

Collapse 511

Chapter 511 Announcement_1

"You may not leave the village primary school before we finish shooting today."

By the early morning of the second day, the audience had already planned the personal tasks for Gu Mian and the other three. At this point, they were in a leaky room, looking at the director in front of them.

Accompany me next year was the first to receive her task. It was just an ordinary restriction task, nothing particularly dangerous. Gu Mian believed the only danger from this task came from the dilapidated, crumbling wall nearby.

This variety show was a live broadcast. To pique the audience's interest, the director decided the order of task assignments based on popularity.

Accompany me next year held the task card, looking somewhat dumbfounded. She had prepared for a ghost to suddenly appear during the night, but nothing of the sort had happened. Last night had been completely quiet, and even now, there were no signs of any ghosts.

Is this really just a variety show? As this thought crossed her mind, Accompany me next year looked up at the production crew before her. The clouds from the previous night had scattered, and the sun was slowly rising in the east, its light illuminating the shabby little hut.

She looked at the group of people in front of her. She had known for a while that this was a special instance, but the people in this instance were too peculiar. Her suspicions had begun during yesterday's interview with the host. The host had been sarcastic and condescending, treating her not like a guest, but like a lowly underling he could trample at will.

With these questions in mind, Accompany me next year pondered deeply. Where does the danger in this instance come from? Why does it feel different from the instances I've experienced before? And those two male players next to me are as strange as they come. She also remembered Gu Mian's group "dropping something from upstairs" last night. To this day, she still didn't know what they had thrown down.

The next to receive a task was Chu Changge. Considering they were filming here, the task location wouldn't be too far. Chu Changge's task was "Janitor"—which meant cleaning up garbage for the entire day in the village.

However, for this dilapidated village, the term "Janitor" seemed far too modern. Gu Mian preferred to call Chu Changge a "garbage picker," though Chu Changge probably wouldn't appreciate the title.

Chu Changge's garbage-collecting task was slightly more challenging than Accompany me next year's task of not leaving the village primary school. If things went as expected, Accompany me next year could just find a corner and lie low, while Chu Changge would have to contend with all sorts of trash.

Meanwhile, the sole female guest, Accompany me next year, still hadn't figured out this instance. Where could the danger possibly come from? She seemed to have her doubts about the production team but couldn't pinpoint the exact issue. This was understandable; after all, there were very few ghost-free instances in the entire world.

According to the popularity rankings, the next person to receive a task should be Xie Bi'an, who was so bundled up that even his own parents might not recognize him. Gu Mian doubted if the cloaked figure was truly Xie Bi'an. After all, the man had the word "Anonymous" displayed prominently above his head, much like Gu Mian's own "Doctor" title.

The people of the Old World readily accepted Xie Bi'an's strange attire, but Gu Mian's desire to rip off his cloak grew stronger by the day.

Xie Bi'an, ranked second in popularity, received a task slightly more troublesome than Chu Changge's. Accompany me next year had a restriction task, and Chu Changge was collecting trash. Xie Bi'an, however, was made responsible for the group's sustenance. The production crew clearly had no intention of providing for their food, clothing, or shelter, so this burden fell directly onto Xie Bi'an.

It was only then that Gu Mian realized this instance also carried a certain degree of danger. If Xie Bi'an couldn't secure food, they might actually starve to death on the show. The instance details hadn't specified the show's filming duration, and the production team offered no clarification, making starvation a distinct possibility.

Xie Bi'an calmly accepted his task card. Now, all eyes turned to Gu Mian, the last to receive his.

No world lacked onlookers, especially a world like the Old World. The local villagers, seemingly with no proper jobs, were currently gathered not far away, a crowd of heads bobbing, their eyes glinting with an inscrutable light.

Meanwhile, Fatty, who had woken up early to assess the situation, was already in front of the TV, watching the live broadcast. Knowing that as long as he played pitiful and weak, no major problems would befall him, Fatty had slept soundly the previous night. After a quick check confirmed Gu Mian still had all his arms and legs, Fatty breathed a small sigh of relief.

Just as a close-up of Gu Mian filled the screen, Fatty heard soft footsteps behind him. Years of experience in instances made him instinctively turn. He saw Know my thoughts' somewhat pale face.

Staring at You Si's slightly pale face, Fatty asked, "Didn't get any sleep last night?"

Know my thoughts looked at the ruddy-faced, energetic Fatty in surprise. "You actually slept?"

Being able to sleep in an instance is the strangest thing of all, isn't it?

Fatty's throat tightened. He quickly said, "No... I didn't sleep either..."

You Si looked at Fatty's flushed complexion, clearly skeptical, but then his attention was drawn to the television screen. On screen, Gu Mian was taking his task card. In the distant background, a dense crowd of people craned their necks towards the camera, their eyes emitting an unreadable gleam.

Seeing those eyes, You Si shivered. He still hadn't figured out this instance. Last night had been relatively safe compared to other instances, but he couldn't shake a peculiar feeling.

"Speaking of which," You Si began after a few seconds of thought, "last night, did you..."

But before he could finish, another set of footsteps reached their ears.

You Si quickly shut his mouth and looked back, only to see "Father" approaching them with a smile.

Seeing the newcomer, Fatty covertly glanced at Gu Mian on the TV screen. This "Father" was originally supposed to be Gu Mian's, but thanks to the Metamorphosis program, he was now Fatty's father.

But this 'Father' doesn't seem to care at all about Gu Mian on the screen, Fatty mused.

At that moment, Gu Mian also saw his task.

"You may not enter the village before today's filming ends."

Chapter 512 Where Has Mum Gone_1

Gu Mian was somewhat surprised that his task wasn't something along the lines of "eating shit."

He had long felt that the world had displayed an exceptional level of malice towards him, so if his task really was "eating shit," he wouldn't have been the least bit shocked.

On the contrary, the seemingly easy task: "Do not enter the village until filming is done for today" left Gu Mian somewhat puzzled.

He silently touched his guitar bag and looked at the three people next to him.

Accompany me next year still seemed ignorant and clueless, appearing as if they had sensed something but understood nothing at all.

Xie Bi'an was wrapped tighter than a moldy pharaoh in an Egyptian pyramid. Gu Mian couldn't fathom the thoughts of those moldy pharaohs, nor could he discern Xie Bi'an's current mood.

The janitor, Chu Changge, stood at the very back. He maintained an expression of calm, unaffected even if the sky were falling, as if his face were paralyzed from botched plastic surgery. This was in stark contrast to the bystanders waiting to watch the drama unfold.

Fatty, who had been closely watching the screen, breathed a sigh of relief when he saw Gu Mian's task. He had been somewhat worried that Gu Mian's task would be quite a bother. However, he didn't expect the instance to be so understanding and not assign any unusual tasks to Gu Mian.

"'Cannot enter the village until filming for today is done,' Fatty muttered to himself. 'Although it's considerably more normal than the task I had imagined, compared to regular variety shows, this task is indeed a bit unusual...'"

Fatty pondered as he stared at the screen for a while. Perhaps intentionally by the cameraman, Gu Mian's large face filled the entire screen.

Looking at the close-up of Gu Mian on the screen, Fatty's thoughts began to drift. I have to admit, Doctor is rather handsome...

Know my thoughts, on the other side, wasn't as perceptive as Fatty. He wasn't paying attention to Gu Mian's large face on the screen but was sneakily glancing at their male host.

The man was gazing at them kindly, never once glancing at the television screen—it was as if the person on the screen wasn't his son.

At this moment, the host's irritating voice came from the television.

Know my thoughts, who was fully focused on the male host, had no interest in listening to what the host was saying. Only when the name "Gu Mian" drifted from the television did he glance at the screen.

However, Fatty had quickly turned off the television with a CLICK and turned around, flashing an unnatural smile.

Fatty quietly wiped the sweat from his palms. Although the exposure of Doctor's identity is inevitable within this instance, it's best to delay it as long as possible...

Fatty murmured to himself, These people live with us in Liu Ruyan's rental building. It would be tricky if they found out about Doctor's identity.

Know my thoughts looked at Fatty with a strange expression.

He thought, This fatty is a bit strange... It's as if he doesn't want me to see the live broadcast. Could he be a ghost pretending to be a player, trying to obstruct me from getting clues to the instance? As he thought this, he subconsciously looked at Fatty's player panel and saw the nickname "Wang Longxiang."

You Si's mind raced. Could it be that this fatty was replaced by a ghost right from the start?

With that thought, his gaze towards Fatty carried a hint of fear.

Fatty was considering how to conceal Gu Mian's identity when he suddenly noticed the player across from him looking at him with an expression full of fearful reverence. He was taken aback.

Just as he was paused, trying to analyze the meaning of this gaze, the male host's voice suddenly came from the side, "Come and have breakfast."

The two of them turned their heads towards the source of the voice and saw tableware already set out on the nearby dining table.

The breakfast looked quite nutritious. The male host hadn't treated them hastily just because they came from the "slums."

You Si's attention temporarily shifted from Fatty to the food in front of him. In this Mysterious Dungeon, the one thing they weren't worried about was a cliché like "poison in the food."

Fatty was also quite reassured.

Ghosts had innumerable ways to kill them. So far, no one in any supernatural novel had been poisoned to death by a ghost.

Well, if Doctor were in a supernatural novel, that might be a different story, Fatty thought, holding his fork. Even if Doctor were in a supernatural novel, he could be killed by a falling flowerpot, hit by a car, die from gas poisoning, be electrocuted by a mobile phone, or stabbed with a fork...

Huh... stabbed to death with a fork...

Fatty looked at the fork in his hand and fell into deep thought.

But speaking of which, Fatty thought as he glanced around, the male host was sitting not too far away, concentrating on the food on his plate.

Fatty's gaze swept past him and quickly scanned the room again, but he didn't find any sign of a fourth person.

Is there no lady of the house here?

Doesn't Gu Mian have a mother?

But judging by the slippers at the door and the toiletries in the bathroom, a woman should be living in this house.

So where is she now?

Fatty absentmindedly prodded the fried egg on his plate, his thoughts drifting back to his days working at the police station.

They received as many as a thousand reports a day, with an assortment of cases on file. Individuals turning on their families weren't uncommon; there were killings and all sorts of things.

So in this perverse world, a missing wife is fairly normal... right?

Who knows, she might be hidden in some refrigerator.

As Fatty thought this, he subconsciously turned his gaze towards the dark TV screen. I wonder how Doctor is doing right now.

「The filming had already started on Gu Mian's end.」

Chapter 513 The Disappeared Cooing_1

Before Gu Mian could do anything, he was cordially escorted to the edge of the village by the villagers.

The village boundary was not clearly defined, only marked by a crooked tree. Once you stepped past that tree, you were considered outside the village.

Gu Mian did not have time to wonder what kind of torment the tree had endured to become so bent. He glanced back at the other players. Chu Changge and the others were standing not far behind him, watching him go.

Even though I can't see Xie Bi'an's eyes, I'll assume he's also watching me leave, Gu Mian thought.

The camera crew and the other villagers were watching him with an expectant gaze, as if the moment he left the village, a pack of large dogs would chase him for eighteen blocks.

The only person who never left Gu Mian's side was one of the cameramen. He was now shouldering his camera, its lens aimed directly at Gu Mian's face, seemingly unwilling to miss a single one of his expressions.

"This cameraman..." Gu Mian touched his guitar case. "Don't tell me I'm going to run into a ghost even after leaving this village?"

Theoretically, this instance should be free of ghosts.

Gu Mian began to consider the possibility of being chased by eighteen large dogs.

But these large dogs... can they be eaten?

The sun was slowly rising. Gu Mian, the most popular guest, was ushered out of the village early. The cameramen focused their lenses on his solitary departing figure, seemingly attempting to capture emotions of "loneliness, helplessness, and pity."

Unfortunately, Gu Mian, who didn't understand human sentiments, did not satisfy their wishes.

He walked out of the village with his back to them, seemingly lost in thought. Even from just his back view, everyone could tell he appeared to be contemplating, What should I have for lunch today?

Accompany me next year watched Gu Mian's retreating back. "This guy is truly ridiculous..."

At this moment, most of the camera lenses were focused on Gu Mian, so not many people noticed the other three guests.

Accompany me next year withdrew her gaze from Gu Mian and instinctively turned to look at the two men by her side.

On her right was the securely wrapped Xie Bi'an. In Accompany me next year's impression, he was a good person. Despite being dressed like a highway robber from a wuxia novel, after spending some time with him, she could indeed sense he was a good man.

On her left was Meiren Chu, another player she had recently met.

Accompany me next year was quite self-aware; she deeply felt that although she had met this Meiren Chu, he might not necessarily know her.

After all, he always looked as if he'd had a botched plastic surgery. His entire face was usually motionless, making it impossible to discern any of his inner thoughts.

Recalling the guest who had just left, apparently pondering What to eat today? she suddenly felt a wave of despair. Why do I feel like none of my teammates in this instance are normal people? Speaking of which, that guy who just left has such a strange nickname, 'Green Doctor'...

But do the viewers of this variety show also call this person 'Doctor'?

Come to think of it, I haven't heard anyone call him by his actual name so far.

Accompany me next year frowned, looking around strangely, trying to find some clue about Gu Mian's name.

Unexpectedly, when she looked up, she saw the fanatical gazes of the people.

These strange gazes startled her. Although she had witnessed their abnormality in the instance before, the people seemed even more frenzied now.

They were all, without exception, looking in the direction the guest had departed, their murky eyes nearly bulging out of their sockets.

A strange instance, strange onlookers... and... what on earth is out there? Accompany me next year shivered as she watched the crowd's reaction.

At this moment, she heard Meiren Chu, the man beside her, say, "He's the most popular among us, so his task is naturally the most dangerous. There must be something terrifying outside the village."

Terrifying? What could it be?

Accompany me next year glanced at the bespectacled man beside her. He was looking straight ahead, and she didn't know who he was talking to.

Then, she thought she heard a faint laugh from Xie Bi'an on her other side.

She turned her head to look, only to see Xie Bi'an completely hidden by his black cloak, his expression invisible. The laughter just now seemed to have been her imagination.

「Meanwhile, Fatty was in a room, engrossed in searching for something.」

The Old World was an era of less developed technology. Television was the primary form of entertainment. Mobile phones and computers existed, but they were comparable to those from decades ago in the real world, suitable only for games like Minesweeper and Solitaire.

One could also search for things online, but most results were spam, like 'Learn this trick and live to ninety-nine!'

Fatty was trying to use the computer in the room to search for past episodes of Metamorphosis, but all he found were spam ads or scam websites.

He stared at the suggestive pop-up ad that appeared in the bottom-right corner of the screen, lost in thought.

He didn't want to turn on the television, since the name "Gu Mian" could pop up on the screen at any time.

At this moment, Know my thoughts was sitting on the bed behind Fatty, remarking that it was safer for two people to stick together.

Know my thoughts leaned his head towards the screen. "Brother Fatty, are you trying to find previous episodes on the computer?"

Fatty nodded while staring at the computer screen. "But I can't find any. If we could watch the previous episodes, we might get a clue."

"That's normal. It'd be stranger if you *could* find them," Know my thoughts said matter-of-factly. "Think about it: why does this global game randomly assign us instances instead of letting us choose?"

Why does it cut off internet access and prevent us from opening forums? It's because they're afraid of guides!"

"If players could freely choose which instances to enter and had access to guides, wouldn't those instances just become prime spots for farming resources?" Know my thoughts analyzed, clearly having played his share of games. "The content of this show's past episodes is pretty much the same as a guide. They most likely wouldn't let you find it."

Indeed, Fatty nodded in agreement.

But even with random matching and no forums, for us, instances are still a great place to farm resources...

Thinking this, Fatty touched his belly, which had grown bigger because of this global game.

"Oh, how I envy you, Brother Fatty," Know my thoughts gazed at Fatty's belly. "It's been more than half a year since the game started, and you're still so fat. I really envy you."

Fatty was dazed for a moment and decided to take it as a compliment.

Since the computer was no help, Fatty had no choice but to ask for assistance in their cheat group chat.

[Fat Son]: Dear Miss Liu, you're a native of this world. What's your take on Gu Mian's mission? @Liu Ruyan

He tried his best to make his tone sound polite, perhaps a little too polite.

Fatty was aware that Gu Mian's mission was likely to be the most dangerous, so he wanted to find out more about it.

Liu Ruyan's message arrived not long after:

"In this world, ghosts aren't what people fear. In the face of their faith, even if they were to genuinely encounter a ghost, they would expose its unrighteous deeds to others.

"Completely destroying a person's character, completely subjugating someone until they no longer dare to resist, making them bow their heads and suffer others' insults forever—these are the things that bring them the greatest joy.

"Gu Mian should be experiencing these things right now."

Chapter 514 Gu Bengbeng Uproots the Weeping Willows_1

After seeing the words Liu Ruyan sent, Fatty seriously imagined Gu Mian having a complete mental breakdown, kneeling on the floor, weeping and begging for mercy.

That kind of thing is unlikely to happen... No! It's not just unlikely, it's absolutely impossible! The probability of that happening is even less than my dad being resurrected from the dead and clawing his way out of the ground.

Fatty sighed after some thought. Honestly, I'd have an easier time picturing a zombie apocalypse. But even if zombies were running amok, the Doctor would never kneel and beg for mercy, would he...

The state of the Earth now wasn't that different from the end of the world, after all.

While Fatty was sighing away, a voice suddenly came from You Si on the side, "Brother Fatty, I think this special instance is really weird. We haven't seen any ghosts in ages, and there don't seem to be any dangers... The only strange things are that TV show and the man who owns this house. I'm still really curious about where the woman of the house is."

At this moment, a myriad of storylines had already flashed through You Si's mind. His extensive experience with instances had turned his mind into a story generator, capable of conjuring countless terrifying little tales in an instant.

Fatty wasn't in the mood to deal with You Si's musings. He was straining his neck to stare at the blackened TV screen. I really want to know what the Doctor is doing now.

Of course, he didn't need to watch to know that Gu Mian was definitely up to no good. Having trailed behind Gu Mian for over half a year, Fatty had hardly ever seen him do anything decent.

The filming location was a village in the mountains, and the Doctor wasn't allowed to enter it until filming for the day was over. Fatty thought to himself, The Doctor's probably in that little grove right now, isn't he?

That kind of place was a classic haunting ground; countless horror films had shot scenes in small groves. Walk through one, and you might just stumble upon a sinister-looking tree with a corpse in white clothes hanging from it. This scene indeed appeared in many horror novels. But strangely, though Fatty had followed Gu Mian for so long and experienced so many horror instances, he'd never actually encountered such a clichéd scene of a ghost hanging from a tree.

After some thought, Fatty muttered to himself, Perhaps they're afraid the Doctor will unleash his destructive side and uproot the weeping willow?

Just as he considered this, Fatty saw a new message pop up in the "Exam Cheating Group".

It was from Xiao Qiao, who had been missing for a long time. Xiao Qiao had disappeared after the college entrance examination event. Fatty had originally thought she was probably buried somewhere, but surprisingly, she appeared today. She immediately opened with, "Are you guys in the Old World?"

They had mentioned the name of this world during a group discussion, so it wasn't surprising that Xiao Qiao knew about the Old World. But Fatty found Xiao Qiao's tone a bit odd. It was as if she'd known about the "Old World" for a long time and was surprised they had managed to enter it.

Having long suspected Xiao Qiao was no ordinary person, Fatty wasn't surprised she already knew about the Old World. Instead, he pondered another question. Why? Is this Old World a place we're not supposed to enter?

Fatty honestly relayed his doubts to Xiao Qiao, but naturally didn't receive a response.

Fine, if you won't answer that, maybe I can ask something else...

Fatty thought for a while and put forward another question, "Miss Xiao Qiao, it seems like you are familiar with this world, the Old World. We are now in an instance called 'Metamorphosis'. Do you know about it?"

He'd only asked casually, not really expecting an affirmative answer.

"I do."

Fatty blinked, somewhat dazed.

At that moment, Xiao Qiao sent several more lines of text.

"Those who follow me prosper, those who defy me perish."

Is she talking about the Doctor? Fatty thought to himself.

As he wondered, Xiao Qiao sent another message, "I'm talking about this instance."

Oh, so that describes this instance. In that case, what happens when a player who insists on doing things their way meets an instance that operates on the same principle of 'defy me and perish'?

At the thought of this, a thin layer of sweat formed on Fatty's forehead. I have a feeling this won't end peacefully.

Of course, the people of the Old World didn't realize they might soon face a rather unpeaceful future. For now, they were all glued to their TV screens, trying to wring some happiness from them.

Liu Ruyan, on the other hand, was also focused on the TV screen.

The camera was currently on Accompany Me Next Year.

Her mission was not to leave the village elementary school before the end of the day.

She now stood at the school gate. The village elementary school wasn't large; she could see to the very back from the entrance. Two rows of earthen houses with walls full of cracks served as classrooms. Faint, yet vibrant, green shoots even poked through the large gaps.

Accompany Me Next Year felt she might die in these dilapidated, precarious buildings.

Although I still don't understand the true objective of this instance... she mumbled, glancing at the nearby cameraman. ...it's safer to stick to the mission. It's broad daylight, so I feel a bit braver, and it'll be easier to run if I have to.

The mission objective—to complete the variety show filming—was somewhat vague. What if the director suddenly died during filming? They wouldn't be able to continue, would they? Wouldn't that mean they'd be stuck in this instance forever?

The director shouldn't just suddenly die, right...? Accompany Me Next Year thought, stepping anxiously into the unsafe-looking school.

Speaking of schools, she vaguely recalled that the first instance in this global game to crash was related to one. What was it called... something High School? It was quite something that this global game had managed to slip ghosts into a school setting, bypassing all censorship. That really wasn't easy.

Just as Accompany Me Next Year was mulling this over, a battered old basketball suddenly flew out of nowhere and smacked her right on the forehead.

The impact made her vision go black for half a second. Then, she heard the clamor of children shouting and the noisy patter of running feet. She shook her head and looked forward. Several children with sallow, dirt-caked faces and sleeves so grimy they practically shone were running towards her. The basketball that had just so rudely greeted her forehead had clearly come from them.

Are these the local students? Accompany Me Next Year wondered as she watched the children approach. Just then, she noticed the cameraman, not far off, flash a barely perceptible, eerie smile.

She quickly realized it wasn't just the cameraman; the approaching children also wore the same strange, faintly sinister expressions.

Seeing those expressions, Accompany Me Next Year's heart skipped a beat. This is bad.

Chapter 515 Wishing Everyone a Happy 520 Always Single_1

Beneath the sunlight, which wasn't particularly harsh, Accompany Me Next Year sized up the disheveled children in front of her.

"Another newcomer," she heard these children, only waist-high to her, spew out venom in their voices, their expressions indistinct, backlit as they were.

A newcomer? So, has this place always been the filming location for the variety show?

That means quite a number of people have been here before her.

So, where did all those people go then?

As Accompany Me Next Year pondered, the children who barely reached her waist stared at her coldly, issuing an impatient command, "Come here."

Next Year furrowed her brow. The NPCs in this instance were extremely unsettling, yet they acted so entitled, as if it were only natural.

After a moment's hesitation, Next Year stepped forward.

SPLAT! She hadn't taken more than a few steps before something hurtled toward her from the side, deliberately striking her hair.

Stunned, Next Year reached out to touch the affected area. It was damp and seemed to be mud, carrying a somewhat unpleasant odor. A wave of derisive laughter resounded from the children. The laughter jolted Next Year. A chill ran down her spine as she turned to look at the production crew

behind her. All of them were staring at her with malevolent gazes, their eyes holding unconcealed, mocking amusement, as if they had anticipated this all along.

She looked around at the crowd filled with ill intent and stepped back slightly. What on earth is this instance...

"This world primarily afflicts your spirit, unlike other instances where players frantically flee for their lives. The Old World's spiritual torment is quite intense, manifested as..."

At this moment, Fatty was engrossed in reading a long message sent by Xiao Qiao in the cheat group. Unexpectedly, Xiao Qiao demonstrated a deep understanding of the Old World. Not long after Fatty had raised his doubts, she had begun sending lengthy messages to explain.

However, Fatty felt that the tone of this information didn't quite resemble Xiao Qiao's, but rather someone else's.

While reading Xiao Qiao's message, Fatty, bewildered, typed out a new message.

[Fat Son]: Miss Xiao Qiao, may I ask why you are so well-versed in this world?

A response appeared in the chat within seconds.

[Xiao Qiao]: It wasn't my research. I asked someone who's been in this instance.

Asked someone? Fatty finally understood. Xiao Qiao just happened to know someone who's been in this instance. Isn't that a bit too coincidental?

Unbeknownst to Fatty, this wasn't a coincidence. Xiao Qiao had utilized her special item—

[Big Data Search]

[Description: Are you troubled by not being able to find what you're looking for? Have you forgotten where you put something important? Use our Big Data Search to ease your troubles.]

[Function: Input your desired item, and the map will display the location of the nearest such item to you. Due to the cumbersome Big Data scanning process, this item can be used only once a week.]

Xiao Qiao had used [Big Data Search] to search for "Players who've entered the Metamorphosis instance."

This special item was obtained from an instance called "Rich Man."

Luckily, the College Entrance Exam instance had recently concluded, and many players were gathered there. So, indeed, she managed to find a player who had been in the Metamorphosis instance.

The user's nickname was "You Hit Me For Debt."

She advanced towards the target's location, and in little more than ten minutes, she apprehended the player. The term "apprehended" couldn't be more fitting, as the player detected by the search was now bound hand and foot, while she held him by the back of his collar, interrogating him.

None of the players who participated in the College Entrance Exam activity were alone. This abducted "You Hit Me For Debt" wasn't solitary either; he had three companions.

It's worth mentioning that just a moment before, they had been fretting in the rental house they had managed to find with great difficulty. Their Game Coins were nearly depleted, and the remaining food was not enough to satisfy their hunger. In the next instant, their door was kicked open with such force that the entire building shuddered thrice; even the old-fashioned ceiling fan overhead vibrated with the sound. Just when the four thought there had been an explosion, they looked up to see a familiar face outside their door.

Almost everyone recognized Xiao Qiao's face. Even elderly people with little interest in contemporary TV dramas could recall and name a few famous figures upon seeing her, though not always correctly. A celebrity who usually only appeared on TV had suddenly materialized before their eyes. Just when they

thought they were dreaming, they saw this superstar stride in with remarkable boldness and grab Yao Zhai.

Xiao Qiao's face, usually expressionless on screen, appeared even more frighteningly blank now.

Seeing someone seize Yao Zhai with such a terrifying expression, the other three naturally wouldn't just stand aside and watch. They immediately charged forward out of loyalty. But those who rushed forward all ended up sprawled on the ground, leaving only Yao Zhai, still grabbed by Xiao Qiao's collar, barely standing.

Yao Zhai looked up, wobbling. He had never thought the actress so active on TV screens could be this terrifying. He recalled how, back in the day, he too had followed the trend and disparaged Xiao Qiao as a "vase" a few times. Looking at the broken door nearby and his three teammates groaning on the ground, Yao Zhai now just wanted to find a vase and smash it over his own head.

Deeply regretting his past actions, he cautiously looked up at the actress, trying to figure out what she wanted. He saw Xiao Qiao slightly open her mouth, as if about to ask him something. Feeling the tension on his tightened collar, he pricked up his ears to listen, but after hearing her words clearly, his mind went BOOM, completely stunned.

Metamorphosis... Metamorphosis...

That was an instance he didn't want to recall. If possible, he wished he'd never have anything to do with this instance again, never even mention it for the rest of his life. But he hadn't expected that today he would be grabbed and forced to recall the events of that instance.

...

At this point, Yao Zhai had been interrogated by Xiao Qiao for ten minutes. Just as he was wondering, amidst his fear, why this female star was asking about such things, he heard Xiao Qiao's voice from above, "...Stop daydreaming. Speak."

He shivered before he began to speak again.

"At first, we didn't understand the instance's mechanics. We worried every day that ghosts would appear, but our worries never materialized, right up to the end.

"Later, we gradually figured out the instance. It had no ghosts, but the harm to players was quite significant.

"In there, we players were divided into two groups. The slightly stronger ones would be sent away for 'transformation'... which basically meant enduring endless humiliation. We couldn't resist, absolutely could not resist. The task was to complete the filming, and only a successful transformation counted as completing it. Resistance would only prolong the instance's duration... possibly indefinitely, and we might never have been able to leave that instance...

"In that instance, I was in the weaker group, the one sent to experience life in wealthy families. After figuring out the instance's mechanics, I felt sympathetic towards the stronger group because all the negative attention was directed at them. Our group, due to our perceived weakness, was only shown sympathy and treated kindly...

"That's what I thought at first, but I soon discovered that things weren't actually like that. Actually..."

Saying this, Yao Zhai shivered again before continuing.

"You are always being watched."

Reading these seven words that had just arrived, Fatty was taken aback.

You are always being watched?

What does that mean?

And just then, he heard You Si behind him say, "Don't you find it strange? Where on earth has the lady of this house gone?"

Fatty's mind blanked.

You are always being watched... the disappeared lady of the house...

At this moment, he suddenly felt something staring at him from behind. He stiffened his neck and turned to look.

In the dark crevice under the bed, an eye was staring fixedly at him.

Chapter 516 Love Scammer Gu BongBong_1

That was the missing hostess, but she wasn't missing. She had been there all along, watching them from under the bed.

Since when had this started... Fatty's head was spinning. When had this woman started hiding here? If she had been hidden from the start, then wouldn't she have been under his bed last night? However, this wasn't the most terrifying thing. The most terrifying thing was that his conversation with You Si might have been entirely overheard by this woman. If that were true...

"People from that world are full of love and kindness for the weak. They pour out their boundless enthusiasm onto those they perceive as weak, which gives them a greater sense of satisfaction and accomplishment.

"They always keep an eye on you, peeping at you, because your every move could bring them immense satisfaction.

"However..." Yao Zhai paused at this point, as if recalling unpleasant memories. "They only show kindness to the weak. If any of your words or actions don't align with their expectations, it will trigger frantic suspicion and doubt. They will peep from every visible corner and appear in the most unexpected places.

"Once it's discovered that you are not, in fact, the weak person they imagined, you will be subjected to the harshest punishment." Yao Zhai, who had been intercepted by Xiao Qiao outside the instance, fell silent for a few seconds. "This is... precisely my cause of death."

Those eyes staring intently at him felt like an illusion. They vanished without a trace in an instant. When he looked under the bed again, only darkness remained.

Just then, Fatty heard footsteps from the living room. He turned his head towards the door and saw the man of the house wearing slippers, making a TAP TAP sound.

The man paid them no attention, heading straight for the sofa. Then, he picked up the remote control and pointed it at the TV, pressing a button.

It was still the show "Metamorphosis." However, the camera was no longer focused on Gu Mian. Instead, a woman's face was on the screen, her expression somewhat strange, a face Fatty didn't recognize.

Then You Si's voice said, "Su Xiaocha."

Fatty understood. So, it was Su Xiaocha, the female player who was with Xie Bi'an. She was a member of the disadvantaged group, sent to a good family to experience life...

But before Fatty could repeat the name, You Si, beside him, suddenly let out a terrified cry.

He had barely finished uttering "Su Xiaocha" when his voice abruptly shot up, like a parrot whose neck had been suddenly squeezed.

Fatty immediately turned to look at him and saw You Si's eyes glued to the TV screen. The sudden rise in his voice was due to something he had seen; Fatty's gaze also slowly shifted to the TV screen.

By now, the camera had pulled away from her face, allowing Fatty to see the female player's miserable situation clearly.

To say she was in a "miserable situation" was no exaggeration.

She was trussed up and laid on a cement platform, like a pig awaiting slaughter or a criminal from centuries ago awaiting beheading in the public square.

Fatty immediately understood. This female player had undoubtedly, inadvertently exposed the fact that she wasn't as miserable as she appeared to be.

A host stood beside her, speaking excitedly, "In this episode, we've also discovered a fraud—this very female guest..."

The camera followed her voice, and Su Xiaocha's face once again filled the entire screen.

"We discovered that this guest is not as unfortunate as we imagined, yet she tried to exploit our kindness and pity to deceive the audience. What a greedy person! Next, we will carry out the punishment for deception and greed..."

As the host spoke, the camera panned away, pulling Su Xiaocha's face from the screen and revealing another scene to Fatty and You Si.

It was a filthy, foul-smelling toilet.

More precisely, it should be called an "outhouse."

Fatty swore he hadn't seen such an outhouse in many years. It resembled the dry toilets from over a decade ago: two old cement Stone Tablets laid over a square pit several meters deep, leaving a gap dozens of centimeters wide.

Beside the gap on the Stone Tablet, there were splashes of an unidentifiable yellowish-brown substance; even the filthy walls were stained with it. The stains varied in color; some had dried and solidified, while others were still fresh.

Even through the screen, Fatty felt as though he could smell the foul odor.

He saw HUMMING black bugs flying in and out of the gap, occasionally sticking to those yellowish-brown spots. The sight reminded him of the small bugs that often flew into his mouth when he used to run. A wave of nausea rose from his stomach.

The camera continued to zoom in, and through the narrow gap, Fatty and You Si could see the contents of the deep pit.

After seeing what was inside, Fatty felt that calling it a "dry toilet" was no longer an appropriate description. At the very least, the inside was quite damp.

The contents of the deep pit were almost up to the Stone Tablets. It was a soupy mess inside, with several darker-colored chunks floating on the surface, covered by a layer of writhing white maggots. Upon closer inspection, something floated in the thin, yellowish liquid, resembling dead fish.

Even though Fatty had a strong stomach, he was rendered speechless by the scene. You Si, beside him, couldn't bear it any longer; he gagged and quickly covered his mouth.

Fatty heard his horrified voice, "What are they doing? How can this be?"

Apart from Gu Mian and his companions, the others didn't understand this world's situation. Naturally, anyone seeing such a scene for the first time would be horrified.

The screen switched back to the host.

She seemed impervious to the stench, her face still wreathed in smiles.

Chapter 517 Shit Flower_1

"For deceivers, we won't be overly harsh; we will only mete out a small punishment..."

You Si heard these words from the smiling host.

He looked at the almost overflowing, yellow, oatmeal-like substance in the pit. A small punishment... Wait! It can't be what I'm thinking, can it?

Then he saw two people enter the frame. They adeptly lifted Su Xiaocha, who was in the middle of the screen, one on each side, and carried her towards the stench-ridden pit.

Even though Su Xiaocha was tightly bound, she was still conscious. At that moment, she stared in terror at the pit near her. From her angle, she could just see the oatmeal-like substance floating on top and the teeming, writhing masses of tiny worms. She began to scream, her face contorted in terror.

Fatty and You Si couldn't make out exactly what she was yelling; they could only vaguely discern words like "No!" and "Put me down!" from her terrified shrieks.

The two people carrying Su Xiaocha, of course, ignored her screams.

Accompanied by the soprano screams, the host's clear voice echoed from the screen: "This guest will continue to be 'marinated' here. I'm sure she will repent her mistakes... Oh, please be assured, we have specially treated this place. The guest, Su Xiaocha, will not be submerged; she will be able to keep her nostrils just above the surface."

Fatty saw the host flash a brilliant smile at this, as if pleased with some good deed he had performed.

At the same time, a chilling smile, just like the host's, crept across the face of the man watching the television.

Most likely, all viewers in front of their televisions wore the same expression.

Then, a SPLASH and a scream came from the screen. The person had been thrown into the stinking pit, sending up a spray of filth.

You Si also let out a cry of alarm, his voice even drowning out the sounds from the television.

Su Xiaocha, losing her balance, was completely submerged for a moment, but she instantly struggled desperately to stand up. Fatty saw a head, looking as if it were covered in curry sauce, desperately trying to break the surface.

Indeed, she could just barely keep her nostrils clear.

She had to stand ramrod straight for her nostrils to barely remain above the surface. The brownish-yellow liquid was just two millimeters below them, and it felt as if a slight inhalation would draw it in. The stench was unbearable. She saw something floating towards her from not far away, with a half-glimpsed, writhing worm occasionally emerging from it.

No more sounds came from Su Xiaocha on the television; if she opened her mouth, she would get a taste of feces. People could only judge her emotional state by her terrified, wide-open eyes.

You Si heard a gleeful laugh coming from the man in front of the television.

The laughter was ordinary, like the sound someone makes when suddenly thinking of something amusing. It was a casual laugh, as if he had laughed this way countless times before.

You Si's eyes were wide with terror, almost matching Su Xiaocha's. A chill ran down his spine, and his whole body began to tremble involuntarily.

"Brother Fatty, what... what's going on?" You Si stumbled over to Fatty and grabbed his arm, as if clinging to a lifeline. He hadn't encountered the ghost he had been yearning for, but his expression was now even more terrified than if he had.

Fatty, wary of the woman under the bed, felt beads of sweat form on his forehead. "It's just as we see. This time, it's probably different from before. If we're not careful, we'll end up like that too. Understand?"

Hearing this, You Si seemed to understand something. Could it be that the threat in this instance only comes from humans?

His scalp tingled as he looked at the man laughing heartily in front of the television. Then, his gaze passed over the host to Su Xiaocha on the screen. She was desperately trying to stand straight to keep her nostrils above the yellowish-brown liquid.

You Si stared at the screen. She'll have to stay in there until they leave the instance. During this period, she can't eat or sleep; she has to keep standing rigidly inside.

Before the game started, even standing for a few hours would make his back ache. But now, Su Xiaocha would have to stand in such a place for who knows how long. It's terrifying just to think about it...

Looking at Su Xiaocha's terrified eyes on the screen, You Si also wanted to complete the instance task quickly and rescue this pitiful player.

Completing the filming means they can leave the instance. If we cooperate a little, she can get out sooner.

Just as You Si was quietly pondering this, a statement that made his hair stand on end came from the television.

"By the way, because this lady deceived the audience and the production team, we have no choice but to strip her of her guest status and disqualify her from the shoot."

The host's words made Fatty's breath catch in his throat.

"Disqualified from the shoot?" Fatty murmured these words over and over, thinking about the task for this instance.

Completing the shoot means completing the task, and then they can leave the instance.

So, Su Xiaocha being disqualified from the shoot means...

At this point, Su Xiaocha also seemed to realize something and began to struggle fiercely. If she was disqualified from the shoot, she would never be able to leave this instance!

She would be trapped in this instance forever, trapped in this horrifying world, trapped in this disgusting, humiliating world.

Cold sweat streamed down You Si's face.

Fatty also sucked in a sharp breath. At this moment, he desperately missed Gu Mian.

If the Doctor were here, it would be so much better. I wouldn't have to worry about being thrown into a dung pit or being stuck here forever. If the Doctor were here, the one thrown in definitely wouldn't be me... Fatty sniffled, missing Gu Mian immensely.

Chapter 518 Graveyard Racing_1

Gu Mian, who was left alone in a small grove outside the village, had long ago found a shady spot and sat on a large rock.

When Su Xiaocha was thrown into the dung pit, Gu Mian had been sitting leisurely for a long time, and the cameraman didn't rush him.

Because there was no conflict on Gu Mian's side, the camera switched to Su Xiaocha's side.

At this moment, Gu Mian was contemplating finding clues to the "Old World."

Since the "Second World" existed in reality in the form of a book, the "Old World" probably also existed in some form.

Perhaps it was something like a CD Spirit, like his older brother...

Speaking of which, his brother was still in his pocket. Thinking of this, Gu Mian patted his pocket, reassured when he felt the flat disk inside.

He certainly didn't want to perform a magic trick on camera called "A Curly Hair Ghost Can Jump Out of My Pocket."

He then returned to contemplating the Old World. If we find the real form of this world and reduce it to ashes, the number of instances of this global game would drastically decrease, he mused.

At this point, the cameraman, unaware of Gu Mian's cheerful thoughts about scattering ashes, heard his pocket communicator beep a few times.

Gu Mian saw the cameraman pull a phone comparable to an old Nokia from his pocket, apparently checking a message.

Then Gu Mian saw a light-hearted smile spread across the cameraman's face before he looked up at him.

「Meanwhile, Fatty and You Si were still glued to the TV screen.」

Probably to stir up audience emotions, the production team had filmed Su Xiaocha's miserable state and showed it to the other guests.

All the guests participating in this show were like grasshoppers on the same rope. If one of them suffered misfortune, the others would undoubtedly feel scared and panicked. The production team showed Su Xiaocha's situation to the other players specifically to let the audience see the guests' horrified expressions.

The screen had switched to another guest's face. You Si recognized it as Xingluo, who was in his group.

Xingluo received a black phone, roughly two centimeters thick. He looked at the screen curiously, and his expression instantly turned to horror. It obviously showed Su Xiaocha's current situation.

Another host beside him began to speak to Xingluo, "This is the first deceiver discovered in this episode. She pretended to be weak to win our sympathy, so we administered an appropriate punishment. We hope there won't be a second deceiver in this episode... Guest, what do you think?"

Fatty stared at Xingluo's face.

He saw Xingluo's mouth fall slightly open, his face a mask of immense fear and apprehension, mixed with a dawning realization and disbelief.

No doubt he had gleaned something of this instance's true nature from Su Xiaocha's plight.

He seemed to want to ask something instinctively but immediately clamped his mouth shut, only speaking after a long moment.

"I... I also hope... that such a thing won't happen again..." he stammered, clearly in deep shock.

The production team, however, was quite satisfied with his performance. The host replied with a smile, "It would be best if it's as you say."

Xingluo's face didn't remain on screen for long; the camera quickly cut to someone else.

Fatty recognized her; she was the female guest in Gu Mian's group, known as "Accompany me next year." She was Know my thoughts' girlfriend, and their nicknames were a pair.

At this moment, Next Year was standing on a dirt road by the school. A scruffy kid on a rickety bicycle deliberately crashed into her from behind. Knocked off balance, Next Year looked back. The kid, a malicious smile on his face, sped past her. However, a few meters ahead, he turned around as if intending to ride back and hit her again.

Next Year dodged but was hit again.

Fatty watched, his heart pounding, inevitably imagining what would happen if Gu Mian were in her place.

The outcome would be predictable: the kid's collar in Gu Mian's hand, and the bicycle impaled on the child's ancestral grave. The kid would probably even earn a parting taunt like, "Trying to hit your own mother, are you?"

Wouldn't that get his guest status revoked on the spot?

But if they really left the Doctor in the Old World... For some reason, Fatty imagined ashes scattering freely.

It seemed the production crew was approaching from a distance. The child on the bike, after maliciously bumping into her twice, didn't come back.

A host, smiling, approached a bewildered Next Year, holding something out for her to see.

In front of Next Year was an old mobile phone. She paid no mind to how old it was, staring at the screen in surprise.

It was a photo. Only half a head was visible, covered in some disgusting substance, but she still recognized it as Su Xiaocha's.

"What is this!" Fatty heard Next Year's voice from the TV. "Is this Su Xiaocha? What happened?"

Players unfamiliar with this world would naturally have such questions.

The host spoke with a smile, "This is a deceiver found in this episode who pretended to be weak to gain our sympathy. We will, of course, give her the appropriate punishment. You should know our rules have always been like this. Naturally, if you don't cooperate honestly with the filming, your fate will be even worse."

On the TV, Fatty saw Next Year's expression change from shock to disbelief, as if she couldn't believe what she was hearing.

Then her disbelief morphed into fear and stupefaction, until finally, her face went blank, as if she were dreaming.

She muttered to herself in a voice only she could hear.

Are there no ghosts in this instance? Is the greatest danger from... humans?

No wonder, no wonder!

The production team seemed to enjoy her traumatized, vulnerable expression. The camera zoomed in on her face, holding a close-up for a full two minutes.

The effect was indeed potent. The master of the house watching the TV showed an expression of extreme enjoyment.

Fatty had long known that the program's entertainment value came from amplifying the guests' pain to satisfy the audience. That was why they showed Su Xiaocha's tragic state to the others one by one.

The audience greatly enjoyed the guests' fear and terror.

Fatty, at the side, was silently praying, The production team doesn't seem to be showing Su Xiaocha to all the guests, just picking a few to witness it and feel the pain... but please, don't let them pick the Doctor...

It wasn't that he feared Gu Mian would feel any actual distress.

Fatty knew full well that what the audience craved was the guests' terror. But if Su Xiaocha's situation were shown to Gu Mian, not only would the audience fail to get what they wanted, they would get a thoroughly defiant Gu Mian instead...

A defiant Gu Mian was not what the audience wanted. A defiant Gu Mian would certainly be targeted.

Although Fatty knew this was just Gu Mian's nature, he still wished he could delay this inevitable targeting. If Gu Mian had to be targeted, Fatty hoped it would be later rather than sooner.

But Gu Mian's luck had always been good. Just as Fatty was silently praying, Gu Mian's face appeared on the TV screen.

The moment he saw Gu Mian's face, Fatty cried out in his heart, We're doomed!

Earlier, Gu Mian had seen the cameraman in front of him holding that old phone, laughing gleefully and occasionally glancing up at him with a teasing look.

Just as Gu Mian was wondering about this, he suddenly noticed the camera lens zoom in significantly. It was aimed directly at him, as if determined not to miss his slightest reaction.

Then, Gu Mian saw the cameraman raise his hand, offering the phone with a malicious smile, "Have a look at this."

Just as Gu Mian reached out for the battered phone, the camera lens moved even closer. Behind it was a face contorted with laughter.

Fatty held his breath, watching the screen.

The master of the house also froze, his eyes glued to the screen. Presumably, all the viewers were the same, everyone waiting for this guest to show fear, terror, any sign of distress.

Unexpectedly, Gu Mian stared at the phone before that contorted face for several seconds, then finally frowned and said, "Your curry with rice looks quite stinky."

Chapter 519 Hit, Hit me hard _1

"You call this curry over rice?"

Fatty's breath hitched. He saw the male host on the television screen falter as well and could only imagine the expression on the man's face.

Presumably, all the viewers watching TV are feeling the same way, Fatty thought. Their expressions probably aren't much different from someone who just ate shit.

The cameraman was clearly startled by Gu Mian's rebellious words.

The twisted smile on his face gradually faded, the smile vanishing, until only the contortion remained.

"What's with that expression?" Gu Mian said nonchalantly, tucking his phone into his pocket. "If it's not curry over rice, what is it then? Ashes mixed with rice?"

The cameraman's expression twisted further.

Gu Mian paused, then turned to the camera with a warm, enthusiastic smile. "Just kidding. Obviously, I can tell it's shit; there's even a person mixed in it."

Seeing Gu Mian's enthusiastic smile, Fatty momentarily felt that Gu Mian was more terrifying than the humans in the Old World. To say something as outrageous as "a person mixed in the shit" with such an enthusiastic tone, and this was a player who had entered the instance with him.

The audience was clearly unhappy they hadn't seen what they were hoping for.

The male host's smile had vanished. He was staring intently at Gu Mian's face on the TV screen, and presumably, so were all the other viewers.

At this moment, the cameraman in front of Gu Mian struggled to move his lips, finally managing to say, "She is another guest from your batch. She deceived the audience by pretending to be weak. This is our punishment for her... Perhaps you too will soon receive such a punishment."

As he said this, he stared intently at Gu Mian, as if hoping to see a flower bloom on his face.

It wasn't just the cameraman who wanted to see a flower bloom on Gu Mian's face; the production team and the viewers watching their screens all wanted to see if a flower would bloom on Gu Mian's face.

Even Fatty, glued to the screen, was praying silently.

With everyone watching, Gu Mian pondered for a moment. Just when they all thought he would at least show some apprehension, he casually lifted his head and, under all those watchful eyes, flatly uttered, "Oh."

That's it? The words suddenly flashed through Fatty's mind. Is that all? Just that? Really, that's it?

This was a huge letdown for the audience eagerly waiting before their TVs. Gu Mian had crushed their expectations.

In that instant, everyone felt the situation was spiraling out of control.

The image on TV froze in a strange stillness. It wasn't until the cameraman's voice came from off-screen that Fatty realized the TV hadn't actually frozen.

He heard the cameraman begin to improvise.

"Mr. Gu, seeing your fellow guest's current situation, don't you have anything to say? Aren't you sad? Aren't you scared? Or are you actually terrified, but too stubborn to show it?"

This is complete bullshit, Fatty thought.

Unexpectedly, Gu Mian on screen actually started spouting bullshit along with the cameraman.

"Yes, my heart is filled with terror and fear right now. I desperately want to leave this show. I have sincerely repented. Do you think the production team could discuss letting this prodigal son, who has seen the error of his ways, go?"

Gu Mian's words dripped with insincerity, especially the part about being "filled with terror and fear." Not only Fatty, but the entire audience could hear the lack of conviction in his voice.

After Gu Mian spoke, the screen fell into another eerie silence. Only Gu Mian's face and the sparse woods behind him were visible.

Honestly, there wasn't much to see where Gu Mian was, but the camera stayed stubbornly fixed on him, not cutting away.

The audience didn't seem bored, however. They all remained glued to their TVs, staring at the almost static image, the earlier smiles completely gone from their faces.

Apparently realizing the situation was getting out of control, Gu Mian's face didn't remain on screen for long. The view abruptly switched to Accompany me next year.

The audience was extremely uncomfortable; they really needed to see something pleasant.

The cut to Accompany me next year was visibly rushed. Her face was blurry at first, and it took two seconds for Fatty to see her clearly.

She was standing before a ditch at the school's edge. It was a channel of stagnant, black water that ran straight out of the school grounds. It was clear the students enjoyed throwing things into it; what looked like books and schoolbags were floating on the water.

A group of children was blocking Accompany me next year, hemming her in by the fetid ditch. It looked as if she might be thrown in at any moment.

"My schoolbag fell in. Go get it for me," a boy with spiky hair ordered Accompany me next year imperiously.

Another girl in a rose-red dress also suddenly yanked off her hair tie and threw it forcefully into the water. "You, get down there and pick it up for me!"

Accompany me next year looked at the filthy, stinking ditch before her.

She had a high tolerance for ordinary children, but that didn't include brats. And this group in front of her was worse than brats; they couldn't even be classified as "children."

On any other day, Accompany me next year might very well have picked up any brat she didn't like and given them a beating. In fact, she had thrashed quite a few brats in the past.

But this time, it was probably not an option.

Having seen what happened to Su Xiaocha, Accompany me next year had no doubt that if she so much as touched any of these children, she would end up with the same fate as Su Xiaocha.

She had heard the host say that Su Xiaocha had been disqualified as a guest and had her filming privileges revoked. She would probably be trapped in this world forever.

If she wanted to complete the show's filming and leave this instance, she had to do exactly as these people demanded.

Having already glimpsed some of this world's true face, Accompany me next year definitely didn't want to be trapped in this damned place forever.

Even though in the real world they were often cold and hungry, and also had to face malice from other players, it was still much, much better than this instance.

This world, though seemingly peaceful and stable, was filled with surging malice. Accompany me next year knew she absolutely couldn't endure it here for more than a few days.

Looking at the stinking ditch before her, she grew somewhat worried about the other players. I wonder if the others have also discovered that something is wrong with this instance.

It's likely that very few people will be able to get out of this in one piece this time.

Besides her own companions, Accompany me next year also thought of Gu Mian and his group. They don't look like people who would be completely submissive. I wonder if they've noticed the instance's abnormality. How many of us will be able to leave in the end...

She was worried sick, both for Su Xiaocha and because she feared very few people would be able to leave the instance this time.

Just as Accompany me next year was worrying, the vicious voice rang out again, "Did you hear me? Hurry up and get down there to pick it up!"

This time, his voice was laced with impatience. At the same time, Accompany me next year felt someone shove her hard in the small of her back. Unable to keep her footing, she stumbled and fell into the stinking ditch.

Choking, Accompany me next year poked her head out of the water and looked toward the bank. She saw the group of children looking at her with mocking, jeering expressions, as if they were already thinking up other nasty tricks.

She took a deep breath. A true hero doesn't fight when the odds are against them. Only an idiot would get worked up over these brats, she told herself.

Accompany me next year comforted herself with these thoughts as she waded deeper into the channel. I really want to give these kids a good thrashing and throw them all in here, she fumed internally. But I can't. To leave this instance, I can only endure. Others are probably going through something similar. Everyone has to endure... I have to endure too.

Accompany me next year, busy practicing her 'ninja endurance technique' over here, had no idea that on the other side, Gu Mian was already on the verge of fighting the cameraman.

Chapter 520 The Love and Hatred Among the First Place_1

Gu Mian initially thought the population of this world was quite sparse, thus only assigning a shabby-looking cameraman to follow him. But as time went on, Gu Mian realized he was mistaken. The production team had only sent a single shabby-looking cameraman because he was the most familiar with the terrain here. If a group of people had come, they might have easily lost their way and gotten lost. This cameraman was deeply familiar with the area, navigating it as if he knew it by heart, even with his eyes closed.

At this point, the sun was starting to dip westward; it was already afternoon. Although this place wasn't the real world, the pattern of the sun rising in the east and setting in the west hadn't changed. At some point, a thick fog began to fill the small woods, restricting Gu Mian's visibility to only about seven or eight meters. If he got lost in here, finding his way again would be very difficult.

At first, the cameraman was quite taciturn. However, he was fervent about filming Gu Mian's face with his camera. A shy Gu Mian would occasionally take the opportunity to strike the most perfect pose for the camera. Unfortunately, the cameraman didn't notice Gu Mian secretly posing for the lens. His expression was filled with anticipation and fervor, as if he was waiting for something. This expression lasted until Gu Mian finished looking at Su Xiaocha's picture and gave his comments. After that, the cameraman's expression lost its fervor. He looked as if he had been struck by something, his face indescribable. To use a common description from novels, his face held three parts embarrassment, two parts surprise, and five parts incredulity. Making such an expression was quite difficult, but it was probably simpler than the original "three parts coldness, two parts derision, and five parts deep affection."

Gu Mian knew the cameraman wanted to see him look scared and surprised. However, years of honing had made him extremely resilient, and his thought processes typically didn't align with those of ordinary people. He wouldn't bat an eye if Su Xiaocha, a stranger to him, were thrown into a latrine pit. Even if Fatty were thrown in, Gu Mian would only remark, To think they could throw someone so fat. Impressive!

Gu Mian's eccentric mindset obviously annoyed the cameraman. The two stared at each other awkwardly for a while. There was no third person around; if they started fighting, no one would intervene. If no one were there to pull them apart, Gu Mian would certainly take the chance to open his guitar case. Possibly, Gu Mian's screen time would end right there. Fortunately, the cameraman managed to maintain his professional demeanor and didn't make a move immediately. But his face now carried a hint of "I'll get you later," like a grade-school kid waiting until after class to bully a classmate.

Fatty, watching the television screen and worried about Gu Mian, had no clue that in Gu Mian's mind, he had already been thrown into a latrine pit. At this moment, he was still sincerely concerned about Gu Mian's safety.

「Let's leave that aside for now.」

The cameraman soon perked up again. He received a message from the production team on his old-fashioned phone. The message, which Gu Mian couldn't see, significantly boosted his confidence. It seemed the production team had also regained its confidence after sending the message. Fatty noticed the camera had shifted back to Gu Mian. Gu Mian's hand was fiddling with the zipper of his guitar case. Fatty's hair stood on end, and a chill ran down his spine. Thankfully, Gu Mian only touched the zipper and didn't pull out the item inside to give the cameraman an exclusive performance. Fatty heaved a sigh of relief at this sight. He knew that the instance task was to complete the filming. If Gu Mian directly dealt with the cameraman, the task would surely be impossible to complete. Although Gu Mian's way of clearing instances was different from most people's, for safety's sake, it was better to keep the cameraman alive.

But why did the camera switch back to the Doctor again? Fatty wondered, alert to the woman under the bed while also keeping an eye on the television screen outside the door. In contrast to Fatty, You Si, who was nearby, seemed completely unconcerned about his girlfriend. When clips of "Accompany Me Next Year" were aired, he didn't show any signs of worry.

Just as Fatty was beside himself with worry for Gu Mian, the man of the house in front of the TV suddenly twisted his neck, his entire face turning to confront them. Fatty was startled by the sudden turn, swallowing hard as he stared at the man's face. Then, he saw the man's mouth open and close, and a voice reached Fatty's ears, "Although you all live in a very impoverished place, you've surely watched this show quite a few times."

Indeed, since its inception, Metamorphosis had become the mainstream variety show in the Old World, its ubiquity comparable to the weather forecast in the real world. Fatty couldn't understand why the man of the house would ask such a question.

Then he heard the man's mouth continue to speak, "Then you should also know that no matter how difficult the guests are, once they go into this forest, they will completely despair and go crazy. They will beat their chests, stamp their feet, and bang their heads against the ground. Some will even commit suicide in there. So far, there are dozens of bodies inside."

His voice was soft, tinged with a faint smile, but Fatty felt an intense chill.

Players completely despair and go crazy just by entering this forest?

Why? Fatty wanted to ask but didn't dare to. He had a vague feeling that something was wrong. What horrific thing was hidden in that forest that could make players behave like this? Theoretically, it was

impossible for players to truly despair in an instance. Even if they died in an instance, they would resurrect in reality. So, what could make those players end up like that? Could it be...

At this moment, the unfortunate player named "You Beat Me Up For Debt Collection" still had the back of his collar in Xiao Qiao's grasp. However, compared to his companions lying haphazardly around him, Yao Zhai was already quite lucky. Yao Zhai looked up trembling at Xiao Qiao, at the face that usually only appeared on TV screens. This female celebrity, whom the public unanimously considered a "decorative piece," had smashed them to smithereens.

Although the current scene was surreal, Yao Zhai was still somewhat curious. Yao Zhai carefully craned his neck and asked, "You're asking me this for someone else, right? Do you have a friend in that instance?"

He found it strange. To his knowledge, there were no communication tools connecting the inside and outside of an instance. But looking at Xiao Qiao, it was clear she was asking on behalf of someone else, and she seemed anxious.

"Yes," Xiao Qiao answered without hesitation.

Yao Zhai became even more curious. What kind of influential friend could make a top celebrity do something that could ruin her image, even personally beating them up? Could the person in the instance be one of her parents...?

Thinking this, Yao Zhai impulsively asked another question, "A very important friend?"

Xiao Qiao bent down, her dark eyes staring directly at him. "If he doesn't come out, none of you need to live."

Yao Zhai suddenly broke out in a cold sweat. He inwardly lamented, cursing the undeserved calamity that had befallen them today.

Then he heard Xiao Qiao's voice from above, "What else is there to pay attention to?"

Even if I tell you, can you still send a message to the people inside the instance? Cold sweat trickling down his face, Yao Zhai began, "There's one more thing to note..."

As he spoke, Yao Zhai's already panicked expression grew even more mournful. "The number one player in that instance... the one sent to the mountainous region for Metamorphosis, the guest voted by the audience as the most popular... I've never seen him again..."

A voice came from above, "What do you mean?"

Yao Zhai was sweating profusely. "He... seems to have never come out of the instance. Later... later, I also met another player who had been in that instance. He said... their most popular player didn't come out either..."

"What I mean is... the guest who ranks first in popularity, it seems, will be trapped in the instance forever."

Even guests who were disqualified from filming could leave the instance through suicide. But this didn't seem to be the case for the most popular guest; for them, suicide meant true death. Regardless of life or death, they would be forever trapped in this world, the Old World.