

## **Collapse 351**

Chapter 351 Night has fallen, here comes the wolf

Three players acted as 'ghosts,' among twelve participants in total.

Five people were present, almost half the total players. It was unlikely that none of these five were playing the role of 'ghosts'.

So, out of these five, who exactly was a ghost... or perhaps, 'who were ghosts'?

The night wind blew by, and Fatty felt a chill on his back.

Getting a 'ghost' to admit their identity was impossible.

Fatty gently nudged Chu Changge, who was next to him, then glanced at the date displayed on Chu Changge's wristwatch as the other looked on.

The green numbers on the digital watch were somewhat dazzling in the darkness.

It was September twenty-fifth, 7:41 PM.

The five present had fallen into an unspoken silence.

Gu Mian saw 007 seem to want to say something, but she swallowed her words. He figured she wanted to say something like, 'I'm just an ordinary citizen,' but everyone would claim that, and no one would believe it.

At that moment, Keke spoke up, "Right, my in-game name in this instance is Xu Keke, similar to my nickname. It's pretty easy to remember..."

She said tentatively, looking at Gu Mian, "You're Mr. Gu, aren't you?"

The only name on the wanted list.

Gu Mian's alias was still Doctor, displayed in green, but this instance directly revealed his real name.

However, even if the instance had given him a fake name, Keke would have recognized him as 'Gu Sanwan' from the wanted list.

She had experienced the hide-and-seek instance with Gu Mian.

After the hide-and-seek instance collapsed, a compensation list was released, which always displayed players' real aliases. The name 'Gu Mian' was conspicuously listed there.

There hadn't been any player nicknamed 'Gu Mian' in the hide-and-seek instance at the time.

If Keke wasn't foolish, she could deduce who the 'Gu Mian' on the list was through elimination.

This was an awkward subject. Should I kill her to silence her? Gu Mian wondered for the second time.

But just as he was considering the feasibility of murder, he suddenly heard Fatty, from behind him, say, "Oh, right, I have that little..."

But Fatty's sentence was cut off mid-way.

What happened?

Gu Mian turned to look at the suddenly quiet Fatty. At this point, everyone else also looked curiously towards Fatty, who was at the back.

Chu Changge had his hand on Fatty's shoulder, apparently having just silenced him.

Keke didn't continue the previous topic but nervously bit her lip as she looked at Fatty. "What do you have?"

Fatty's expression was odd. After a pause of several seconds, he stuttered, "I... uh... need to pee... Can someone come with me?"

Gu Mian: "..."

Asking a girl to accompany a boy to the restroom wasn't appropriate.

Luckily, the teaching building wasn't far, and each floor had a restroom. Fatty practically dragged Chu Changge with him.

Gu Mian and the others waited nearby.

Since it wasn't yet 7:50 PM, Gu Mian wasn't worried; he wouldn't have been concerned even if Fatty had gone to the restroom alone at this point.

007 didn't seem to have any worries.

Only Keke, standing to one side, looked very nervous. She seemed to have completely forgotten about mentioning Gu Mian's name earlier.

While Fatty and Chu Changge were in the restroom, Keke, still visibly nervous, asked Gu Mian, "In this game, don't we win by voting out all the 'ghosts'? Do we have any clues yet?"

007 glanced at Keke.

Even though Keke's question positioned her with the ordinary citizens, only she knew if she was a 'ghost'. She might be saying this to hide her true identity.

Keke was clearly intelligent. She'd clammed up after noticing Gu Mian didn't appreciate his name being brought up. If someone like her wanted to hide her identity, she'd do it very well.

Appearances were mostly unreliable. Personal investigation was the only way to find the truth.

While 007 remained silent, Gu Mian spoke, stroking his chin. He asked unexpectedly, "You and Zhang Pingfan are in the same class, so you must know about his disappearance, right?"

Keke seemed to hesitate for a moment.

In the dim corridor, Gu Mian couldn't see her expression. He only heard her pause for a few seconds before replying, "Yes... Zhang Pingfan is in my class, but I haven't seen him since entering this instance. Our class leader said he suddenly disappeared yesterday, without any warning..."

"Our class leader is still in the office discussing it with the teachers. Oh, and our class leader for Class Nine is Yuan Qinghua. I mentioned her before, right? She's also playing Close Your Eyes."

Yuan Qinghua? That's quite a unique name.

Having read numerous web novels, Gu Mian knew authors often followed a certain naming convention: unimportant side characters got generic names, while good-looking or important characters received more distinctive ones.

According to this convention, Yuan Qinghua probably isn't a pushover.

Similarly, Yue Nu probably isn't one either.

Just look at how plain 007's game name, Lin Qi, or Keke's, Xu Keke, sounded in comparison.

Keke then continued, "Speaking of Zhang Pingfan, I know one of the twelve players, a girl named Pan Yue, is close to him. We might get some information if we ask her. But Pan Yue isn't in our class, so I wouldn't recognize her..."

Pan Yue?

Gu Mian remembered that 007, Yue Nu, Pan Yue, and Li Wentao were all students of Senior Year 2, Class 13. So 007 should recognize her.

At this, 007 frowned. "Pan Yue is indeed in my class, but we only just entered the instance. I haven't had much chance to talk to her yet."

"Looking at your game alias, you must be Lin Qi from the list, right?" Keke offered a shy smile. "Our classmate, Li Yibai, is really close to your character—like childhood sweethearts. Don't fail to recognize him when you see him."

007 knew Li Yibai was one of the twelve players, but she hadn't expected her character and his to be childhood sweethearts.

Luckily, they weren't in the same class. Otherwise, her cover could easily be blown.

At this point, Chu Changge had already come out of the restroom, with Fatty trailing behind him.

Gu Mian looked at the two of them. "Why did it take so long just to use the bathroom?"

Fatty replied awkwardly, "The atmosphere in this instance is too scary. I had a bit of trouble... uh... going."

Gu Mian glanced at Chu Changge's wristwatch. It was 7:50 PM. Ten minutes left. The 'ghosts' would start their hunt soon, and they still had no clue about the game.

"We have no suspects and no clear clues. We must do something in these ten minutes," Gu Mian frowned. "At the very least, we need to identify a suspect. The 'ghosts' kill between 8:00 PM and 3:00 AM. Right after that, we have the first vote. I suspect we won't have any time to find clues while the 'ghosts' are active."

Chu Changge nodded slightly.

Not wasting any time, Gu Mian turned to 007. "Do you know where Yue Nu is now?"

Keke, standing beside him, asked, "Is Yue Nu also a player in this instance?"

Fatty nodded. "She's in the same class as 007."

Yue Nu and 007 had agreed to look for players separately at the classroom and cafeteria entrances, but Yue Nu had mysteriously disappeared.

007 shook her head. "I don't know where she is right now. Maybe she went back to class."

"Okay, the five of us will team up for now," Gu Mian nodded. "Out of the twelve players, Zhang Pingfan is currently the most suspicious; there's not much suspicion on anyone else yet. No one knows where he is, and crucially, he's acting alone. There's no one to restrain him. If he's a 'ghost', he can kill at any time."

If we follow the lead on Zhang Pingfan, it points to Pan Yue, who is close to him. Pan Yue from Senior Year 2, Class 13—007's classmate.

Gu Mian looked at 007. "Take us to Class 13 to find Pan Yue."

Chu Changge glanced at his wristwatch. It was now 7:51 PM.

By this time, the teachers had basically finished their patrols, so they wouldn't be caught even if they ran wildly outside the classrooms.

Hearing this, 007 immediately broke into a run. "Time is tight; we can't afford any delays."

As she ran ahead, she grumbled, "If I'd known time was this tight, we wouldn't have hidden in that dilapidated little pavilion for so long."

Gu Mian, following behind, chimed in, "Actually, we would've had enough time if Fatty hadn't gone to that bathroom."

Fatty: "..."

Gu Mian continued, "Between 8:00 PM and 3:00 AM, the five of us should stick together. If a 'ghost' tries to kill one of us, they'll hesitate, fearing their identity will be exposed."

Just then, Keke, close behind Gu Mian, asked with obvious confusion, "Are you actually afraid of 'ghosts' killing people?"

Though those were her words, Gu Mian could hear the subtext: 'Shouldn't the 'ghosts' be afraid of \*you\* killing \*them\*?'

Gu Mian paused. I don't recall this student-like girl witnessing my... brutal treatment of 'ghosts'. Did she hear about it from someone else?

007, however, looked genuinely surprised. "Why would you say that?"

In 007's memory, the most brutal thing Gu Mian had done was tear the skin off an arm. Since there were no actual 'ghosts' in the Fairy Tale City instance, she hadn't witnessed his famous ghost-tearing antics.

"You'll understand soon enough," Fatty, at the very rear, suddenly leaned in to explain to 007.

Such strange people...

007 was still puzzled but continued to lead the group upstairs.

"Our classroom is on the fifth floor," 007 said, a little out of breath. "We're almost there."

The teaching building had five floors in total. It took them less than two minutes to quickly ascend.

But just as they reached the top, the others were stunned.

The hallway on the fifth floor was pitch-black; not a single light was on.

"What's going on?" Fatty peeked down the hallway from the stairwell. "Is evening self-study over already? But I'm sure the lights on the fourth floor were still on when we passed it."

Without wasting time, Gu Mian turned to 007. "Where is your classroom?"

007 pointed to the right end of the hallway. "All the way at the end."

Gu Mian stepped into the dark hallway, with the others following closely.

He quickly reached the end of the corridor. Fatty had already taken out his flashlight and was shining it on the sign above a doorway.

It wasn't a classroom plaque but a sign that read 'Storage Room'.

"This isn't it," Gu Mian said, turning back to 007.

007 looked bewildered. "How did it suddenly change? Is this a ghost wall?"

At this point, Fatty shone his flashlight towards Gu Mian and 007. "Miss, are you sure you didn't remember wrong? Maybe your class is on a lower floor?"

Then Keke suggested, "Should we go downstairs and check?"

There was nothing more to do here, so Gu Mian headed for the stairs.

Fatty, holding the flashlight, whispered, "I think we should still be able to find clues between eight and three..."

He had just reached the stairwell when he realized it looked different from before.

The lights on the fourth floor, which had been on, were now extinguished.

At that very moment, even the beam from Fatty's flashlight vanished. They were plunged into complete darkness, unable to see a thing, only hearing sharp intakes of breath from the others.

Gu Mian frowned slightly, turning to face the pitch-blackness behind him. "Fatty?"

No one responded.

Then, suddenly, another light came on.

It was Chu Changge. He had taken out his own flashlight. Its stark white beam illuminated his face, giving him a rather terrifying appearance.

Chu Changge was looking at his wristwatch. "It is now... 8:01 PM."

「Night had fallen.」

Chapter 352 Love's Spiral Staircase\_1

Pale light illuminated the area.

The surroundings were completely different from before.

It was no longer the familiar campus but a chaotic, abandoned building. Nearly collapsed cardboard boxes were piled in the corners. The ground was covered in thick dust, and even the stair railings were rusted and almost broken.

Without light, it would have been pitch-black.

Chu Changge's flashlight lit up everyone.

Gu Mian couldn't see Fatty.

Keke was staring wide-eyed at where Fatty had been standing, her expression one of utter bewilderment.

Gone.

Fatty was gone.

He vanished into thin air, without making a single sound.

007 hadn't expected someone to encounter trouble so quickly. Sweat beaded on her forehead, and her breathing grew heavier. "Was it a ghost?"

Gu Mian remained silent.

Chu Changge, holding the flashlight, shook his head at Gu Mian. "I didn't hear anything, nor did I find any clues."

Gu Mian furrowed his brow and walked back into the corridor they had just been in. However, it too had undergone a heaven-and-earth change; it was no longer a long corridor but a wide, open floor.

It was pitch-black.

It was as if they had been moved to another building in an instant.

Chu Changge followed and swept his flashlight around. "No one," he said.

Gu Mian stared at the empty floor in silence for a moment before speaking. "There are three possibilities now. One: the four of us were moved to this building, and Fatty was left alone at the school. Two: Fatty was moved here with us but isn't nearby. Three: he's dead."

Hearing the last possibility, both 007 and Keke felt a chill run down their spines.

"We need to find out where we are," Gu Mian said, turning and heading for the stairs. "First, let's leave this building. Downstairs."

007 and Keke nodded slightly and quickly followed.

Gu Mian was in the lead, with Chu Changge at the rear, lighting the way with the flashlight.

These stairs were very steep, and even more dangerous in the dark.

As he descended, Gu Mian said, "Everyone, hold hands. To prevent anyone from suddenly disappearing."

Previously, it was Fatty, who was last in line, who had suddenly disappeared. Now, Chu Changge was at the very back.

Gu Mian heard 007 and Keke agree. Then, Keke's voice came. "Then I'll hold onto your clothes?"

She was speaking to Gu Mian.

Gu Mian didn't speak, which was taken as tacit consent.

He quickened his pace down the stairs, but this seemed to be an incredibly tall building; the staircase made several turns without any sign of an end.

Just as they reached the fourth turn, Gu Mian heard Keke, who had been quiet until then, suddenly exclaim anxiously, "Wait!"

He turned to look.

The flashlight beam was still on, illuminating the surroundings. But behind Keke was empty space. Further back stood Chu Changge, holding the light and looking over.

007 was gone.

Keke looked at the empty space behind her, bit her lip, and shivered violently. "We're..."

Gu Mian looked inquiringly at Chu Changge behind him. Chu Changge shook his head slightly, indicating he hadn't noticed anything.

Gu Mian frowned again. He paused for a few seconds before saying, "Let's stop for a moment."

It was certain their group had been targeted by the ghost; that's why they were disappearing one by one.

But disappearing didn't necessarily mean death. A ghost could only kill one person a night, yet two of their companions had already vanished.

Keke clutched Gu Mian's clothes tighter. She looked down at the staircase spiraling into the darkness below, like the gaping maw of a giant beast waiting for prey to walk into its trap.

Fine beads of sweat appeared on her forehead. "If this goes on, will the three of us also disappear one by one?"

Gu Mian looked at the slightly panicked Keke. "That's right. But I have a theory now."

"What?" Keke, somewhat on edge, hadn't expected Gu Mian to suddenly say this and couldn't help but look at him.

Gu Mian looked at the staircase disappearing into the darkness below. "Everything has a pattern," he said. "Including this."

"Pattern?" Keke looked like she didn't quite understand.

Gu Mian withdrew his gaze. "People started disappearing ever since we began going downstairs."

Keke understood. "So, you're saying the disappearances are related to going downstairs?"

"Very possibly. Perhaps we should try the opposite," Gu Mian said, lifting his head to look up the stairs.

The stairs above were also shrouded in darkness. Even though this was the path they had taken, looking back now, the darkness seemed to hide unsettling things.

The three of them fell silent. Half a minute later, Keke nervously broke the silence. "So, we... try going back up?"

"Yes," Gu Mian nodded. "You two go back up."

Keke was taken aback. "Then what about you?"

"I'll continue down," Gu Mian responded, looking at Chu Changge. "I'll go down; you two go up. Starting from when we separate, I'll call out one of your names every twenty seconds. Answer me. If my voice disappears..."

Gu Mian paused briefly. "...it means I've disappeared. If my voice hasn't disappeared after ten calls, then stop, and I'll come up to find you."

Upon hearing this, Keke's face turned even paler. "Why do this?"

Gu Mian reached behind him and pulled a small flashlight from his guitar case. "This is the only way to confirm my theory. It's an important clue."

As he spoke, he switched on the flashlight and pointed it downstairs.

The beam lit up the dark staircase below. It seemed to have no end.

Chu Changge had already turned sideways. He looked at Gu Mian and didn't object to his idea. "Anything else to add?"

Keke looked at Chu Changge in disbelief. "Are you really letting him go downstairs alone?"

Chu Changge looked at her and nodded slightly. "Just remember to answer when he calls your name."

With that, he turned and started up the stairs.

Keke hesitated only for a moment before quickly following him. When she glanced back at Gu Mian, all she saw was his back descending the stairs.

Gu Mian didn't have a watch.

There were no watches in the game supermarket that could be brought into an instance.

So, he could only rely on mental calculation to count the twenty seconds.

Holding the flashlight, he slowly descended. The sound of footsteps from above—Chu Changge and Keke's—grew fainter and fainter.

After descending the first flight of stairs, Gu Mian stopped. It was time.

He lifted his head and looked upward. "Chu Changge?"

His voice echoed eerily in the stairwell.

Half a second later, Chu Changge's voice, also echoing, drifted down from the darkness above. "Still here."

Hearing the reply, Gu Mian continued down the dark stairs.

Keke had learned Chu Changge's real name from the compensation list of the hide-and-seek instance, so Gu Mian didn't need to be discreet.

The footsteps from above had faded, almost inaudible.

Another twenty seconds passed. Gu Mian looked up, paused for a moment, then called out, "Keke?"

Hearing her name, Keke nervously leaned her head towards the handrail and quickly answered, "I'm here."

Ahead, Chu Changge, holding the light, didn't stop. He continued to ascend, his silent back looking somewhat eerie in the darkness.

Keke felt a sense of unease.

After twenty silent seconds, Gu Mian's voice came again from below. It was much fainter now; they were getting farther and farther apart.

"Chu Changge?" Keke heard Gu Mian's third call from below.

Chu Changge answered again and continued up the stairs.

We're getting so far apart, Keke thought, anxiously awaiting the next call. I wonder if I'll be able to hear clearly next time.

Another twenty seconds passed. The next call came as expected —

"Keke."

Hearing her name, Keke instinctively responded.

But as the sound left her throat, she realized something was terribly wrong.

That voice... it came from right beside her head, and it wasn't Gu Mian's.

Right behind her, practically on her scalp!

Fear instantly shot through her limbs, and the hairs on the back of her neck stood on end.

In that horrifying instant, a thought struck her.

If going down the stairs made someone disappear, then going up... wouldn't that mean someone extra would appear?!

Chapter 353 Making a Wish\_1

"Keke..."

The sound from behind her still seemed to cling to her scalp, making her skin crawl.

It was a female voice, and it was impossible for Gu Mian to make such a sound.

I have to get out of here quickly!

But at this moment, Keke saw Chu Changge, in front of her, suddenly halt.

In the dark, Keke slightly opened her mouth. Why did he stop?

Before she could utter a sound, Chu Changge, who was in front of her, suddenly spun around. The flashlight in his hand also changed direction; its grim white beam swept back along the staircase, illuminating the source of the sound.

Keke hadn't expected Chu Changge to do such a thing and froze on the spot.

After turning around, Chu Changge didn't react much. He simply stared at the space behind her as if he saw something, or as if he didn't see anything at all. Seeing this, Keke also slightly turned her head to look behind her.

Just as she half-turned her head, she felt a hand land abruptly on her shoulder. Then, a voice identical to the one from earlier came to her ear, "Keke, what's wrong with you? You don't answer when I call you... And Meiren Chu, what's with that expression?"

What?

Keke turned her head towards the source of the sound.

She saw a short-haired girl about her own height standing before her. The girl appeared somewhat anxious, an expression mixed with a hint of terror.

Is she... a human?

Although the other party could call her by her name, Keke didn't recognize this girl. The girl was an acquaintance of "Xu Keke," not her—the player who had joined the instance partway through.

But Keke reacted quickly, giving an ambiguous answer, "We were just too scared... Why are you here too?"

They had been mysteriously brought to this place. Keke guessed that the girl in front of her was also one of the twelve people, similarly brought here inexplicably.

However, Keke didn't know the name of the girl before her.

At that moment, she suddenly felt Chu Changge drawing something on her back.

Keke instantly recognized it. Chu Changge was repeatedly tracing the character for "Moon" on her back.

Connecting this to the names of the twelve players, Keke immediately linked the person before her to Pan Yue.

That's it, Keke understood.

Looking at the names, she recognized five of the twelve people from her class. Excluding Gu Mian, Fatty, Chu Changge, 007, and Yue Nu—the five instance players—there were only two people among the twelve she didn't know: Li Wentao and Pan Yue.

The girl in front of her probably wasn't Li Wentao.

Pan Yue showed a curious expression, as if she found the two people before her rather strange. But she seemed to quickly accept the situation. "I also don't know why I'm in this ghostly place. I was at school, but in the blink of an eye, I was here..."

As she said this, Pan Yue's anxious expression turned a bit peculiar. "How come you guys have a flashlight?"

Hearing this, Keke quickly explained, "We found it here."

As she spoke, Keke tilted her head slightly to glance downwards. Gu Mian's voice hadn't been heard again; it seemed his chances of survival were slim.

Pan Yue, however, didn't seem to care much about the flashlight, nor did she notice Keke's subtle movements. With a frightened expression, she said, "I thought I was dreaming... It's pitch black all around. Nobody answered when I called out. I couldn't see anything and didn't dare to move... Then I saw a light over here, so I followed it and found this staircase. That's when I saw you."

Chu Changge looked down and indeed saw a door at the bottom of this section of the staircase. It seemed Pan Yue had come from there.

Pan Yue looked around, her shoulders hunched slightly. "Why are you guys here too? Did the same thing happen to you?"

Keke nodded. "Yes, we were also mysteriously transported to this place. Actually, there were five of us who came here together..."

"Five people?"

"That's right," Keke said. "Besides him and me, there were Gu Mian, Lin Qi, and Wang Pan. But all three of them vanished mysteriously on the way."

"How can that be!" Pan Yue's eyes widened. "Does that mean everyone here is..."

Chu Changge's voice came from behind Keke. "They're all people who played that game a week ago. That game isn't over; that's why it's replaying now in a different way. We are currently in that game, Close Your Eyes, and it's the ghosts' killing time."

Chu Changge spoke while staring intently at Pan Yue.

The identity of this person who appeared so suddenly is questionable. Is she a ghost or a civilian?

"That's impossible!" Pan Yue's voice suddenly rose, but then it quickly fell again as if she had remembered something. "I remember Zhang Pingfan telling me before... he was too scared to play this game..."

Zhang Pingfan? Chu Changge caught the name.

This name had been mentioned frequently since they entered the instance. At this stage, the mysteriously disappeared Zhang Pingfan was definitely the most suspicious person.

And according to the available information, Zhang Pingfan and Pan Yue seemed to have a good relationship.

Keke also realized this. She then asked, "What did he say?"

Pan Yue seemed somewhat dazed, likely because the pitch-black surroundings made her extremely uneasy.

With a worried expression, Pan Yue grabbed Keke's arm. "Zhang Pingfan... he mentioned before that he was too scared to participate, worried about dying. It was ridiculous! Do you remember? On the night we played the game, right after the identities were distributed, the classroom lights went out. Zhang Pingfan was the first one to run out. The next day, he even told me he forgot to get his identity slip and hadn't even glanced at it!"

Identity? Chu Changge frowned. If there were paper slips with identities written on them, things would be much simpler.

Keke narrowed her eyes. "So, did anyone secretly peek at Zhang Pingfan's Identity Plate?"

With some confusion, Pan Yue looked at Keke. "Do you also think our sudden appearance here is related to that game?"

"Not only that," Chu Changge said, taking a step down the stairs. "The killing has already begun. At this moment, anyone could die."

Pan Yue's face still showed disbelief. "Although we did appear here mysteriously, that game isn't as mystical as you say, is it?"

"It's true," Keke said. "I saw with my own eyes the other three people who came with us vanish right in front of me. Anyone who goes down the stairs disappears."

Pan Yue still didn't quite believe her. "Could it be that you just weren't paying attention and got separated from them?"

"No, really," Keke said, frowning. "They were right behind me. We were even holding hands, but in the next second, they were gone."

Pan Yue couldn't understand. "Perhaps they were behind you, and you just didn't notice when you got separated."

Keke was frustrated and speechless. Just as she was about to retort, the surrounding light suddenly vanished.

In an instant, the light from the flashlight completely disappeared from their sight.

Immediately following that was Pan Yue's scream.

"Ah!" Pan Yue abruptly grabbed Keke. "What's happening? What's wrong?"

Keke's hands trembled as she slowly took out her own flashlight and switched it on.

The light once again illuminated the area.

Only, this time, things were a bit different.

Chu Changge had disappeared.

Chapter 354 First Night

"What's going on!" Pan Yue also realized the seriousness of the situation. He was right beside her just a moment ago but had disappeared in the blink of an eye. The light flickered, alternating between dark and bright for only a few seconds. It was impossible for someone standing in the middle of the staircase to have run out of their line of sight in that time.

Keke looked in the direction where Chu Changge had disappeared, a flashlight in one hand, while her other hand gripped Pan Yue's arm. "I'm scared too..."

"Right, did he just go downstairs?" Pan Yue suddenly seemed to remember something.

Yes, Chu Changge had indeed gone downstairs. Keke was somewhat dazed. Although he had only descended a few steps, it was still a move downward. He knew the dangers of going down, yet he still chose to do so.

Keke didn't think this was a momentary oversight. An inexperienced ordinary person might make such a mistake, but Chu Changge, who had experienced many instances, how could he make such a basic error? So...did he do it on purpose? Did he know what would happen after he disappeared? Did he discover something, thinking that disappearing was better than staying here?

At this thought, Keke suddenly looked at Pan Yue. Pan Yue still looked terrified, and in the darkness, her face was inexplicably chilling.

Death was even more terrifying than disappearing.

"What's wrong? Why that look?" Pan Yue turned her face, which was stark white in the flashlight's beam.

"Nothing," Keke shook her head quickly. After a few seconds, she spoke again. "It was like this the last few times too. There were five of us who came here. They all disappeared one after another, and now I'm the only one left."

Pan Yue's eyes widened slightly, her pupils reflecting the flashlight beam, looking somewhat eerie in the darkness. "So... these strange things are really happening because of that game we played a few days ago?"

It was because of the three ghosts in that game.

Keke watched Pan Yue's expression, nodded slightly, her own face filled with fear. "I guess the game didn't stop due to an accident. Instead... it turned into a more terrifying game. We've become real players. You remember the rules of the game, right?"

Pan Yue opened her mouth. "Three ghosts, nine civilians. The ghosts kill at night; the civilians vote during the day."

Keke, holding the flashlight, gently stepped down another stair. "Yes, everything will follow the rules of the game."

"I guess the three players who impersonated the ghosts really want to kill us. Between 8 p.m. and 3 a.m. is the ghosts' killing time. At 3 o'clock, we start voting. It's now precisely the ghosts' killing time, which is why we're encountering these bizarre incidents..."

As she spoke, she quickened her pace, rapidly descending several more stairs.

But just as Keke was lightly stepping down the stairs, an icy hand suddenly grabbed her wrist. She stopped abruptly.

Immediately after, Pan Yue's voice came from behind her, "Didn't you say that going downstairs might cause unexplained disappearances?"

The surroundings suddenly fell into an eerie silence.

Several seconds later, Keke's fearful voice echoed in the dim staircase, "Ah...yes. I was just so scared that I forgot..." As she spoke, she turned to look at Pan Yue. Pan Yue still looked nervous, appearing to be an ordinary civilian.

"So, should we go upstairs?" Pan Yue asked, seeming a bit hesitant. She apparently hadn't noticed Keke's strange attitude.

The best choice right now would be to leave this building by heading downward. But as they had just witnessed, someone could disappear just by stepping down a few stairs.

Keke nodded. "Right now, the only option is to go up, but... I'm too scared to lead."

Pan Yue paused for a moment. "Then I'll go first. You hold onto me from behind." Pan Yue's expression wasn't confident either; she was clearly somewhat afraid of leading the way.

Keke nodded silently and tightly grabbed the hem of Pan Yue's clothes. The two of them started moving, talking as they went.

Meanwhile, Keke kept an eye on Pan Yue in front. But just as she surreptitiously glanced at her, Pan Yue suddenly turned around, her eyes filled with an eerie light.

"What...what are you doing?" Keke asked, seemingly startled, looking at Pan Yue who had suddenly turned.

"Oh right, I just remembered something," Pan Yue said from the front, now looking down at Keke. "You said we're encountering all these peculiar incidents because of the players impersonating ghosts, so what is your role?"

In the oppressive darkness of the stairwell, the atmosphere turned exceedingly strange.

Keke looked scared. She raised her head and looked at Pan Yue. "Of course, I'm a civilian. What about you?"

Pan Yue gave Keke a suspicious look. "Of course, I'm a civilian too."

Both of them seemed to distrust each other, but they had no choice but to proceed upwards together.

Meanwhile, Gu Mian was idly swinging his flashlight around. He had proposed splitting up just before, and it had to be said, dividing the group in a Mysterious Dungeon was always a big mistake. He had lost complete contact with the main group just minutes after their separation, although the so-called "main group" consisted of only Chu Changge and Keke.

Earlier, when Gu Mian was descending the fourth flight of stairs, he suddenly noticed a change in his surroundings. When he tried to call out to those above, he received no response. Looking up, he couldn't see the beam from their flashlight either. Gu Mian was certain that he had been transferred.

Even though he was transferred, the current environment was still very much like the previous one.

#### Chapter 355 First Night

It was still the same pitch-black building, with its long staircases, dust-covered floors, and piles of discarded debris. Gu Mian even suspected he might still be in the same building, just shifted to a different floor. The building seemed to have no windows. Gu Mian, holding his flashlight, searched the dark surroundings for a long time but couldn't find a single one. Left with no other option, he decided to continue down the stairs to see if the paranormal events would persist.

This time, however, he reached the ground floor unimpeded and even managed to leave the eerie building. Throughout this, nothing out of the ordinary occurred. He wasn't sure if this was the instance's leniency or the calm before the storm.

He was now standing under the pitch-black night sky.

The time within this instance was late September.

The night wind was quite refreshing, and Gu Mian now had a clear view of his surroundings.

This area was very open, the only conspicuous features being the two buildings right here.

Two nearly identical greyish-black buildings, each about nine stories high, stood approximately a hundred meters apart. Their gloomy exterior walls had almost no windows, making it difficult to count the exact number of floors.

Between the two buildings was a tall, net-like fence, appearing to be over three meters high.

The building he had just exited was one of these two.

Gu Mian stared at the two buildings under the night sky, trying to understand the connection between them.

Perhaps I wasn't in the same building before and after the transfer.

Gu Mian narrowed his eyes. Two buildings that look so similar...

As he mused, he took a few steps forward, intending to get closer to the greyish-black building opposite. However, after just two steps, Gu Mian noticed something: a sign on the fence.

Even though the fence was over three meters high, Gu Mian's saw could easily cut through it.

What truly made Gu Mian hesitate was the warning on the sign: "High Voltage. Do Not Climb."

"This is really excessive," Gu Mian muttered, his gaze following the line of the fence.

Could this high-voltage electric fence have been set up specifically for me? Did they move me here, while the other players are still on the other side?

The fence, over three meters high, encircled both buildings, effectively separating them and completely preventing anyone from crossing between them. This is infuriating.

Seeing this, Gu Mian abandoned his plan to take out his electric saw and instead stared intently at the opposite building.

Just then, he suddenly saw Chu Changge's face appear in a window of the opposite building. It was a window on roughly the fifth or sixth floor.

Despite the distance, Gu Mian recognized him instantly. Chu Changge was standing by the window, seemingly gazing at something.

Following Chu Changge's line of sight, Gu Mian saw it ended on the building behind him. On that building, directly opposite Chu Changge, was another window.

A dark figure flashed rapidly past the window of the building behind Gu Mian, as if someone had just been there.

Gu Mian frowned and turned to look back at Chu Changge's window.

But the window was now empty. There was no one there.

"Did you hear that? It sounds like there's some noise upstairs in our building!"

At that moment, Keke and Pan Yue were cautiously making their way through the pitch-black building. They couldn't just keep going upstairs. After a brief discussion, they decided to first search each floor they passed for any other people.

As they moved nervously through each floor, they suddenly heard the sound of hurried footsteps from the floor above.

Pan Yue reacted quickly, stopping at once to ask Keke.

Keke clutched Pan Yue, who was in front of her, tightly. "I heard it! It's right above our heads!"

"Don't say it like that. It sounds like there's something on the ceiling right above us..." Pan Yue also hunched over slightly.

"Okay, okay," Keke whispered, "so, should we go up and check?"

As Pan Yue moved towards the stairs, she replied, "Of course. Aren't we trying to find the others and figure out what's going on?"

Keke hesitated. "But what if it's a ghost? What if it kills one of us?"

Pan Yue puffed out her chest, as if to bolster her courage. "Things are pretty strange right now... We've definitely experienced some bizarre things, but I doubt anyone will die. You think the person playing the ghost would actually kill someone? Would they dare?"

Keke couldn't explain to her that among the three 'ghosts,' one might be real. She could only nod in agreement. "We should still be careful..."

Pan Yue didn't argue, instead carefully leading Keke up the stairs behind her.

As she climbed, she tried to reassure Keke, "No one will die, don't worry. As soon as we get out of this place, we'll call the police."

Keke remained silent.

Meanwhile, the footsteps from upstairs seemed to grow more urgent.

But shortly after Pan Yue spoke, the urgent footsteps vanished. The area instantly fell silent again, as if the sound had never been there.

Pan Yue and Keke reached the landing of the stairwell on that floor. Pan Yue stood before the doorway to the floor, carefully poking her head in and calling out, "Is anyone there?"

There was no response.

Overwhelming darkness filled this floor. Keke carefully adjusted her flashlight. But the beam couldn't penetrate the darkness beyond the doorway; it seemed to pour out, making their hearts pound with unease. The long staircase behind them was also pitch-black, as if something might crawl up it at any moment.

"What should we do?" Keke whispered to Pan Yue.

Beads of sweat had formed on Pan Yue's forehead. I clearly heard footsteps, but no one replied... There's something terrifying about this.

Just as the two of them hesitated by the dark entrance, wondering whether to go in, a voice suddenly came from within.

"I've fallen... help me..."

It was a very faint male voice, so weak it was impossible to identify who it belonged to. The person inside sounded as if they could lose consciousness at any moment.

There really is someone in there!

Hearing this, Pan Yue immediately wanted to step inside but was pulled back by Keke. "Are we really going in?"

"I'm a little scared too," Pan Yue said, gripping Keke's hand, "but we have to go in."

With that, she lifted her foot and quickly stepped inside. Keke hurried after her, flashlight in hand.

The flashlight beam wasn't strong enough to cut through the darkness of the entire floor, so the two had to carefully feel their way forward.

"Where are you? Who are you?" Pan Yue called out, her voice louder now, trying to pierce the dim light of the flashlight.

Keke stayed close to Pan Yue, warily scanning their surroundings.

The faint voice continued to call out.

"I'm... I'm to the right of the entrance... Help me..."

To the right? Keke thought, shifting the flashlight beam towards the right side of where they had entered.

But the floor area was vast. The light only revealed abandoned cardboard boxes and some steel pipes or similar debris.

Pan Yue quickly advanced a few steps. Keke hurriedly followed, keeping the flashlight steady.

"Over here..."

The faint voice was still audible in the darkness. Pan Yue quickened her pace, and Keke almost broke into a run to keep up.

They hadn't been moving through the darkness for long when a hand appeared in the flashlight beam.

"Found him!" Pan Yue exclaimed, overjoyed at the sight of the hand in the light. She immediately took a few steps forward, trying to get a clearer look at the fallen person.

Keke also moved forward, shifting the flashlight beam ahead. They could now vaguely make out the person making the sounds.

The moment they saw clearly—

The hairs on the arms of Pan Yue, who was in front, stood on end. She almost turned and fled.

Keke's hand trembled violently, and she nearly dropped the flashlight.

Before them lay a young man. Two iron pipes impaled his abdomen and ribs, protruding from his back, smeared with fresh blood and shredded flesh.

He was crawling on the ground, the iron pipes embedded in his body scraping against the cement floor with a harsh, grating sound.

"I've fallen... Help me..."

His voice had become strange, as if squeezed from his throat. The piercing sound echoed continuously across the empty floor.

Keke saw the man on the ground lift his head. He twitched, extending a hand, his bloodshot eyes fixed on her—an incredibly terrifying sight.

At that instant, Pan Yue, still in front, shuddered violently, then abruptly turned and fled.

Chapter 356 Angry Tao Tao\_1

Keke also whirled around and ran out.

Just as they turned to flee, the crawling sound behind them continued to echo.

Keke faintly heard someone behind them cry out in a sharp voice, "Don't go!"

But no one paid him any mind.

Pan Yue ran incredibly fast. In an instant, she rushed out of the pitch-dark floor and, without any hesitation, darted upstairs. She ran up several flights before stopping, panting as if she had run out of strength.

Panting heavily, she looked behind her.

She saw Keke had also desperately caught up.

Keke tightly gripped the flashlight in her hand, an uneasy expression on her face as she looked behind her, as if terrified that the horrifying person would catch up.

Fortunately, no humanoid figure with a bizarrely contorted body appeared crawling up the stairs behind them.

Keke clutched her collar tightly and asked in a trembling voice, "That... what was that just now?"

Pan Yue took a sharp breath, her gaze fixed intensely on the dark staircase below. Her voice was urgent. "Didn't you recognize him? That was Li Wentao!"

Li Wentao. One of the twelve game participants, and a classmate of 007 and Yue Nu. He was also the only native of the instance Keke hadn't met. She had initially worried she wouldn't recognize Li Wentao, but that wouldn't be an issue now.

Because he was dying.

Even if he wasn't dead yet, judging by his earlier appearance, he definitely wouldn't last much longer.

Pan Yue's expression was still one of utter terror. She suddenly grabbed Keke, "You were right! People really die here! It's really connected to that game. Everyone who came here has played that game! The ghost killed Li Wentao!"

Keke looked equally panicked. "But we just ran... Is it really okay to leave him there?"

"He won't make it!" Hearing this, Pan Yue suddenly released Keke. "Even if we were there, he wouldn't survive. Besides, we don't have our phones. We can't call the police or an ambulance. Are you going to wait there and watch him die?!"

"Besides..." As she said this, the agitated Pan Yue suddenly lowered her voice. "Don't you think there was something wrong with him? Very wrong!"

Keke looked at Pan Yue's agitated face, her own expression fearful.

Pan Yue continued, as if to herself, "Didn't you see it? The way he looked at us just now... it was like he wanted to kill us. I couldn't bear to stay there any longer."

Indeed, that was true. Keke still remembered those blood-red eyes. They definitely weren't the eyes of a dying man begging for help, but more like those of a malevolent ghost from hell, intent on dragging everyone down with him.

Was Li Wentao the player killed by the ghost on the first night? But why would he look at them like that as he was dying—so terrifyingly, so hatefully?

Just then, the two of them suddenly heard footsteps coming from the darkness above.

"Who is it?!" Pan Yue snapped her head up.

Keke also quickly looked up.

The area instantly fell silent.

The two waited nervously in the strange silence for several seconds before a response came from above.

"It's me..."

Keke instantly recognized the voice. It was Li Yibai, one of the twelve participants, a native of the instance, and her classmate.

She aimed her flashlight up the stairs. The beam instantly dispelled the darkness, illuminating a small landing.

Pan Yue had apparently also recognized Li Yibai's voice, as she let out a sigh of relief.

Moments later, Li Yibai's figure appeared from around the bend of the stairs above. He looked down at the two of them with a strange expression. "What are you two doing here too?"

Keke looked up at Li Yibai on the landing above, slightly wary.

She didn't know if this person was human or ghost. Even though the first night's victim had already appeared and the ghost couldn't kill again, it was still best to be cautious.

Pan Yue quickly ascended a few steps. "You were also inexplicably sent to this place, right...?"

Keke, flashlight in hand, followed Pan Yue.

"Yes, that's right." Li Yibai nodded quickly. But just as he finished nodding, a peculiar expression crossed his face, as if he wanted to say something more.

But Pan Yue had already cut him off. "This place is dangerous! People die here!"

"What?" Li Yibai's face retained its peculiar expression, his eyes darting about. His gaze towards Pan Yue also seemed somewhat strange.

Keke nodded as well. "Pan Yue isn't lying. Just now, the two of us..."

But before she could finish, Li Yibai interrupted her in a strange tone, "Aren't there three of you?"

As he spoke, he looked behind the two of them, but it was still silent back there; no one made a sound.

Keke and Pan Yue froze simultaneously.

Three... of us?

In an instant, an icy chill surged up from the soles of their feet, rapidly spreading throughout their bodies.

Keke, at the very back, stiffened abruptly.

"Run!"

Pan Yue, at the front, suddenly choked out the word, grabbing Keke and the still-confused Li Yibai, and desperately ran upwards.

As Keke rounded a bend in the stairs, she caught a glimpse of what was below out of the corner of her eye.

In the darkness, half a deathly pale face emerged from around the corner. Its crimson eyes darted about before finally fixing on them.

It was Li Wentao!

Keke's scalp tingled. She immediately sped up, running upstairs for dear life.

The three of them ran in the darkness for an unknown amount of time, only forced to stop when they reached the end of the stairs.

Pan Yue had no strength left; she finally stopped when they reached the top floor.

On the top floor landing, there was, unusually, a window.

Pan Yue leaned against the windowsill, bent over and coughing incessantly, then gasping for air, unable to speak.

Li Yibai, who had been dragged along, flopped onto the ground, too exhausted to even ask what had happened.

Only Keke, with her enhanced physique, was still holding up. She just took a few deep gasps for air but wasn't exhausted.

"You... you two... what on earth is going on?" Li Yibai, being male, had better stamina than Pan Yue. He could now speak intermittently. "And... what's with Li Wentao?"

Keke also pretended to be out of breath. "That game... the 'Close Your Eyes' game... it's become a real-world game! The three people playing the ghosts are trying to kill us!"

"Are you kidding me?!" Li Yibai was clearly stunned by her words, even forgetting to pant.

"I'm not kidding," Keke took a deep breath. "Before we met you, we saw Li Wentao. He was a few floors below, completely immobile, and about to die! He'd been impaled by two iron rods! There's no way he could have followed us upstairs!"

"How is that possible?!" Li Yibai's eyes widened. "Then what did we see just now? Don't lie to me."

Just as Keke was about to speak again, Pan Yue, who was bent over the windowsill, suddenly cried out, "Gu Mian! I see Gu Mian! There's another building across from us, and he's on the top floor of that building! He sees us too!"

Gu Mian?

Keke immediately turned to look out the window.

Sure enough, just over a hundred meters away, there was another building. The distance was close enough that they could see the opposite building clearly.

Gu Mian was also on the top floor of the opposite building, where there was also a window. He was currently behind that window, waving at them.

Could it be that the people who disappeared when they went downstairs were moved to another building?

"Gu Mian?" Panting heavily, Li Yibai climbed up from the floor and walked towards the window. "How did he end up in this godforsaken place too?"

But as he neared the window, he noticed the expressions of the two girls beside him suddenly stiffen, as if they had seen something terrifying.

Puzzled, Li Yibai looked across.

Gu Mian was standing behind the window of the opposite building.

And in the darkness behind him, a horrifying face was faintly visible, appearing and disappearing.

It was Li Wentao!

Chapter 357 Missing Person Chu Changge\_1

Gu Mian felt like he was the player in the toughest spot in the world.

He had been inexplicably transported to a building with absolutely nothing in it and was now surrounded by an electric fence, preventing him from going anywhere. Tonight, dark clouds covered the sky, so he couldn't even look up to admire the moon or stars.

With no other options, he had to return to the only building he could enter, looking for any clues about this game. Unexpectedly, he found nothing from the ground floor to the rooftop. Gu Mian could only lean against a window on the rooftop, feeling the cold breeze and contemplating life.

The atmosphere was peaceful and quiet, nothing like a Mysterious Dungeon.

And just as he was contemplating life and about to observe the building opposite, he noticed three tense-looking people in a window directly across from him. They seemed to be hiding from something, their faces filled with terror. Gu Mian also saw a familiar face—Keke.

He remembered Keke had been with Chu Changge when he went downstairs, but it seemed they had separated long ago. Gu Mian had happened to see Chu Changge pass by a window alone.

So now, the formation seemed to be himself and Chu Changge acting independently, while Keke was with two others he didn't recognize, a man and a woman. The previously missing Fatty and 007 were still nowhere to be found, their whereabouts unknown. They were likely also on their own. If one were the ghost aiming to kill, acting alone would certainly be more convenient. Looked at this way, the most suspicious individuals were all of them, the instance players.

He understood Fatty's temperament; if Fatty were the ghost, he probably couldn't hide his identity, and his behavior would be different and quite strange. So, Fatty could basically be confirmed as a civilian. But as for Chu Changge and 007... it was hard to say. Especially Chu Changge, who always moved mysteriously in any instance, always adhering to the philosophy of "I'd rather deceive everyone than let anyone deceive me." So even if Chu Changge tricked people intentionally, Gu Mian couldn't be sure of his identity. As for 007, she was a girl who embodied poverty, violence, courage, fearlessness, and bloodthirstiness. From the hand-tearing skin incident, it was clear she wasn't easy to deal with. If she were the ghost, she would definitely hide with all her might, and presumably, killing wouldn't cause her any psychological burden.

As for the other instance players... Gu Mian had never met Yue Nu, so he couldn't judge. Keke looked like a high school girl, young, probably around that age. Her appearance and her apparent personality were very similar: cute, well-behaved, and a bit timid. In some horror novels, such characters were usually either burdens or cannon fodder. These points aside, Gu Mian had only seen Keke twice and couldn't make an accurate judgment.

However, most of the teammates matched in this instance were acquaintances. Gu Mian guessed that these teammates were matched according to the difficulty of the instance. If this was the case, the players matched with him wouldn't be easy to deal with; presumably, Keke also had some tricks up her sleeve.

As Gu Mian was analyzing things carefully, he suddenly realized that someone was looking at him from the opposite building. It was a woman he didn't recognize, who looked like a native resident of the instance and seemed to recognize him.

Of course, he couldn't act like he didn't recognize her. As he thought this, Gu Mian symbolically raised his hand and waved at the woman across.

Just then, a man Gu Mian didn't recognize also approached the window. But just as that man drew near, Gu Mian sensed a subtle change in all three of their expressions.

The three of them suddenly froze. Then, the two women at the window widened their eyes as if they had seen something terrifying, and they opened their mouths, seemingly wanting to shout something.

Because the two buildings were only about a hundred meters apart, Gu Mian heard their shouts without much effort.

"Run!"

"Watch your back!"

Behind me?

Hearing the two women's shouts, Gu Mian slowly turned his head. A pallid face had, at some unknown point, appeared in the darkness behind him.

Suddenly turning to see an unfamiliar white face was quite startling; Gu Mian almost blurted out, "Who are you?"

The owner of the face, likely not expecting Gu Mian to turn around so suddenly, froze for a moment before breaking into an excited, cheerful smile.

"Gu Mian, you're here too! I thought I was the only one, I was so scared!"

Gu Mian watched as a person emerged from the darkness—the owner of this pallid face, its whiteness likely due to fear.

Gu Mian had no idea who this person was, so he decided not to use a name. "Did you also inexplicably end up here?" he asked.

"Yes," the person before him nodded excitedly. "I thought I was having a nightmare, so I didn't dare move... But the dream never seemed to end. Then I saw what looked like a light over here, so I groped my way toward it. I never expected to run into you! I was scared to death..."

While the person was speaking, Gu Mian tilted his head slightly to glance at the expressions of the people in the opposite building. The two women and one man in the window opposite looked terrified, as if they had seen a ghost.

Gu Mian understood. Thinking this, he turned sideways, pointed across, and said, "Same here. Look, there's another building over there, and Xu Keke and the others are there too."

The person before him looked across in surprise. "You're right! Isn't that Pan Yue, Li Yibai, and Xu Keke over there? Are they in the same situation as us?"

"Most likely. We've all played that game. You know which game I'm talking about, right?" Gu Mian looked at him.

The person opposite him looked astonished but didn't refute, seeming somewhat unable to comprehend the situation.

Gu Mian then tried to recall the man's name. From the list of names, there were three men he didn't know among the twelve participants: Li Yibai, Li Wentao, and Zhang Pingfan. Now that Li Yibai was in the building opposite, the person in front of him had to be one of the other two. Considering the terrified expressions from across the way, it was more likely that this person was Zhang Pingfan, who had been missing for over a day.

But Gu Mian didn't say the name aloud. He also looked out the window. "Lin Qi is here too, but we got separated. By the way, who else from your class played the 'Close Your Eyes' game?"

Li Wentao scratched his head in confusion. "Just Lin Qi, Yue Nu, and Pan Yue..."

Gu Mian frowned.

Lin Qi, Yue Nu, and Pan Yue were in Year 11, Class 13. And the boy from Year 11, Class 13 was Li Wentao. So, this person in front of me is Li Wentao? Then why do those three across the way look like they've seen a ghost?

At this point, Li Wentao also noticed something was off with the three people opposite. "What's wrong with them?"

Gu Mian shook his head. "I don't know."

Meanwhile, Pan Yue was clenching her fists tightly.

Li Wentao no longer looked as terrifying as before! After seeing Gu Mian in the building opposite, he seemed to have become a normal person! There was nothing wrong with him at all!

Li Yibai's eyes widened. "He... wasn't he just behind you guys a moment ago? How did he get over there in the blink of an eye!"

"That's why I said people will die—there's a ghost here!" Pan Yue gritted her teeth, watching the opposite building tensely. "Li Wentao... it's highly likely it's him!"

Li Yibai also stared across, somewhat frightened. "Should we warn Gu Mian then?"

Keke pressed his arm, shaking her head slightly. "No. Li Wentao is acting strangely. Shouting out to Gu Mian now wouldn't do him any good."

"What should we do then?" Li Yibai also clenched his fists nervously.

Just then, the three of them suddenly heard another voice from behind: "What are you all doing?"

All three jumped in fright and spun around. Chu Changge had appeared behind them at some unknown moment.

Chapter 358 I Want It All \_1

Li Yibai was taken aback for a moment. "Meiren Chu, you're here too!"

Pan Yue also turned around, looking at Chu Changge in surprise. "Weren't you suddenly missing? How come you're here again?"

Keke also turned her gaze to Chu Changge, who had suddenly appeared behind her. Chu Changge seemed not to like the title 'Meiren Chu', but he only furrowed his brows slightly and said nothing.

"Yes, I disappeared all of a sudden, but I was transported to the roof. I stopped here for a while, trying to see if I could find anything..." As he spoke, he waved his flashlight, the beam sweeping over the faces of the three people in front of him. "What's going on with you guys? What's with those looks?"

Chu Changge didn't recognize Li Yibai and didn't pay him much attention.

Upon hearing Chu Changge's words, Pan Yue immediately tensed up again. "It's a long story—Keke and I ran into Li Wentao on the lower floors. He was almost dead! Two pipes had pierced him, and he was bleeding profusely. He glared at us as if he wanted to kill us! We were so scared we ran away immediately. Halfway there, we met Yibai, but to our surprise, Li Wentao was still following us!"

Pan Yue didn't even pause for breath. "The three of us ran for our lives all the way to the roof. Then we saw a large building across from us, with Gu Mian there. But Li Wentao appeared there as well! He wasn't hurt at all! We clearly saw him on the brink of death before, but now he was standing there perfectly fine. He must be fooling Gu Mian! He's the ghost in this game!"

Li Yibai, standing to the side, had a faraway look on his face, apparently lost in thought.

By this time, Chu Changge had already turned his gaze to the window. Opposite, two figures stood in a window: Gu Mian and Li Wentao.

Li Wentao still looked puzzled, seemingly unaware of why the people on this side were so frightened. Gu Mian, in contrast, seemed very relaxed, as if he were just taking a stroll after dinner. The atmosphere over there was completely different from here.

"What should we do?" Keke asked, looking at the building across from them and then back at Chu Changge.

"Don't worry. Do you remember the game rule about time? From 8:00 PM to 3:00 AM is nighttime, when the ghost can kill. Once it's 3:00 AM, we can start voting to eliminate the ghost," Chu Changge said, raising his wrist. The luminous numbers on his watch dial were clearly visible in the dark. "It's now 2:40 AM."

Li Yibai regained his senses. "But how... how do we vote for Li Wentao? And what happens if he gets the most votes? Will he really die?"

The twelve of them had originally planned to play the entire game in the classroom, voting together openly and then tallying everyone's votes. But now, they weren't all together and didn't know how to vote. Would they say the name of their chosen person aloud, or write it on a piece of paper? They didn't know any of this. As for whether the person with the most votes would actually die, no one was sure.

"Don't rush," Chu Changge said, lowering his hand. "We might find out when the time comes."

Pan Yue's brows were tightly knitted, her anxiety palpable.

At this point, Chu Changge walked towards the window. "We should join up with Gu Mian and the others first."

"Join up?" Pan Yue repeated. "But Li Wentao is there! He, he is..."

Chu Changge turned around. "We can't judge solely based on appearances. You said that the two of you saw a dying Li Wentao, but only you two saw him. The claim that Li Wentao might be the ghost also came from you. The rest of us haven't seen it, so we can't rush to conclusions."

As he spoke, Chu Changge turned his gaze to Li Yibai. "Did you see it?"

Li Yibai shook his head, confused. "No, but I saw Li Wentao in this building just a moment ago, and then he was suddenly in the building opposite!"

"We were also mysteriously transported here," Chu Changge said. "So abruptly moving a certain distance in this place isn't really anything significant."

Pan Yue's face contorted, and her voice rose. "So you don't believe what we said? We really saw it!"

Gu Mian was still looking out the window at the building opposite. He noticed that after Chu Changge appeared, some friction seemed to arise among the people over there, as if they were about to start arguing.

Li Wentao, who was nearby, looked puzzled. "What on earth are they doing over there?"

Gu Mian shook his head. "I don't know either."

As he spoke, he turned to the puzzled Li Wentao. "Have you been in this building the whole time?"

In the darkness, Li Wentao nodded. "Yes. When I suddenly arrived here, I initially thought I was dreaming. But after spending some time here, it didn't feel like a dream anymore. I wandered around the building... I only dared to go to areas that were a bit brighter. But even in those brighter places, I still felt like someone was watching me from the corners... Eventually, I found a place to hide."

Gu Mian nodded thoughtfully. "I see."

"What about you?" Li Wentao asked Gu Mian nervously. "Are you like me?"

"Yes, I also came to this place suddenly," Gu Mian replied.

Li Wentao nodded, still looking confused, then seemed to recall something. "Right, you mentioned earlier that we're here because of that game..."

He hesitated. "You meant the game 'Close Your Eyes,' right? Why are we here, and how does it relate to that game?"

It seems he still isn't very clear about the current situation, Gu Mian thought. Is he genuinely clueless, or just pretending?

Thus, Gu Mian began to explain things to him.

Meanwhile, Pan Yue was glaring at Chu Changge. "If you don't believe us, you can go down and check for yourself. Even if Li Wentao is gone, the bloodstains must still be there!"

Chu Changge replied in a low voice, "It's not that I don't believe you. It's just that sometimes what we see with our own eyes isn't necessarily the truth. The first round of voting is crucial, so I must verify."

"Fine," Pan Yue said. "Then let's go down together and check for the bloodstains. I roughly remember which floor it was."

At this moment, Keke, who was beside them, softly asked, "But didn't you say that going downstairs would cause us to disappear?"

Chu Changge adjusted his glasses. "Indeed, people can disappear suddenly. However, based on the experiments Gu Mian and I conducted, disappearing merely means being transferred to another place. I think this is very likely the 'ghost's' doing. It doesn't want us to leave this building, which is why it made people disappear when they tried to go downstairs..."

"What do you mean by disappearing when going downstairs?" Li Yibai asked, looking puzzled, but no one explained it to him.

Confused, Keke voiced her doubt. "But Gu Mian was directly transported to the building opposite."

Chu Changge continued, "The ghost doesn't know other people's identities. Since it's the first night and everyone's identity clues are unclear, the ghost will try its best to find the civilian with the most obvious identity. That's why it would gather some people together to observe them. Before that, it would likely send those whose identities are hard to determine to other places to avoid mistakes. Gu Mian is obviously in that category."

"Also, out of the twelve people in this game, I've only seen eight here," Chu Changge went on. "This indicates that the ghost's capabilities are limited; it can't manage everyone at once, so it has temporarily disregarded the other few on this first night. And the first two who disappeared, Wang Pan and Lin Qi..."

"What?" A voice suddenly broke in, interrupting Chu Changge. It was Li Yibai. "Lin Qi was also here? And she disappeared?"

Keke glanced at Li Yibai. Indeed, this Li Yibai and Lin Qi (who was also known as 007) were very close; they were childhood sweethearts, neighbors who had grown up together.

"Don't worry," Keke comforted Li Yibai. "She should be fine..."

As Keke was comforting Li Yibai, Chu Changge glanced at them and continued, "It's possible they were also hard to identify and were thus removed. But there's also the chance their identities were confirmed and they were killed... After all, no one has seen them since they disappeared."

"However, one of 007 and Fatty must still be alive, because the 'ghost' can only kill one person per night," Chu Changge added.

Upon hearing this, Li Yibai became agitated, repeatedly questioning Keke about 007's disappearance.

At this moment, Pan Yue, who had been quiet, suddenly spoke. "Is it possible that one of those two is the ghost? Or perhaps... both of them are."

Chapter 359 Happy as can be 007\_1

"I won't dismiss that possibility," Chu Changge began slowly. "As I mentioned, our disappearing when we try to go downstairs might be one of the ghost's methods. It doesn't want us to leave this building; if we're too dispersed, it would be harder for it to observe our identities."

"But it's now nearly three in the morning. I reckon the ghost has already made its move, so there's no need for it to keep stopping us from leaving. I believe nothing unexpected will happen if we go downstairs now." Chu Changge glanced at his wristwatch.

It showed 2:45 a.m. Fifteen minutes remained before the first round of voting would officially begin.

"If the ghost has already struck... of the eight of us who came here, at least five are still alive, not counting Li Wentao." As Pan Yue spoke, she looked towards the opposite building, trying to see Gu Mian in the window there.

But when she turned her head, she was stunned to find the window empty.

Only pitch-black darkness remained...

"What happened?!" A shocked expression crossed Pan Yue's face.

Li Yibai, who was pressing Keke for news about Lin Qi, also turned to look out the window. His eyes met only the darkness beyond it.

Just then, the four of them suddenly heard a strange sound from behind the stairwell door.

Everyone turned to look. A beam of flashlight cut through the darkness, shining out from the door.

Gu Mian's face was framed by the light. He appeared before the four of them, startling them.

He was holding a flashlight, the large guitar case still on his back.

Keke hadn't expected Gu Mian, who was in the opposite building just moments ago, to suddenly appear behind them. She calmed herself and asked, "How did you... get over here?"

Pan Yue stared nervously behind Gu Mian. "Did Li Wentao come over too?"

Gu Mian shook his head slightly. "No, it seems to be just me. My vision suddenly blurred, and when it cleared, I was already here..."

As he was speaking, Keke and the others saw another flashlight beam shine out from the darkness.

Everyone immediately looked over nervously.

Gu Mian also turned, meeting 007's somewhat dazed expression.

The dazed 007 instantly saw Gu Mian and the others in front of her, and her expression couldn't help but become a little excited. "I've finally found you all again!"

Beside them, Li Yibai was even more agitated. He looked nervous and, before anyone else could speak, quickly ran to 007's side. "Lin Qi, are you alright?"

007 hadn't met Li Yibai and didn't know who this person was. Her expression slowly changed from excited to hesitant, as if considering how she should answer.

Keke, however, was very perceptive and said, "Li Yibai, don't be so agitated."

Only then did 007 realize that the person before her was the one she had a good relationship with. She thought for a moment and said, "I... I'm fine, just a bit frightened."

At this time, Gu Mian ignored 007 and Li Yibai, frowning. It was nearly time for the voting, and he and 007 had been directly moved here. Could this be... a pre-vote assembly?

Would all twelve of them be gathered by some mysterious force before the vote?

In that case, Fatty should appear too.

Chu Changge evidently had the same thought.

But Gu Mian gave up after waiting another ten-odd seconds without anyone new appearing.

Just then, Pan Yue suddenly called out, "Gu Mian!"

"What is it?" Gu Mian turned to look at her.

Pan Yue seemed extremely nervous. "When you were with Li Wentao earlier, did you notice anything unusual?"

Gu Mian shrugged. "No. But speaking of which, why do you all seem so afraid of Li Wentao?"

"Because they said they saw Li Wentao near death earlier, pierced by two pipes with blood everywhere. Then, like a lingering spirit, he relentlessly pursued them on the stairs. Finally, he appeared next to you without a scratch, striking up a conversation," Chu Changge summarized.

Gu Mian understood. It was because the Li Wentao they had seen was on the brink of death that they were so terrified when they saw the lively person beside him.

"Are you sure the dying person you saw was Li Wentao?" Gu Mian looked at Pan Yue.

Pan Yue raised her voice. "Keke and I both saw him!"

Keke nodded quickly.

Gu Mian asked, "Do you remember which floor it was?"

Pan Yue nodded. "I don't remember the exact floor number, but I remember what the surroundings looked like. I'll recognize it when we get to that floor."

"Alright, let's go downstairs then," Gu Mian said, taking a step down. "Didn't you just say it's safe to go downstairs now?"

Keke's eyes widened slightly. "You heard all that?"

"I've been standing behind you for quite a while."

007 seemed a little lost. "Was I suddenly teleported because I went downstairs?"

Keke nodded from the side.

Perhaps still afraid, Pan Yue and the others didn't immediately go downstairs. Only after seeing Gu Mian descend quite a way with his flashlight, unharmed, did they start to follow.

Chu Changge remained at the rear.

"Pan Yue, you said earlier you saw Li Wentao about to die, with blood all over the floor, right?" Gu Mian asked as they descended.

Pan Yue nodded quickly.

Gu Mian frowned, puzzled. "But when I saw him, he was completely unscathed, no different from a normal person... Though, I don't know why this gathering didn't teleport him here." And Fatty isn't here either.

Pan Yue interjected, "It must be because he's the ghost! That's why he was unharmed and isn't with us."

Gu Mian frowned. "Wang Pan isn't here either. Of those teleported, only those two are missing now."

The one who died tonight is highly likely to be one of them. Gu Mian felt a headache coming on.

At this moment, Keke spoke up in a low voice, "But if Li Wentao is the ghost, shouldn't he be carefully hiding himself to avoid exposure? Why would he chase us so blatantly...?"

Pan Yue couldn't refute this but was unwilling to abandon her view. "But he was nearly dead, and then he appeared completely fine, like nothing happened. Can a normal person do that?"

After she spoke, everyone fell silent for a full ten seconds.

Not long after, Keke's voice suddenly echoed in the dark stairwell, "Speaking of which, if someone died tonight, then those who were with others the whole time wouldn't have had the chance to kill, right?"

Exactly. Identities could be deduced based on this.

However, very few people met this criterion.

Pan Yue quickly added, "Then let's each share what we did tonight!"

No one objected.

007 was the first to describe her situation. She was the first to disappear after Fatty, so she had a large window of unaccounted-for time.

Gu Mian heard 007's voice from behind her. "I was going downstairs when I suddenly found myself in another place, on some floor... I couldn't find any windows, so I don't know which floor it was."

Chu Changge also spoke up. "In all that time, you didn't run into anyone at all?"

Chapter 360 Meng Tricks his Way by - Meiren Chu\_1

In the darkness, Li Yibai beside 007 turned to look at Chu Changge.

007, for her part, seemed calm. As she looked at the staircase steps beneath her, she began to speak, "I don't know what floor I was on. I found two doors there, one at each end, connected to two staircases, but they were all locked. I was completely trapped. I wanted to call for help, but I was afraid that making too much noise would attract the ghost. So, I pressed myself against one of the doors, listening for any movement outside, hoping to shout for help if someone passed by."

However, no one had heard 007's cries for help. From the moment she disappeared to when she reappeared, she had been alone.

Gu Mian stroked his chin.

If what 007 said was true, then she must have been trapped on some floor of this building. He had already thoroughly inspected the building across the street and found no locked floors.

In the darkness, Chu Changge continued questioning 007, "So, you didn't see anyone pass by the door?"

Upon hearing this, Li Yibai seemed slightly displeased. Since he and Lin Qi were on good terms, he appeared to dislike others interrogating 007.

007 paused, frowning, causing the others descending the stairs to stop and look at her.

"No," she said, looking a bit hesitant. "Someone did pass by the door. After a long wait, I finally heard a sound. At first, I heard the hurried footsteps of two people running up the stairs. They seemed to be fleeing, so I didn't make a sound, fearing a ghost might be chasing them..."

Pan Yue widened her eyes. "That must have been Keke and me."

At that time, the two of them had seen Li Wentao on the verge of death and were fleeing frantically.

Keke, too, was watching 007 intently. "What happened next? Did you hear anything else?"

At the front, Gu Mian resumed his descent, and the others who had paused earlier followed suit.

"It was strange," 007 said as she continued walking. "After you two ran upstairs, a while later, sure enough, I heard another sound... It was a very faint sound of someone climbing the stairs in your direction. If it hadn't been so quiet, I almost wouldn't have heard it."

There was something else she didn't mention: because she had invested almost all of her Attribute Points into her spiritual power, her sight and hearing had improved significantly. She wasn't sure if someone with lower spiritual power would have been able to hear that incredibly faint climbing sound.

"Right," Pan Yue said, her expression tense. "That must have been Li Wentao following us!"

At this, 007's expression turned peculiar.

"What's wrong?" Li Yibai quickly asked. "Are you okay?"

007 was a little uncomfortable with Li Yibai's solicitous concern, but she couldn't outwardly reject it.

"Something strange happened," she said. "After those extremely faint footsteps went upstairs, I heard a sound from upstairs. Someone yelled, 'Run!'..."

"Yes," Pan Yue nodded. "I was the one who shouted."

Although they had told 007 about Li Wentao, they hadn't gone into great detail, so 007 shouldn't have known that someone had shouted 'Run!'

"But a while after that person shouted, I heard those very faint footsteps again. They were going downstairs!" 007's voice rose slightly.

Keke also widened her eyes. "What?"

Li Wentao had chased them and then gone back downstairs? That was impossible! They had seen Li Wentao reappear in the building opposite, with Gu Mian. How could he have had time to go downstairs?

Chu Changge suddenly looked at 007. "Are you sure you heard footsteps going downstairs again after that?"

007 looked up at Chu Changge and stated with certainty, "I'm sure."

Chu Changge fell silent for a few seconds before saying, "Continue."

007 shook her head. "No, after those footsteps went downstairs, I didn't hear any other sounds. I just kept waiting behind the door until I suddenly met up with you all."

This meant that during this period, no one could prove 007 hadn't committed murder; she had ample time. Although tonight's victim hadn't appeared yet, their body might have already turned up in some corner.

Pan Yue and Keke exchanged glances, apparently unsure whether to believe her. Li Yibai, however, seemed completely unconcerned about this; his only worry was whether 007 had been frightened.

"Alright," Gu Mian, who was leading the way, spoke up. "As we go downstairs, we'll check if any floors are locked. This can, to some extent, verify what Lin Qi said."

At this point, Chu Changge glanced at his wristwatch, "2:49. Eleven minutes left. Hurry."

As they descended, Gu Mian began, "I'll go next. I was the one who disappeared after Lin Qi. Since time is short, I'll be brief. I didn't encounter anything particularly strange, so my experience can be summed up in a few sentences."

"After I disappeared, I was actually transported to the opposite building. I continued downstairs there and made it to the ground floor. I discovered there are two identical gray buildings here. Because an electric fence blocked the way, I couldn't cross over, so I had to go back up in the opposite building to observe."

"Oh, and I briefly checked the floors over there but found nothing special. I just got a sense of the layout. The layout here should be the same as over there: ten floors in total, east-west oriented buildings, each with a staircase at both the east and west ends. After that, I saw Pan Yue and you all over here."

Gu Mian omitted the fact that he had seen Chu Changge standing by a window. Chu Changge showed no reaction, and Gu Mian wasn't sure if Chu Changge had seen him at the time.

Although no one could prove Gu Mian hadn't committed murder, Pan Yue and the others weren't particularly interested in him. Their attention was now solely on the terrifying Li Wentao.

No one raised any objections. Chu Changge promptly continued, "I disappeared after Gu Mian. I was transported to the top floor. Since going downstairs might have made me disappear again, I just stayed up there..."

Gu Mian slightly raised his eyebrows.

When he had seen Chu Changge, Chu Changge had already separated from Keke. At that time, Chu Changge was on the fifth or sixth floor, not staying put on the top floor as he claimed.

However, Gu Mian remained silent, continuing to listen as Chu Changge said, "When Keke and the others came up, I was on the other side of the rooftop looking for clues. I only came over to find you after hearing sounds."

This period was also an alibi-less blank, completely uncorroborated. Gu Mian could even have called him out on his lie.

Keke said softly, "Oh, no wonder it took you so long to appear, even though we'd been on the rooftop for a while."

Hearing this, Pan Yue looked at Chu Changge with a somewhat puzzled expression but said nothing.

Then it was Keke's turn. "I don't need to say much. I was with everyone from the start, then met up with Pan Yue. I had no opportunity to be alone at all."

Pan Yue nodded and continued, "After I was transported here, I couldn't see my surroundings clearly, so I didn't dare move around much. I pretty much stayed put and waited for a while until I heard Keke and the others. I followed the sound of their voices, and I've been with Keke ever since."

Before meeting Keke and Chu Changge, Pan Yue also had a period where she was alone.

The last to speak was Li Yibai. "After I inexplicably ended up here, it was too dark, so I moved very slowly. It took me a long time to find the stairs... Just as I was debating whether to go down, I saw Pan Yue and Keke running up as if fleeing for their lives, and I joined up with them after that."

Li Yibai, too, had a period when he was alone.

The critical point was that during tonight's events, everyone except Keke had spent time alone.

The people present, ranked from the most to the least unaccounted-for time, were:

007, Gu Mian, Chu Changge, Li Yibai, and Pan Yue; Keke had no opportunity to be alone.

But by this point, almost everyone's suspicions had shifted to Li Wentao—a man who had seemed on the verge of death yet was now able to move around so actively.

Just as the six of them were each harboring their own suspicions, Gu Mian suddenly stopped walking.

It seemed they had reached the floor where 007 had been trapped.