness. With a quick cut of the scene, the person would already be dead.

Ghosts that kill people with their own hands don't seem all that terrifying...

Heart still pounding, Fatty skirted Manjusaka's corpse and continued to follow Gu Mian. "So, Doctor, what are we doing in this office building?"

Gu Mian replied matter-of-factly, "Of course, we're here to drag out the missing Chu Changge and see what on earth he's up to."

From the beginning of this game, there was no trace of that fellow Chu Changge. Not even the ghost knew what he was doing.

After wandering around the office building for so long without seeing Chu Changge, Gu Mian even suspected he had long since been swallowed whole by the ghost, his bones completely digested.

While Gu Mian was leading a trembling Fatty through the office building, Bai Qiong was anxiously scratching his head. He was currently holed up in a basement, frantically pressing buttons on his cell phone.

Following the clue about a water sound every seven minutes, he found a Ferris wheel with a seven-minute rotation cycle. A stream even flowed beneath it.

After finding the Ferris wheel, he then discovered a key in one of its cabins—

the key to the basement storeroom of Changle Community West Zone, Building 65, Unit 3, No. 109.

The key had a label, which was how he knew exactly which room it belonged to.

Having obtained this item, Bai Qiong rushed non-stop to that community's No. 109 basement storeroom.

This place was a small storeroom. It was quite empty, containing only a wall-mounted telephone and a copy of the "Hide and Seek Handbook."

A label next to the telephone read: "This telephone can call all other players' cell phones."

This phone could reach all the players' cell phones in the instance—upon realizing this, a rather ominous premonition arose within Bai Qiong.

Without hesitating for long, he opened the "Hide and Seek Handbook."

[Hide and Seek Handbook]

[1. Player factions are determined, divided into 'Hunters' and 'Survivors'.]

[2. Hiding and pursuit are conducted separately.]

[3. If a 'Survivor' is caught, they must accept punishment, swap identities with the 'Hunter' who caught them, and continue the game.]

[4. The game of hide and seek ends when all players of one faction are eliminated or the game time limit is reached.]

Instantly, Bai Qiong's entire attention was captured by the third point.

"If a 'Survivor' is caught, they must accept punishment, swap identities with the 'Hunter' who caught them, and continue the game..."

He read this point over and over, a feeling of dread rising in his heart.

At first, the ghost was a Survivor, so it couldn't do anything to other players.

But if it was captured by a Hunter and their identities swapped...

Bai Qiong suddenly remembered what the Doctor had said not long ago: the ghost always appeared when Hunters and Survivors gathered but never attacked Hunters.

The ghost had been misleading them all along! Misleading them into capturing it!

No!

This absolutely cannot be allowed to happen.

As he thought this, Bai Qiong quickly walked towards the nearby wall-mounted telephone. He had to inform the Hunters about this immediately!

Gu Mian was the first to receive the call because his name was at the top of the Hunters' list, and Bai Qiong was dialing in order from top to bottom.

"Doctor?" Bai Qiong's tone was extremely urgent. At this moment, Gu Mian had just pushed open a door.

Gu Mian instinctively nodded. "It's me."

"Listen," Bai Qiong's urgent voice came through, "Whatever you do, don't capture the ghost!"

But before he could finish, Gu Mian interrupted him, "I know what you're going to say. You're going to say that if the ghost is caught, its identity will swap with the player's, right?"

Bai Qiong paused slightly. "You know so clearly... Could it be that you...??"

"Of course," Gu Mian glanced at Manjusaka's corpse in the distance. "Practice is the sole criterion for testing truth."