

Collapse 43

Chapter 43: Happy New Year everyone_1

By the time the landlady finished speaking, Qing Huan, standing beside her, was already quite pale. Gu Mian saw his hair standing on end, his face ashen.

When they left the landlady's house, his steps were still unsteady, and he nearly fell, but Gu Mian was quick to catch and support him.

"If you're this easily scared, why enter an instance at all?" Gu Mian looked down at him.

The first time entering an instance was compulsory, but now, players should be entering voluntarily. It wasn't like someone was holding a gun to their head, forcing them in.

Qing Huan, his face white, replied, "To live, to not starve to death... to survive..."

He stammered, "D-don't you know? Outside the instances, near our homes, it's already chaotic. There are even people daring enough to commit home invasion robberies..."

"You might think I'm exaggerating, but that's how it is. Some people roam the streets in gangs, robbing anyone they see.

"The signals are down, so we can't contact the police. All regions are cut off from each other, so it's impossible to issue commands. Even if the state wants to manage the situation, it's difficult.

"And although my grades weren't great, I did pay attention in history class. Doctor, don't you think this game is like human evolutionary history?

"It's always been survival of the fittest. Historically, how many unambitious nations were invaded by stronger ones? How many people from less advanced civilizations were sold as slaves?

"Isn't the current situation so similar to those times? People all over the world are starting to evolve. If we don't become stronger, we'll be the weak ones, destined to become sacrifices.

"This evolution game has only just begun, and many might not have sensed it yet. But I believe that as the gap between the strong and the weak gradually widens, that's when history will repeat itself."

Although this wasn't an apocalypse with zombies roaming everywhere like in horror movies, it was another kind of end of the world.

It compelled each person to become stronger; otherwise, they would face a tragic end.

Qing Huan looked at Gu Mian. "Doctor, since this evolution game began, haven't you encountered people with ill intentions towards you?"

Ill intentions? That sounds like they were after his body.

Gu Mian touched his chin. "Of course, I have. A group of people wanted to rob me of my things."

"And then?" Qing Huan asked, curiosity apparent.

"And then?" Gu Mian lowered his hand. "Then their heads were almost sawed off by me."

Qing Huan: "..."

By the time they arrived at the restaurant where they were supposed to meet, it was already past four. But the others didn't complain. They were waiting there, their expressions distant, lost in who knows what thoughts. It wasn't until Gu Mian took the chainsaw off his back and put it down that they seemed to react and come to their senses.

"What's going on with you guys?" Gu Mian asked Yuwen Hao.

Yuwen Hao swallowed before speaking. "I was thinking about today's investigation... We first went to Huang Yu's place... Huang Yu had received a terrifying phone call, so naturally, we started by investigating the call... We asked the landlady if anyone had died in that house and if the deceased had

any connection to the phone. But the landlady said no one had died there, and no one had ever encountered any supernatural incidents. At first, we didn't believe her, so we went to ask Huang Yu's neighbors and people living nearby. But their accounts were all the same; they'd never heard of any supernatural incidents. It was very strange. Just when we were at a loss, Huang Yu's landlady suddenly found us again, saying she'd remembered something...

"She said the phone number for the house Huang Yu rented had been changed not long ago because the original number was a bit unlucky. The landlady believed in that sort of thing, so she specifically had the number changed. The landlady said what we encountered might be related to this newly changed phone number. We then copied down the phone number and went to the phone company's service hall to check it. And a check indeed revealed that this phone number had a problem! The previous owner of this phone number was named Zhou Guanglei. Because he died, the phone number was canceled. Coincidentally, he also lived in this town."

Yuwen Hao paused here and took a sip of water. The three of them had a heavy workload, investigating the house and then the owner of the phone number.

"We followed the trail and got the phone number and work address of Zhou Guanglei's parents. But he was from out of town; his parents didn't live here at all. Calling them was useless; they didn't know anything. With no other choice, we had to go to his workplace. Fortunately, that place hadn't closed down yet."

Just as Yuwen Hao said this, Gu Mian suddenly asked, "What was Zhou Guanglei's workplace?"

Yuwen Hao paused slightly. "A plastics factory, called Mingliang Plastic Factory."

Sure enough...

This was also the workplace of Zhao Wen, who had been killed by the Knocking Ghost.

Hearing this, Qing Huan opened his mouth, seeming to want to say something, but Gu Mian stopped him. "Let Yuwen Hao finish first."

Yuwen Hao glanced at the two of them strangely but didn't press further and continued, "When we investigated at that plastics factory, we discovered that more than one person had died there! Someone was burned to death several years ago. Later, two more died, one of whom was this Zhou Guanglei. The man who had partnered with Zhou Guanglei back then was still working there, so we asked him about things before Zhou Guanglei's death. That person actually knew quite a lot. He told us that before Zhou Guanglei died, he was acting very strangely. He kept saying someone was knocking on his door, but no one else could hear any knocking..."

As Yuwen Hao said this, he glanced at Gu Mian.

Originally, he had thought the knocking Gu Mian mentioned had nothing to do with any ghost, but now it seemed that wasn't the case.

Could it be that this Doctor really dragged a chair over, stuck his head out, and cursed furiously at the ghost?

He shook his head, pushing the thought away, and brought his focus back. "Zhou Guanglei was alright at first, just a bit paranoid. But he got progressively worse. He'd mutter things like 'It's close,' 'It's closer now,' all day long. Eventually, he just hid at home, stopped going to work, and wouldn't even show his face. This situation lasted for about a week, and then Zhou Guanglei's colleagues started receiving phone calls from him... Not normal calls... Zhou Guanglei seemed to have lost his mind back then, constantly calling people in the middle of the night... And the content was also...

"...also somewhat terrifying.

"The people who received his calls late at night back then said, when Zhou Guanglei called, he would say things to them like—

"'You've been to my house, haven't you?'

"'Stop knocking on my door!'

"'Are you sick?'

"Later, the content of the calls changed... It became something like this...

"Where do you live?"

"Are you home alone?"

"I'm outside your door."