

## **Collapse 531**

### Chapter 531 –

Gu Mian knew that the Law Code in front of him was just a copy, and even if he used the [Supernatural Editor Simulator] to depict a pile of shit on it, it might not have much effect.

At the moment, they didn't have the opportunity to search for the original, so Gu Mian came up with a lousy idea.

Chu Changge watched Gu Mian muse over the white-covered book in his hand for a second before pulling out the [Supernatural Editor Simulator] from his pocket.

He held the book with his left hand and moved his right hand, holding the pen, towards the cover.

The director outside the door glared in anger, wishing he could shatter the door blocking his view.

And the cameraman finally got the hint, moving his camera from Gu Mian's face to the white-covered book in his hand.

The audience watched as Gu Mian brought the dirty pen close to the Law Code and then forcefully made a mark on it.

To everyone's surprise, Gu Mian was able to use the pen.

All of them seethed with rage. Their dearly revered Law Code had been defiled by an impure man. Worse still, it was this violator. Violators belonged to the lowest caste in the Old World. People would feel disgusted if such individuals even initiated contact with them.

Fatty understood the feelings of the people from the Old World.

It was as if a slave, lower than dirt in feudal society, had spat a thick loogie right onto the emperor's face.

While most people were still seething over this metaphorical spit, a few felt as if something had shifted.

A sense of unreality gripped their consciousness momentarily before vanishing.

Those who noticed the strangeness looked around and felt that something was subtly different from a moment ago.

Most people remained engrossed in their anger and failed to notice the anomaly.

However, as Gu Mian drew more lines with his pen, everyone sensed that something was off.

They felt as if the world was undergoing some change, yet they struggled to put it into words.

Every stroke Gu Mian made was laborious, as if the pen weighed a thousand pounds, and he had to use all his strength to leave a mark on the Law Code.

He continued to write with slow determination under everyone's gaze. Only when he finished the last stroke could others see what he had written on the slightly tilted Law Code.

Behind the words "Law Code" on the cover, Gu Mian had added two words—"Original Edition."

The function of the [Supernatural Editor Simulator] is to alter reality within its capabilities, like fixing a broken watch or repairing a shattered window.

But if someone were to directly write the word "explosion" on the Earth's surface, the user might suffer an immediate backlash and explode themselves.

In contrast, Gu Mian had merely added the words "Original Edition" to the Law Code, which was much less difficult compared to detonating the Earth.

The people outside the door were puzzled by Gu Mian's actions, uncertain as to why he would write those two words on the Law Code.

As the crowd looked on in confusion, Gu Mian put the [Supernatural Editor Simulator] back into his pocket and picked up the Law Code with both hands.

He opened the Law Code from the middle so that the thickness on both sides was roughly equal.

Then, gripping the top of the Law Code with both hands, he held it up vertically, exposing the contents to the camera and the door.

Gu Mian knew that even with the [Supernatural Editor Simulator], he couldn't completely convert the copy into an original. However, as long as it had some connection with the original, that was enough.

He addressed the camera in a sonorous voice, "Today is definitely a day worth recording in history. You can perhaps title this day as a 'Milestone of the Old World.' Of course, I sincerely hope that every year and every day will be as momentous as today..."

While everyone was wondering why he said those words, Gu Mian exerted a little force on both ends of the Law Code.

RRRRIP—

Everyone clearly heard that sound.

The director, the audience, and even those who weren't watching the show heard it too.

The sound seemed to drill into their ears from all directions, as if... the world itself was being torn apart.

Instinctively, someone looked up at the sky.

It was morning, and the weather was good.

The sun had risen above the mountains in the east and was dazzlingly bright.

It was as if a raging fire was sweeping across the east, transforming the horizon into a sea of fire. The mottled clouds interwoven in the blazing flames created a magnificent sight.

This scene was indeed awe-inspiring—if not for the damned fissure in the middle.

A nearly imperceptible fissure ran down the middle of the sun, seemingly intending to split it in two.

What was more terrifying was that the fissure was endless. Starting from the east, it stretched vertically across the sky, passing over everyone's heads, much like the contrail left by an airplane.

Yet this was far from over. After passing over everyone's heads, the fissure continued towards the west before disappearing into the horizon.

People saw the fissure in the sky splitting the heavens in two.

As Gu Mian applied more force, an even more grating tearing sound echoed from the Law Code in his hands.

To their horror, people discovered the rift in the sky had expanded! It was as if someone was tearing the sky apart. Small fragments—shards of the sky—began to fall from the pitch-black opening.

Fatty stared blankly at the torn sky outside the window, a single thought consuming his mind: It's all over. It seems we've really gone too far this time.

As Gu Mian increased the force, the rift in the sky grew even bigger, eventually turning into a vast chasm.

Beyond the chasm, it was pitch black; no one knew what lay there.

Everyone stared blankly at the sky, seemingly unable to believe what was happening before their eyes.

Small fissures began to spread around the chasm, and tiny shards rained down from the sky.

The sky was not as distant as they had imagined; pieces of it were already fluttering in front of them, falling onto the ground and their shoulders.

They picked up fallen pieces of the sky from their bodies—they were ashes.

Almost in an instant, the entire sky began to fracture. The azure sky peeled off in patches, revealing its true face beneath. The entire Human World seemed to be engulfed in a snowstorm of falling ash, as swirling ashes swept across the globe.

After the sky shattered, other things began to collapse as well.

A fine crumbling sound came from overhead. Gu Mian looked up at the ceiling to see that it was riddled with cracks and was falling apart piece by piece.

The world was turning to ash, and everyone was wailing in agony.

Gu Mian listened to the wails. The billowing dust increasingly obscured his vision, and the sound of the earth tearing apart echoed in his ears.

Crumbling, wailing, despair—this was the true state of the Old World at this moment.

Amidst the deafening rumbles, he looked out the window. Everything outside was a white blur; he couldn't see a thing.

Gradually, the cries subsided, and the endless ash seemed to be blown away by some unseen force.

Gu Mian saw the ashes before him dispersing, and what lay behind the dispersed ashes was an enormous face.

So ugly.

Gu Mian stared at Xiao Hong's face, which was almost pressing against his own.

He was back.

And Xiao Hong, like a dog ecstatic to see its master return, excitedly pressed its face close to Gu Mian's, just short of sticking out its tongue to lick him.

Chapter 532 No way, no way, there's really an author who can't write ten thousand words a day? \_1

Gu Mian pushed Xiao Hong's face away with disgust.

Xiao Hong's attempt to enter lapdog mode failed, so he retreated under the bed with a dejected expression—or whatever could pass for dejection on his face.

Gu Mian looked around and saw that everyone else had returned.

Everyone else was still in the same position as when they had entered the instance. Liu Ruyan was still standing by the door; before they entered, she had been discussing the Old World with Gu Mian, but shortly after, the world fell apart.

Liu Ruyan's face was somewhat pale, probably due to dust from the instance.

She staggered slightly, then immediately propped herself against the wall. Looking up, she gave Gu Mian a peculiar grin. "How I've missed this world. I never thought I'd be back so soon."

Gu Mian knew she was referring to the Old World. He wondered how she felt about what the Old World had become.

She seemed to have no desire to express her thoughts. Gu Mian saw her straighten her posture and pull her hand from the wall. "It's already late," she said. "I'd better go home... Oh, and I need to check on those people downstairs."

"Those people" referred to "Accompany me next year" and the others. He still didn't know if that girl had successfully hanged herself.

Su Xiaocha had probably survived thanks to the instance's collapse.

As Liu Ruyan slowly walked away and disappeared into the darkness, Fatty made a strange noise. "But Doctor," he said, "this time we didn't see any game announcements, and no compensation has been issued."

It seemed compensation was the only thing on Fatty's mind.

Chu Changge sat on the sofa, just as he had before they entered the instance. On the table before him was a cup of rose tea that would never cool. "Moreover," he said, "the Old World was slower in ejecting players from the instance this time."

Gu Mian nodded in agreement. Indeed.

He had thought the Old World would teleport them out of the instance when the first crack appeared in the sky, but it hadn't.

Consequently, Gu Mian had nearly torn his Law Code in two, which resulted in a downpour of bone ash in the Old World.

Gu Mian figured the Old World wouldn't have been thinking, 'Even if it cracks, I don't believe Gu Mian can really tear me apart.'

It should have wanted to kick them out the moment the first crack appeared, but it might not have succeeded.

"Perhaps it was hindered by Earth. You know, Earth is quite happy to see all parallel worlds destroyed. There's also another possibility," Chu Changge said, looking at Gu Mian. "When the first crack appeared, some of its functions might have been damaged, like the ability to kick players out of the instance."

Gu Mian rubbed his chin.

Fatty contemplated, "If it's the second scenario, does that mean the Old World couldn't kick us out when the first crack appeared? Did it then hurriedly rally NPCs to repair the function, fix it in under a minute, and then immediately kick the Doctor out?"

It might have even cursed something like, "To hell with you!" while doing so.

Fatty continued logically, "Of course, it's also possible the Old World is completely gone. If the instance disappeared, we would naturally come out."

But Chu Changge shook his head. "A world doesn't vanish so easily. Besides, Gu Mian didn't tear the true original. To destroy a Low-Dimensional World, one has to find its corresponding anchor in a higher-dimensional world."

"Speaking of the Old World's anchor... it must be related to the Law Code. If not the Law Code itself, then something similar. But I don't believe such a Law Code exists in the real world." Gu Mian had returned to his bed. Seeing him sit down, Xiao Hong crawled out from under it and lay spread-eagled on Gu Mian's bed, pretending to be a corpse.

No country in the world had a system resembling that of the Old World.

It was a pathological system, one that even novel authors would find too absurd.

At this moment, Fatty, who had been an avid reader of web novels his entire childhood, suddenly chimed in, "Since the anchor of the Second World is a novel, could the Old World's Law Code also be a setting from a novel?"

They could only seek things that didn't exist in reality from the realm of fiction.

What Fatty said made sense, but Gu Mian suddenly thought of a question. "If the Law Code originates from a novel, wouldn't the world created from that Law Code be even more subordinate than the novel's world?"

"It's like if I wrote a book," Gu Mian mused, "and the protagonist was an author who, in turn, also wrote a book."

"I would belong to the real world, my protagonist to a Low-Dimensional World, and the book written by my protagonist would belong to a dimension even lower than that Low-Dimensional World."

Fatty looked a bit lost. For some reason, this reminded him of the story about an old monk telling a story to a young monk.

While Fatty was racking his already limited brain cells, an announcement appeared.

[Notice of Temporary Closure of Special Instance]

[Due to force majeure, the special instance "Metamorphosis" will be closed as of today.]

The announcement didn't mention the Old World at all, which was expected, as other players were unaware of the existence of Low-Dimensional Worlds.

Although the announcement was extremely short, Gu Mian had a feeling: the shorter the notice, the more serious the situation.

Chu Changge glanced at the time. "This notice was issued twenty-one minutes after we left the instance. It suggests the situation is so severe they barely had time to post it."

"Exactly," Fatty chimed in, recalling his past. "When I worked at a fireworks factory, if there was a minor incident, the boss would immediately focus on how to draft a press release, how to reassure everyone,

and how to talk about future prospects. If he had the chance, he'd even share his heartfelt sentiments with all the workers, going on longer than a college entrance essay. And by 'minor incident,' I mean something like a small pile of goods catching fire."

Gu Mian listened with interest.

Fatty continued, "Then, the factory actually blew up. And when I say 'blew up,' I mean the kind of explosion that takes out everyone and the warehouse, the whole lot. That time, the boss issued only one sentence: 'On XX date of XX month, a fire incident occurred at our factory. The company immediately implemented emergency measures, and the fire has now been successfully extinguished.'"

The fire was extinguished, and so was the boss, in a manner of speaking.

That was the last statement he ever issued before he was locked up.

Hearing Fatty's story, Gu Mian thought the new notice sounded quite a bit like that fireworks factory boss's final statement.

Just a few minutes later, another notice appeared.

[Notice of Immediate Suspension of All Instances]

When Gu Mian first saw the title, he thought the entire global game was shutting down. Reading further, however, he realized it was just going into maintenance.

[Effective immediately, all game instances worldwide will undergo maintenance for a period of fifteen days, from today until June 25th. All ticket booths will be closed, and players will be unable to enter instances. The game supermarket will remain operational.]

[We look forward to bringing players an enhanced gaming experience post-maintenance.]

In other words, all instances globally would be shut down for half a month. It seemed he'd wreaked quite a bit of havoc this time. The previous Lantern Festival event had only caused a long list of instances to shut down; this time, a global suspension was warranted.

#### Chapter 533 The Title Was Eaten by GuGu\_1

It seems that Old World is still a critical game world. Its collapse caused the global game to shut down completely.

"But with the ticket booths closed, it doesn't make much difference whether the supermarket is open or not," Fatty muttered to himself.

Aside from losing their source of Game Coins after the instance shutdown, players needed tickets to enter the supermarket, which could only be issued at ticket booths. Now, only players who had hoarded supermarket tickets could enter.

As he thought this over, Fatty rushed into his room and rummaged through his cartoon Hello Kitty wallet on his desk. Sure enough, he fished out a stack of tickets.

He enthusiastically waved his stack of supermarket entrance tickets. "Before, the Doctor found it annoying to buy tickets before entering the supermarket, so I bought a big stack in advance. I never thought they'd come in handy today."

Actually, even without this stack of tickets, Gu Mian and the others wouldn't starve. They would just have fewer food options.

"Ah," Fatty sighed as he flipped through his wallet. "The instances have been shut down for half a month. Quite a few people must be starving, right?"

Indeed. Because the instances were somewhat challenging and failure led to item drops, players rarely had many Game Coins. They usually lived from hand to mouth.

Just as Fatty was fumbling around in his Hello Kitty wallet, Gu Mian noticed that his compensation had arrived.

Looking at the mail, in addition to the standard one thousand Game Coins, there was an extra special item.

This special item was obviously published by Old World and had an inextricable connection with the Law Code—

["Wildlife Protection Law"]

[Introduction: "The moment it enters your mouth, the Wildlife Protection Law is activated!"

The most prominent characteristic of humans is their desire to taste anything they see, leading many rare animals to be ruthlessly hunted. Even after taking one bite, they want a second.

As wildlife continued to decrease, people realized this couldn't go on, thus birthing the 'Wildlife Protection Law'!]

[Function: Enter a player's name under the 'Wildlife' section of this law, and that player will be immediately included in the wildlife protection list. Under the 'Wildlife Protection Law', all attacks and injuries against that player will be restricted for a short period. Each player's name can only be entered once.]

[Additional: The player who enters someone else's name is the lawmaker. The higher the lawmaker's deterrence level, the stronger the effect of the 'Wildlife Protection Law' and the longer it lasts.]

Each person's name could only be entered once.

Gu Mian flipped through the Wildlife Protection Law. The 'Wildlife' section had ten slots, meaning that after entering ten names, the item was useless.

"So, this means..." Fatty glanced at Gu Mian's new special item. "If the Doctor enters someone's name, you're the lawmaker. For instance, if you see a ghost chasing me and enter my name, the ghost won't chase me anymore, right?"

Chu Changge interjected unhelpfully, "I think even without the protection law, the result would be the same."

Fatty choked. Chu Changge was right. If the Doctor saw him being chased by a ghost, the ghost must have also noticed the Doctor... In that case, whether the law existed or not, the outcome would be the same.

However, combining this law with the cheat group would be pretty cool, Fatty thought.

Fatty started to daydream. In a situation where the Doctor couldn't reach him and he was being chased by a ghost, he would call out in the group chat, "Doctor, save me!" He'd expect Gu Mian to transform him into wildlife in time, but then he'd end up being eaten by the ghost because Gu Mian hadn't checked the group chat in time...

Fatty's imagination ran wild, his face twisting.

"Speaking of which, this thing says the higher the lawmaker's deterrence, the stronger the effect, right?" Gu Mian looked at the protection law in his hand. "So, if Fatty is the lawmaker, would the effect basically be null?"

Fatty finally snapped out of his fantasies. Just as he was about to defend himself, red-faced, Chu Changge said, "I'm afraid so."

Gu Mian pondered, "So the effect should be stronger when it's in my hands."

But he had no item slots, and his back was usually burdened with an enormous chainsaw. Besides, he and Chu Changge were often separated in instances.

As he was thinking, his eyes fell on his brother standing nearby. His brother couldn't take items into the disc, but recalling how he'd clutched a rat the entire time in Old World, Gu Mian figured he could act as a temporary pack mule. He handed the Wildlife Protection Law to his brother. After a moment's thought, he also gave him a pen. Perfect.

Finally, Gu Mian stuffed the CD into his brother's pocket.

The Goddess's brother couldn't stray too far from the CD. With it in his pocket, he could roam freely.

When entering an instance, the CD usually stayed in Gu Mian's pocket. When outside of an instance, Gu Mian would often let him take the CD out for a walk.

But his brother usually didn't go out.

After repeatedly checking Chu Changge's and Fatty's mail, Gu Mian confirmed he was the only one who received an extra special item. The instance probably thought I used too much force tearing up the Law Code and must be tired, so they gave me extra compensation.

Gu Mian was indeed a bit tired. He rubbed the bridge of his nose.

It was nearly three in the morning, and a drizzle had started outside the window, showing signs of growing heavier.

Xiao Hong, already feeling restless, had climbed onto Gu Mian's back and was nibbling at his head.

Gu Mian lifted Xiao Hong off his head and stuffed her under the bed. Then he took off his blood-stained jacket. "I'm a bit tired today. Going to sleep. Good night, everyone."

With that, he rested his head on the soft pillow, pulled up his small quilt, and used one hand to push Xiao Hong, who was struggling to crawl out from under the bed, back down.

Fatty trotted off with Gu Mian's white coat from the bedside, went to the bathroom, and shoved the special item into the washing machine. Before pouring in the detergent, he carefully checked if the bottle contained toilet cleaner instead.

When Fatty came out of the bathroom, he saw Xiao Hong struggling out once more, perched on the headboard with her maw wide open.

Gu Mian was already asleep. Against the backdrop of Xiao Hong's gaping maw, his face looked utterly serene.

After holding her maw open over Gu Mian's head for a while, Xiao Hong seemed to realize he was fast asleep. She reluctantly closed her mouth and quietly crawled back under the bed.

"Ah," Fatty said, gazing at Gu Mian's room. "So, the Doctor gets tired too, huh?"

Fatty had been tagging along with the trouble-prone Gu Mian for half a year, and this was the first time he had seen Gu Mian show such fatigue.

Chu Changge, looking at the "Ghost Editor Simulator" on the table, said, "Of course he's tired. He just altered a world's most fundamental data."

Only Gu Mian could manipulate the Law Code; others might not even be able to leave a mark on the book.

Just then, Fatty heard a knock on the door. With two households now residing in the building, a knock wasn't surprising.

He hurried to the door and looked through the peephole. Outside stood Accompany me next year—the one whose noose Gu Mian had stolen.

After the collapse of the Metamorphosis instance, the group downstairs had likely figured out Gu Mian's identity.

「Meanwhile, Xiao Qiao had long known that Gu Mian and his group had left the instance.」

The player she had held hostage and interrogated, Yao Zhai, managed to escape. Once Gu Mian and the others left the instance, Xiao Qiao immediately released the collar she had been clutching and departed without a word.

Yao Zhai felt something was off about the way Xiao Qiao departed; she was stumbling, likely because her legs were numb from standing for so long.

It's worth mentioning that Xiao Qiao was a person of principle. She knew where Gu Mian and his group were staying and found her way to Liu Ruyan's hotel on that rainy night.

Since it was the middle of the night, the front door was locked.

So Xiao Qiao politely asked in the group chat, "Excuse me, can someone come downstairs and open the door for me?"

However, everyone was already asleep, so no one saw her polite request.

Consequently, Xiao Qiao, who could have easily smashed the door down, waited patiently in the rainy night for someone to open it. She waited until Gu Mian, an early riser, discovered her polite request upon waking.

At this time, Fatty was sound asleep. Chu Changge was silent but also asleep.

Liu Ruyan also showed no reaction.

Gu Mian thought for a moment and had a sinking feeling. He immediately went downstairs to check and saw Xiao Qiao collapsed on the doorstep, looking like she was on the verge of death.

Chapter 534 Prohibition of uploading any lascivious, vulgar,

The door Xiao Qiao had been so careful not to damage was finally kicked open by Gu Mian.

It's worth noting that when Gu Mian was carrying Xiao Qiao upstairs, he happened to run into Accompany me next year, who was on her way out. She recognized Xiao Qiao immediately and gaped, "You... you... Is this... this... the famous star?" She had recognized Xiao Qiao at first glance; after all, Xiao Qiao was a household name. From Accompany me next year's expression, Gu Mian suspected she had already imagined a whole drama: The world is going to the dogs! Instance villain kidnaps popular celebrity in broad daylight!

Indeed, Accompany me next year suspected as much. She even wondered if Gu Mian had knocked Xiao Qiao out and abducted her; after all, Gu Mian had a prior offense of stealing Accompany me next year's own noose. Just as Accompany me next year was awkwardly wondering whether to cry out against this injustice, she saw Xiao Qiao, nestled in Gu Mian's arms, suddenly open her eyes. Xiao Qiao stared at Gu Mian's jawline for a moment, then, apparently reassured, fainted again.

Accompany me next year's mouth fell slightly agape. This doesn't look like a kidnapping... Could they have known each other before? Truly baffling.

While she stood there, still dumbfounded, Gu Mian had already stepped past her and was heading upstairs. Just as Gu Mian's back was about to disappear from Accompany me next year's view, she suddenly heard him, already on the stairs, stop and ask, "How's Xie Bi'an doing?"

Accompany me next year didn't understand why Gu Mian was asking this. She replied honestly, "Same as always. He stays in his room, and we don't know what he's up to."

Then, Accompany me next year heard Gu Mian say, "Oh," before he vanished from sight.

Gu Mian roused Fatty from his sleep. The instant his body separated from the bed, Fatty jolted awake, subconsciously wiping his mouth. Before Fatty could tell if he'd been drooling, a dull THUMP sounded beside his ear. Now wide awake, Fatty saw that the THUMP had come from Xiao Qiao, who was currently on his bed. Fatty understood: Gu Mian had lifted him up and then placed a very damp Xiao Qiao onto the bed.

Fatty's mind rarely landed on the most crucial points. He didn't wonder why Xiao Qiao was soaking wet, where she had come from, or how long a damp mattress would take to air dry. Instead, he began to ponder a far more profound question. Tears welled up in Fatty's eyes. His first words to Gu Mian were, "Why didn't you go haul Brother Chu out of bed?"

Because Chu Changge slept on the sofa.

Naturally, Chu Changge had also been woken by Gu Mian's commotion.

Eventually, the situation evolved into three humans and two ghosts lining up neatly by the bed to stare at the soaked Xiao Qiao lying on it. Fatty, however, was mostly staring at his own drenched sheets and mattress.

"No one opened the door, so I waited downstairs all night," Gu Mian succinctly explained the cause of the situation. He reached out and touched Xiao Qiao's forehead. It was still hot. Gu Mian had already pinched her nose and forced the fever medicine down her throat. Watching Gu Mian administer the medicine made Fatty's eyelids twitch; he seemed afraid Gu Mian might pinch Xiao Qiao's nose right off.

"But she can't keep wearing these clothes, can she?" Fatty declared, his face a mask of righteousness. "We should help her change! Doctor, theoretically speaking, you're not a man, so you do it. This is a great opportunity for plot development!"

Gu Mian, whose gender was a question mark, promptly backhanded Fatty's head to the side.

Of course, among those present, only Xiao Hong could change Xiao Qiao's clothes. But, strangely, Fatty chose this moment to question Xiao Hong's gender. "Speaking of which, Xiao Hong's appearance is rather androgynous. We only think she's a female ghost because she has long hair and likes to wear dresses, right? What if she's actually a male ghost? After all, some boys like wearing dresses too." As he spoke, he glanced at Chu Changge, who was standing nearby.

Light glinted off Chu Changge's glasses; he acted as if he hadn't heard a word.

Gu Mian actually hadn't considered that. Thinking back, it seemed that when Xiao Hong clung to his back, he hadn't really noticed any distinctly female characteristics.

Meanwhile, Xiao Hong indignantly puffed out her chest, as if trying to prove something. Seeing Xiao Hong so eager to prove herself, Gu Mian was certain she was indeed a female ghost.

"Alright, everyone out." Gu Mian grabbed the brother ghost—who was fawningly calling Xiao Qiao 'sister'—with one hand, and Fatty—who was questioning Xiao Hong's gender—with the other, leading the human and the ghost out of the bedroom. Chu Changge followed Gu Mian out and closed the door behind them.

The two men, one ghost, and Fatty crowded onto the living room sofa, making for a rather lively scene.

Fatty picked up a glass of cold water from the coffee table and took a sip. "Thanks to Miss Xiao Qiao, we learned that the first-place winner in 'Metamorphosis' can't leave the instance. Who would've thought she'd faint at our door before we could even thank her." If he hadn't known Xiao Qiao's mind worked differently from most people's, Fatty would have suspected her of faking the faint to scam them.

"Oh, right," Fatty suddenly recalled. "Doctor, after you fell asleep last night, Accompany me next year came over."

Gu Mian looked at Fatty, who was holding the glass. "What did she want?"

"She said she came to express Su Xiaocha's gratitude. Su Xiaocha was so badly hurt in the instance that she was too weak to do anything herself once she got out, so she had Accompany me next year come convey her thanks." Su Xiaocha had been left to "marinate" in a cesspit for an entire installment of the show. If Gu Mian hadn't collapsed the instance, she would never have gotten out.

Fatty lowered his voice. "Doctor, those people downstairs have probably recognized you by now."

During the 'Metamorphosis' program, the host always used Gu Mian's real name. His identity had been exposed long ago. Only Accompany me next year and Su Xiaocha, who couldn't watch TV in their village, were unaware. But they both probably knew by now. An instance collapsing isn't a common occurrence. Although no compensation list was posted this time, one could make a pretty accurate guess about what had happened.

Fatty was actually a bit worried Gu Mian might be assassinated, but seeing Xiao Hong's grotesque face and the brother ghost sticking close to Gu Mian, he felt somewhat reassured.

Chu Changge was once again fiddling with those few tattered pages from the Second World. Whenever he had free time, he tended to stare blankly at these sheets of paper.

Fatty sidled up to Chu Changge curiously. "Brother Chu, since these are tattered pages from the Second World, doesn't that mean the book itself has been torn up?"

Considering that Gu Mian tearing up mere counterfeits in the Old World caused such huge turmoil, and now the actual Second World is in pieces... how could that world possibly survive?

Chu Changge said, "A truly clever world knows how to hide itself. Perhaps the Second World initially existed in book form, but when Earth discovered clues and took action, it racked its brains to escape and adopted a different mode of existence."

That would make things difficult. They couldn't even find the book, let alone now when they had no idea what the Second World had transformed into. What if it turned into a lump of dung in a latrine? Would they really have to go rummage through a privy?

Chu Changge continued, "However, changing its medium is very difficult. The Second World must have only recently replaced the book with some other medium."

Fatty asked curiously, "Brother Chu, how can you be so sure the Second World only recently changed its medium?"

Chu Changge pushed up his glasses and turned to look at Fatty. Meeting Chu Changge's gaze, Fatty inexplicably felt a chill.

Then he heard Chu Changge say, "Earth's pursuit of Low-Dimensional Worlds is undoubtedly an all-out, massive undertaking. The Second World's original form was a book. Earth would spare no effort to eradicate any Low-Dimensional World hidden within such a medium. Now, try to recall any major historical changes related to books."

Upon hearing this, Fatty immediately thought of the Renaissance, but then he shook his head. If Earth wanted to eradicate the Second World, it would surely involve widespread destruction...

At that moment, something occurred to him. The hairs on the back of his neck suddenly stood on end, and his scalp tingled. He suddenly recalled a period of history familiar to almost everyone.

The Burning of Books and Burying of Scholars.

Chapter 535 Whining, the book I was chasing has gone silent\_1

Two thousand years ago, the grand manhunt against the Low-Dimensional World had already begun.

Chu Changge put down the torn page he was holding.

"Two thousand two hundred years ago, Emperor Qin Shihuang burned books and buried scholars alive, setting ablaze the historical books of the six kingdoms, except those of his own Qin dynasty.

Two thousand years ago, the collapse of the Wang Mang Dynasty led to the destruction of tens of thousands of books.

One thousand six hundred years ago, during the chaotic times of the Five Barbarians, countless pieces of literature were buried in the inferno of war.

One thousand five hundred years ago, Western Wei captured Jiangling. Right before Emperor Yuan of Southern Liang Dynasty was taken hostage, he set fire to the book repository, burning one hundred and forty thousand volumes.

One thousand four hundred years ago, Yuwen Huaji usurped the throne and murdered Emperor Yang of Sui Dynasty, torching the palace and resulting in the loss of three hundred and seventy thousand volumes of literature. Li Shiming, who succeeded the throne, immediately dispatched people to transport the remaining books via water routes to Chang'an. However, the boats capsized halfway, and the few remaining volumes did not survive.

Also one thousand four hundred years ago, An Lushan instigated a rebellion, famously known as the An Lushan Rebellion, during which eighty thousand volumes of books were destroyed.

From the peasant uprising led by Huang Chao one thousand two hundred years ago, the Jingkang Catastrophe nine hundred years ago, and the Shaoxing Catastrophe during the Southern Song Dynasty, down to the recent twenty-year-long book burning campaign by Emperor Qianlong. Similar incidents have also occurred overseas; I won't go into details about the rest... As a Low-Dimensional World, any changes to its dependent object would be detected by Earth. But two hundred years ago, Earth was still relentlessly searching for the Second World among books, indicating that, at least during those two hundred years, the Second World existed in the form of books."

Upon speaking thus far, Chu Changge paused and looked towards Fatty, who was standing beside him with his mouth agape.

Noticing he was being stared at, Fatty stammered after closing his mouth, "So, are you saying that Earth did all these things?"

Chu Changge shook his head. "Not exactly. Apart from irresistible forces, those who could launch events on such a large scale must have been significant figures who left a remarkable mark on history; it's difficult to influence them. Perhaps some simply burned books, or perhaps, under Earth's intervention... they had already detected the world's ultimate trajectory long ago."

Within this torrent of history, some were able to perceive the threats derived from humanity.

Fatty had a habit of making odd comments, and Gu Mian heard his next question. "So, would the banning of supernatural novels also stem from a fear that if too many people read them, it would lead to the creation of a Low-Dimensional World?"

He still recalled how the supernatural section of a certain website had tragically transformed into a mystery section not long ago.

Chu Changge turned his head slightly, seemingly uninterested in answering Fatty's idiotic question.

Amidst Chu Changge's rambling, Gu Mian felt a bit hungry.

But he remembered they were in the middle of a serious discussion.

Gu Mian rubbed his stomach. "Now, we don't know the true form of the Second World. So, apart from targeting the Second World, Earth must have also gone after other worlds. Besides books, what else has Earth aggressively hunted?"

Fatty's expression looked strange at his words. He turned his gaze to Gu Mian, an expression of hesitation on his face.

Of course, Gu Mian knew what was going on in Fatty's mind. He immediately used the exclusion method. "Apart from me."

Yet, Fatty still couldn't help but speak up. "Doctor, don't you find it weird? Why have you been so unlucky since you were a child, relentlessly targeted for assassination by Earth? And all these people from Low-Dimensional Worlds seem so eager to protect you. You must have some connection with the Low-Dimensional World."

Just as Fatty was about to propose his theory about "the Low-Dimensional World cultivating into a human before the founding of the nation," Chu Changge suddenly interjected, "Gu Mian is not a Low-Dimensional World. As long as the main body is found, Earth has absolute power to annihilate a Low-Dimensional World, easily causing it to vanish like ashes into thin air. But evidently, Earth found Gu Mian twenty years ago."

That's right. It was obvious Gu Mian wasn't a Low-Dimensional World that Earth could control, given that Earth had been hunting him for a full twenty years without managing to kill him.

Fatty became puzzled again. "Then what exactly are you, Doctor?"

Upon reflection, he realized there seemed to be nothing worth Earth's relentless pursuit for over twenty years.

Perhaps if they visit the orphanage where the Doctor first lived, they might find something out?

While Fatty and Chu Changge were discussing Gu Mian's unusual life story, Gu Mian rose and took the jar of strawberry jam Fatty had made the previous night from the fridge, scooping spoonfuls into his mouth.

Only then did Fatty notice something. "Doctor, are you hungry?"

Gu Mian nodded heavily.

As someone prone to causing explosions wherever he went, the number of times Gu Mian had played with fire in the past twenty-odd years could be counted on one hand. The last time he had touched a pot was during military training in university. They had been taken to a neighboring city for a military training elective focused on cooking. The enthusiastic instructor planned to teach them how to stew soup. However, when it was Gu Mian's turn, the pressure cooker exploded. The lid shot up violently, knocking out two of the instructor's front teeth.

Fortunately, Chu Changge wasn't there at the time; otherwise, the list of property damage would certainly have included "the instructor's two front teeth."

The instructor ended up teaching post-natal care for sows in a different field.

For the sake of his own teeth, Gu Mian seldom went near any cooking area.

Fatty had no choice but to pat his backside, stand up, and resignedly head into the kitchen.

Just then, Xiao Hong had finally finished changing Xiao Qiao's clothes. She tiptoed out of the room, seemingly wanting to show off her taste in clothes to Gu Mian.

Gu Mian glanced into the room and saw Xiao Qiao dressed in a bright red skirt—Xiao Hong's favorite. Because Xiao Hong had a habit of crawling under beds and then climbing onto them, Gu Mian had specially bought many dresses for her.

Of course, her favorite was the reddest one.

Seeing Xiao Qiao in that reddest dress, Gu Mian was reminded of a certain brand of ham sausage with bright red packaging...

Shaking off the thought of ham sausage, Gu Mian turned to Chu Changge. "Liu Ruyan hasn't been seen since she returned last night, and she hasn't appeared this morning either."

Even after Gu Mian had brought Xiao Qiao back and her clothes had been changed, Liu Ruyan still hadn't made a sound.

If she were awake, she would have certainly come to find Xiao Qiao as soon as she saw the messages in the group chat.

In Gu Mian's memory, Liu Ruyan rarely slept. Sometimes, when he returned home at two in the morning, he would see Liu Ruyan sitting at the counter. When he left at seven in the morning, she would still be there, as if she hadn't moved at all.

This time, she had been sleeping for an unusually long time.

Chu Changge pushed up his glasses. "The Old World is her world. It's normal for her to be nostalgic when reminded of familiar scenes."

But Gu Mian didn't think Liu Ruyan would become nostalgic because of the Old World. I reckon when she wakes up, she'll come to take Xiao Qiao away and might even fight with Xiao Hong over Xiao Qiao's dress...

Fatty's breakfast was quickly ready: sweet porridge and vegetable egg rolls.

Oh, he had also thoughtfully prepared a bowl for each of the two ghosts, although one could only call out "Sister," and the other only stared at the bowl in Gu Mian's hand.

"Doctor, the instances will be suspended for half a month. What do you plan to do during this time?" Fatty inquired, lifting his spoon.

They had returned to Lianhua City, but due to the change in the Low-Dimensional World's dependent object, the trail to the Low-Dimensional World had been lost, and they couldn't enter instances for the next half-month.

Right now, Fatty was bored with too much time on his hands.

Gu Mian felt there were quite a few things they could do.

Lianhua University had collapsed due to the incident. They could go there and look for clues.

The orphanage he had inadvertently bankrupted hadn't been demolished. He could go inside and reminisce about his childhood.

There was an amusement park in the west of the city. They could go there to relax when they had free time.

Of course, there was one important thing to do right now.

They needed to buy a bed; otherwise, someone would always have to sleep on the couch.

Chapter 536 Happy Ghost Festival to Everyone\_1

After breakfast, Gu Mian went to knock on Liu Ruyan's door for a while, but there was no response. It seemed she wasn't in the room.

The main door on the first floor, which Gu Mian had kicked open, was still swaying in the wind. If Liu Ruyan had left, she should have seen this precarious door.

The nearby Fatty hesitated and spoke, "Maybe she had an emergency and had to leave."

"What emergency could she possibly have," Gu Mian stared at the door. "Before the game started, she was incredibly idle. Other than flashing fake smiles at people, she didn't do anything productive."

They didn't linger for too long at Liu Ruyan's door. They left the inn and headed for the nearest supermarket.

Driving the Spirit Car wasn't practical, so Gu Mian chose to walk.

Lianhua City was even more desolate now than it had been six months ago. Wild grass grew rampant along the roadsides, nearly reaching calf-high. The clusters of wrecked cars on the road seemed to have been partially cleared; some had been moved to the sides of the main thoroughfare. Perhaps people

had suddenly realized they would never drive on these roads again and gave up midway, clearing only a small stretch of road.

As far as the eye could see, a large pile of wrecked cars lay across the middle of the road, blanketed in thick dust. Gu Mian spotted a heart traced by a finger on one dusty windshield, reminiscent of how children draw on fogged-up glass. However, it was clear this heart had also been drawn a long time ago, as a fresh, thin layer of dust already coated it.

The other two paid no mind to the graffiti. Fatty plucked a blade of grass from the roadside and chewed on it. Ignoring his build, he had the air of a wandering hero from a martial arts epic.

Chu Changge was silently observing their surroundings. About halfway through their walk, Gu Mian heard him remark, "Compared to six months ago, the population here has decreased by at least half. On the way back the night of my college entrance exam, I observed the lighting situation in the residential buildings; very few lights were on."

That was understandable. Now, electricity cards had to be purchased with Game Coins, so people didn't turn on their lights at night because they were poor.

"I took another look just now," Chu Changge continued. "From the outside, you can only see a small area around the windows. But judging by the amount of dust on the glass and the winter clothes still on the drying racks, most of these people died several months ago."

"I see." Gu Mian instinctively reached for his pocket, only to realize his current outfit had none.

His white lab coat was being washed and hadn't dried yet. Today, he was wearing a black sweatshirt stitched with many gold sequins—a classic example of Fatty's aesthetic.

When Gu Mian first saw the sweatshirt, he'd been inwardly reluctant, but after putting it on, it surprisingly suited him.

The chainsaw had been put into Fatty's inventory. So today, Gu Mian looked like a normal person—a rather handsome one at that.

Therefore, when the NPCs in the supermarket saw this handsome face, their expressions were ones of utter astonishment.

Gu Mian waved as he approached the sales floor. "No need to look so stunned."

Amazed, my foot!

The NPC in a supermarket uniform at the checkout counter instinctively reached for a nearby display, but his hand found only empty space. The sharp-eyed Fatty recalled that display previously held a sign: "Gu Mian and Dogs Not Allowed Inside."

Even though Gu Mian looked normal today, the NPCs recognized him.

With the instances suspended, players had lost their source of Game Coins. Consequently, the supermarket had few customers, leaving only Gu Mian's group and the salesclerks staring at each other.

The salesclerks clearly didn't want to see this face, but since Gu Mian and his group had already arrived, they didn't dare try to drive them out. They could only suppress their inner terror and greet them with smiles.

"W-what can I get for you today?" Gu Mian turned to see a somewhat familiar salesclerk standing before him, though he couldn't quite place the man.

Fatty whispered a reminder, "He's the one who sells Spirit Cars! The Spirit Car salesman!"

"Ah." Only then did Gu Mian recall this salesclerk beaming when he'd sold them their first Spirit Car.

So the beaming salesclerk was now working as a greeter, a role that better suited his disposition.

Without inquiring further into the salesclerk's arduous career journey, Gu Mian stated his purpose, "I want to buy a bed."

The salesclerk instinctively glanced behind Gu Mian but saw no female companion. Still, he asked, just to be sure, "Are you looking for a single or a double bed?"

A single bed, of course.

Perhaps it was Gu Mian's imagination, but the supermarket seemed remarkably efficient today. Less than ten minutes after they'd entered, the salesclerk had everything arranged. Fatty even managed to roll around on the bed a few times during the process. Gu Mian could take the bed and leave immediately.

However, there was now a problem...

As a piece of furniture, the bed couldn't be stored in an inventory.

This meant Gu Mian and his companions would have to carry the two-meter-long bed back themselves.

The NPCs, who had helped Gu Mian select the bed, had just breathed a collective sigh of relief when the man suddenly stopped, a troubled expression on his face.

"Is something wrong?" the salesclerk inquired softly.

"I didn't drive," Gu Mian said. "How about I leave the bed here for now, and I'll come back with a vehicle next time..."

Before Gu Mian could finish, the salesclerk before him interrupted, a peculiar expression on his face. "That's alright, we offer home delivery! We can take it back for you."

Gu Mian was surprised. Has the supermarket's service become this thorough?

Fatty nodded emphatically. "The last time I came to get the Spirit Car repaired, everyone was very helpful. They even directly replaced it with a new one for us!"

Chu Changge's somber voice drifted over, "I think they just want you to make your purchase and leave quickly."

Ignoring Chu Changge's words, Gu Mian graciously accepted the free home delivery service.

He bought an assembly-required bed. The NPCs dismantled it into four parts, and eight salesclerks carried the components, following Gu Mian.

Fatty had never seen salesclerks leave the supermarket before; today was a real eye-opener for him.

And Fatty wasn't the only one whose eyes were opened today...

Ever since exiting the instance, the traumatized Su Xiaocha often found herself listlessly gazing out the window, and today was no exception.

As she gazed blankly out the window, a peculiar procession suddenly entered her field of vision.

She saw three figures approaching from a distance, trailed by a group in tidy uniforms who were carrying something on their shoulders.

She stared in confusion in that direction, only to see the three people were indeed heading her way. After a short while, she suddenly found the man leading them, the one wearing a black sweatshirt studded with gold sequins, somewhat familiar.

It didn't take her long to recognize that man as Gu Mian. Shortly after recognizing Gu Mian, she also identified the group following them.

Those neat clothes—they were the uniforms of the salesclerks from the game's supermarket!

Su Xiaocha's jaw dropped. Her mind went blank for two seconds, and then she started shouting to her friends, "Quick, come look at this!"

"What's wrong? Did a line of sows jump into a ditch?" Know my thoughts ambled slouchingly to the window, glanced out, and beheld a sight even more bizarre than sows diving into a ditch.

So You Si also started calling out to friends, "Quick, come look!"

Accompany me next year lifted an eyelid to glance at the two. "What now? Did a line of ghosts jump into the sea?" As she spoke, she also walked to the window and peered out.

Thus, when Gu Mian led the salesclerks back to the inn, he found three people gathered at the entrance.

Chapter 537 It's Daytime Now! \_1

Su Xiaocha and two others had come to verify the identity of this group of people. Lai Nian tried to access the player information of the group standing at the door but couldn't. That's when it dawned on her.

"Are these people really the supermarket staff?" Gu Mian heard Lai Nian's rising tone, a strange edge to it.

Gu Mian gave her a puzzled look, "Of course they are. Who else could they be pretending to be?"

Upon hearing this, the faces of the three at the door changed, looking rather suspicious.

"What's wrong?" Gu Mian glanced at the three.

Lai Nian forcefully suppressed the urge to retort. After a long silence, she finally spat out two words, "Nothing." She had long known Gu Mian had a peculiar character and unpredictable behavior; getting a group of NPCs to work as laborers probably wasn't difficult for him.

They watched the legendary player direct the group up the stairs. Despite being used as laborers, the NPCs did not display a hint of complaint; instead, they exuded a consistent, overflowing sense of happiness.

"Damn, I've never seen the sales clerks at the supermarket look this happy," You Si muttered, watching an NPC hauling a bed frame. "Why do they seem so elated being laborers?"

Gu Mian, who was still on the first floor, suddenly approached the group, "By the way, have you seen the landlord today?"

Lai Nian instinctively took a step back and shook her head, "No... we haven't..."

Gu Mian acknowledged with a grunt before climbing the stairs.

As Gu Mian's retreating figure diminished, the trio exchanged glances. Just as they were attempting to figure out what to say next, a man abruptly entered the inn.

They turned to look and recognized Xingluo Buzhichu, who had left half an hour ago.

Xingluo, part of their group, had also been teleported into the Metamorphosis instance. He was allocated to a relatively benign group of guests.

His luck was uncanny. During the college entrance exam event, others answered Xingluo's questions first, leading to their deaths due to rule violations, while only Xingluo survived. In the Metamorphosis event, he was just background decoration. Gu Mian's brilliance overshadowed the entire show, drawing all the attention away from the others and allowing Xingluo to hide until the instance collapsed.

The inconspicuous Xingluo walked into the room and saw the trio exchanging glances in the lobby.

He asked, puzzled, "What's going on?"

Lai Nian responded in an odd tone, "A group of sales clerks just came here carrying beds to the upper floor. They're doing labor work."

Xingluo was taken aback; he had never seen sales clerks leave the supermarket, let alone act as laborers. He automatically assumed she was delirious, "Are you okay?"

Before Lai Nian could retort, the sound of footsteps descended from the stairs—it sounded like someone was coming down.

She didn't rush to speak and motioned with her chin towards the stairs, "See for yourself."

Xingluo also looked towards the top of the stairs. The sound of footsteps continued for about a minute before a figure appeared. A person with an ordinary face, dressed in a uniform, emerged at the staircase landing.

Xingluo stared at this gloomy-looking person. He was indeed dressed in the standard uniform of a sales clerk.

Following him, several other similarly dressed men came down one after another, each with a desolate expression. It was true that none of them had an accessible player panel.

Only then did Xingluo believe. His mind went blank for a moment. The first words out of his mouth were, "Gu Mian's doing?"

It was only when the Metamorphosis instance collapsed that Xingluo had realized the green-clad doctor was Gu Mian, and only then did he grasp that he had been experiencing the same instance as such a terrifying person.

Lai Nian struggled to nod, "It was him."

Everyone fell silent for a while.

It wasn't until they watched the despondent sales clerks exit the building that Xingluo broke the silence, "I actually kind of envy him."

Gu Mian seemed different from others. In the current world, only he appeared to live freely. Even though they didn't know why the previous few instances had collapsed, one could easily guess Gu Mian had a hand in it. Unlike them, who worried every day about their next meal, feared loss every time they

entered an instance, and dreaded the coming winter if they didn't enter instances. Now that instances worldwide had been suspended for a month, all players had lost their source of Game Coins and had to tighten their belts. Yet Gu Mian seemed completely unaffected. He was even... gathering a group to go to an amusement park?

Xingluo was stunned as he watched Gu Mian come down the stairs. Behind him was Fatty, holding a small notebook and murmuring plans; a spectacled man with what seemed like a paralyzed face; a gray-haired man who kept calling someone 'younger sister'; and a woman in a red skirt with an indescribable appearance.

At this moment, Fatty was intently looking at the small notebook in his hand, rambling, "There's a Lianhua Amusement Park in the west of the city. I used to work there and still roughly remember the attractions. First, we need to buy tickets... well, we don't need to buy tickets. Upon entering, there should be a group of beauties doing a hula dance. That's probably gone now. But Doctor, if you want to see it, I can change clothes and reluctantly perform a bit."

"Scram."

"...Anyway, we're going to start from near the main entrance. If I recall correctly, the closest attractions to the entrance are the carousel and the pirate ship. There are also a few claw machines near the entrance, which aren't bad..."

Lai Nian and her companions watched wistfully as Gu Mian's group walked out the door. Fatty's chattering voice grew fainter until it disappeared entirely.

"What are they going to do?" Lai Nian asked numbly after a moment of daze.

"Obviously, they're going to the amusement park," You Si answered indifferently.

"But can the amusement park still operate now?"

"As long as you provide it with electricity, getting it to operate isn't too difficult. That is, if they don't mind that the facilities haven't been maintained for half a year."

Gu Mian had originally planned to go check out the collapsed Lianhua University, but too many players were watching the place right now. Going in broad daylight would be too conspicuous, so he decided to act at night. The daytime couldn't be wasted either. He planned to visit the amusement park in the west of the city to relive some childhood memories and, incidentally, let these two ghosts experience life. He himself certainly wouldn't participate in any dangerous rides, as the amusement park hadn't been maintained for half a year. But it didn't matter for the two ghosts; they were already as dead as could be. Even if they fell from a drop tower and were smashed to pulp, they could just reinflate.

They quickly arrived at the Lianhua Amusement Park in the west of the city. Pushing down the excited Fatty, who was eager to perform the hula dance, Gu Mian stepped forward and walked in.

#### Chapter 538 The Intermittent Corpse Scam is So Terrifying\_1

Fatty cheerfully went off to find the power distribution room, electric card in hand. Xiao Hong, who had apparently never been to such an exciting place, was peering into a nearby claw machine, fascinated by the toys inside.

Gu Mian had no intention of trying the claw machine. He'd made attempts before, but after pouring in more than two hundred Game Coins and reaping no reward, he had even managed to startle the owner.

In the end, though, Gu Mian walked away with two toys, generously gifted by the amused owner.

Xiao Hong seemed to desperately want one of the toys in the glass case, but Gu Mian had no coins on him, so all she could do was watch longingly.

Fortunately, Fatty, perhaps anticipating someone might want to try the claw machine, returned carrying a large basket full of Game Coins that seemed to weigh about ten pounds.

The sound of the Game Coins clinking together was crisp and clear. Fatty laughed cheerily, asking, "Doctor, do you want to try the claw machine? I, uh, borrowed these from the workbench."

Eventually, Xiao Hong swiped the basket of Game Coins. Everyone watched her determined figure at the claw machine as she relentlessly fed in coins and worked the controls. Yet, after about thirty Game Coins, not a single toy had been won.

Having won nothing, Xiao Hong returned, trying to rope Gu Mian into playing.

But Gu Mian remained unmoved, so in the end, Chu Changge was dragged away instead.

Gu Mian sat on a paint-peeled bench, watching the silhouettes of the person and the ghost. Chu Changge stood before the claw machine, head bowed to examine the toys inside. One hand rested on the control stick, the other hovered over the "Start" button; he looked dead serious.

Xiao Hong tugged at the corner of Chu Changge's clothes with one hand while pointing into the glass case with the other, her Mind Amplifier constantly blaring, "Grab that one, grab that one, grab that one!"

Fatty also ran over to the claw machine, pressing his face against the glass. "HUH?" he muttered, then let out a happy shout, "Doctor, this white-clothed toy looks just like you!"

Gu Mian found himself deep in thought as he looked at the green-furred dog plushie wearing a white outfit.

Chu Changge immediately fished out the green-furred dog. Xiao Hong's Mind Amplifier finally stopped its noise, and she expressed her joy by contentedly squeezing the green-furred dog's neck.

To help Xiao Hong better experience life, Gu Mian settled her—still clutching her green-furred dog—into a roller coaster seat. The brother, who had been enjoying the spectacle, was also caught off guard when Gu Mian grabbed him and placed him next to Xiao Hong.

Fatty slapped the Start button on the nearby control panel, and WHIZZ—the roller coaster shot off, carrying the two ghosts, their hair flying wildly in the wind as they sped into the distance.

Gu Mian left the roller coaster area and plopped onto a gentle and unexciting carousel. The horses on it were cheerily revolving, playing a simple children's song.

Apparently finding the sight quite rare, Fatty sat on the horse behind Gu Mian and, whipping out a camera, began frantically snapping photos.

Gu Mian leaned against the carousel pole, his hand resting on the horse's head, and turned to look back at Fatty. "You know, you really remind me of the director of the orphanage I used to live in."

Fatty instantly remembered the photo album in Gu Mian's room, which seemed to be entirely the work of that orphanage director. He curiously asked Gu Mian, "Doctor, did your director often take photos of you?"

Gu Mian nodded silently. "At first, he just captured my unlucky moments, but gradually it became a running series..."

Fatty couldn't help but recall the photograph of a young Gu Mian drenched in soup by Chu Changge.

"But then he realized he could make money by photographing me. So, every time he took me out, he'd bring a camera and snap pictures right in my face."

Taking photos of the Doctor could make money? Fatty was intrigued.

Noticing Fatty's curiosity, Gu Mian explained, "Because I'm unlucky. I'd find maggots in my food, the hot pot would explode while I was eating, the roller coaster would stop halfway up..."

As Gu Mian spoke, he glanced up at the speeding roller coaster, where Xiao Hong and the brother were currently enjoying themselves.

"So, his photos became evidence: evidence of unsanitary restaurants, hot pot places spontaneously combusting, amusement parks with inadequate safety measures. He'd then use this evidence to extort money."

Those shop owners were so furious their hair practically stood on end. Eventually, whenever they saw the director leading Gu Mian to their establishments, they would simply close up shop.

Fatty mused that back then, someone probably wanted to put up a sign saying 'Gu Mian and dogs not allowed.'

Gu Mian remembered that orphanage was incredibly poor. The large iron pot used for meals would be scraped so clean not a speck of meat could be found; they were dirt poor.

The director's office looked as if it would collapse with the slightest breeze, its walls riddled with cracks. When a mouse scurried past the base of the wall, it could knock loose a piece of plaster.

Back in his childhood, there were more girls in the orphanage, so most of the donated old clothes were little girls' dresses.

With not enough clothes for boys, they too would reluctantly squeeze into the little skirts. But Gu Mian could tell the difference back then! Even though everyone wore skirts, you could tell the boys from the girls by how awkwardly they wore them and the unwilling expressions on their faces.

Only Chu Changge wore a skirt without batting an eyelid, which led Gu Mian to believe he was a girl for many years.

Later, the director discovered Gu Mian's "value" and would often take him out to swindle and extort people. After that, the food at the orphanage improved; their bowls gradually saw more oil, and the children's gaunt faces began to fill out.

Then, everyone got new clothes, and the boys finally got their own trousers.

After that, the director sent the children to school, one after another.

Sometime later, the orphanage closed down.

It was because the director suddenly vanished on a rainy night, never to be seen again.

Before disappearing, he only left Gu Mian a radio. This radio, not long after the global game started, stopped making any sound after Fatty tapped it a couple of times—it was probably broken by the tapping.

While Gu Mian was reminiscing about the radio Fatty had broken, a RUSTLING sound suddenly came from the nearby bushes.

Chu Changge seemed to have noticed something amiss there much earlier and had already turned to look at that patch of bushes.

The RUSTLING continued, as if someone was engaged in some furtive business inside.

Just as Gu Mian lifted his leg to get off the carousel horse, a green mushroom suddenly shot out from the bushes.

"This is..." Gu Mian's eyebrow twitched.

He recognized it. It was Mr. Green's hat.

Since Gu Mian had carried him out of the 'Crazy Guessing Words' instance, Mr. Green had been wandering around. He always wore green, and the verdant hat on his head was especially conspicuous.

Then, the group saw the hat bob up again, and half of Mr. Green's face appeared from the bushes.

It really had been a long time since they last saw this unlucky host.

Gu Mian, eyebrows twitching slightly, looked at the half-emerged NPC. "What in the world are you doing?"

Only then did Mr. Green jump out entirely from the bushes. He brushed the leaves off his clothes. "I heard something yesterday... Did you go to the Old World?"

So he came looking for Gu Mian to settle old scores?

Gu Mian nodded honestly. "Yes, we did. We even tore up a Law Code."

Hearing this, Mr. Green puffed up his cheeks and pursed his lips, looking like he was about to launch into a tirade. But then, just as quickly, he deflated, his head drooping listlessly. "You have no idea what state the instances are in right now."

Indeed, Gu Mian didn't. He asked, "What state?"

"It's utter chaos! Things are popping up here and missing there; we can't patch them up fast enough. Everyone's in a frenzy, holding meetings to figure out what to do! And the worst part is, some of the instances you entered before—they were almost fixed, and now they've cracked open again!" Mr. Green clenched his fist.

Looking at Mr. Green's fist, Gu Mian felt an urge to laugh. "So, your instance cracked open again?"

Mr. Green dropped his hand, a hint of pride appearing on his usually listless face. "Mine hasn't, at least."

Can these cracks pick and choose which instances to affect? Gu Mian rubbed his chin.

Chapter 539 Paradise\_1

"My instance is out of the range of the Old World," Mr. Green said with a hint of pride in his tone.

Gu Mian tapped the wooden horse's head a few times with his fingertip. The Old World can indeed affect the instances within it.

But... Mr. Green had mentioned that some instances Gu Mian previously entered had shattered due to the Old World's influence.

Before entering Metamorphosis, upon learning about the Old World's nature, Gu Mian had deduced that none of the instances he'd entered before belonged to the Old World.

Yet now, those instances had shattered along with the Old World.

Truly baffling.

Gu Mian adjusted his position, leaning against the wooden horse. "Can the collapse of one world affect an instance in another world?"

Mr. Green looked hesitantly at Gu Mian, only speaking after a few seconds of silence. "So, you not only figured out that instances come from multiple worlds but also identified which instances belong to which world."

Mr. Green stated this plainly, with no intention of deceiving Gu Mian.

Gu Mian looked keenly at Mr. Green. "So, Mr. Green Hat, why can the collapse of the Old World affect instances from other worlds?"

Mr. Green raised his head indignantly, waving his hands in the air. "It's Mr. Green, not Mr. Green Hat!"

However, after a few seconds, his frustration subsided. He lowered his head and grew dejected. "A long time ago, others used to respectfully call me Host Green..."

"Then please tell me, Host Green..." Gu Mian patiently repeated his earlier question.

Mr. Green's dim eyes lit up. Like a hen that had just laid an egg, he puffed out his chest. "Even if I don't tell you, you'll find out eventually."

He paused, then added with a tone of conviction, "You will definitely find out one day."

But I want to know right now. With this thought, Gu Mian dismounted, intending to grab Mr. Green. Unexpectedly, Mr. Green, as if prepared, leaped backward and retreated into the bushes. Only the upper half of his face was visible, trembling as he looked over. "If you try to catch me, I'll run!"

If any players who had experienced the "Crazy Guessing Words" instance were present, they would have marveled at how the once eccentric host, who loved to stir up trouble, had become such a coward.

But it was highly unlikely any other players were passing by.

The harsh winter several months ago had frozen nearly half the players to death, followed by a devastating plague. People, already impoverished, were hit even harder; they couldn't afford food, let alone medicine.

The plague had mostly subsided by now, but the human population on Earth had dwindled by more than half—and this was with the caveat that death within an instance wasn't real.

Seeing Gu Mian stop, Mr. Green dared to show his whole head. "The Old World barely survived this time. The entire game will be affected. Just you watch, in fifteen days, the instances will definitely undergo new changes."

Is the Old World instance really that important? If the global game is composed of multiple worlds, then although the collapse of one world would have a significant impact, it wouldn't necessarily cause all instances worldwide to shut down, Gu Mian pondered.

As Gu Mian deliberated, the roller coaster in the distance completed two circuits and came to a halt.

Xiao Hong clutched her green-haired dog, her own hair flying wildly, a few strands draped over her brother's shoulder. Her already unsightly face was now even more grotesque, completely drained of color.

Mr. Green instinctively glanced at the roller coaster as it pulled into the station and immediately spotted Xiao Hong, an employee from his instance.

He was stunned for a moment, then leaped from the bushes and nervously ran to his former employee, shaking her by the shoulders. "Are you okay?!"

Although he didn't know how his employee had ended up on the roller coaster, Mr. Green felt Gu Mian must have had something to do with it. He suspected Xiao Hong had been constantly mistreated after starting to follow Gu Mian.

Xiao Hong stared blankly at the green man beside her and let out a lychee soda-flavored burp in his direction.

She seemed to have forgotten who this person was.

Xiao Hong quickly lifted the safety bar and, clutching the dog's head, WHOOSH! She dashed past Mr. Green and jumped onto the carousel next to Gu Mian. She began to spin with the horses, showing no awareness of having been "mistreated" at all.

Her brother, whose hair had also been blown back into a slicked-back style, also lifted the safety bar. Under Mr. Green's grief-stricken gaze, he leisurely walked towards the carousel. Truth be told, the hairstyle actually looked quite good on him.

As her brother walked past Mr. Green, the great Host Green suddenly seemed to realize something. "Wait, this person..."

He finally realized that her brother was also a product of an instance.

Just moments ago, he had mistaken the gray-haired man for some random tourist who had inexplicably boarded the roller coaster.

Anticipating what Mr. Green was about to say, Gu Mian nodded. "He's a disc spirit, obtained from a special instance where death is real."

Originally, he was the Goddess's elder brother. But now, Gu Mian had gotten him for cheap, though Gu Mian hadn't wanted to take this "bargain" at all.

Mr. Green mulled over the words "disc spirit." Such a peculiar term.

Speaking of the Goddess's instance, Gu Mian suddenly remembered something. He looked at Mr. Green, who was standing near the roller coaster. "Do you know about the Second World?"

It was after encountering "Second World" in the library that Gu Mian and the others had been transported into her brother's instance.

Currently, the only Low-Dimensional Worlds Gu Mian knew by name were "Second World" and "Old World."

Of course, he had entered instances from other worlds, but he couldn't recall their names.

Upon hearing "Second World," Mr. Green tensed for a moment, then relaxed again. Was that deliberate? Gu Mian wondered. "Of course, I know," Mr. Green said. "For certain reasons, instances from the Second World are the most numerous. This means if the Second World were to collapse..."

He paused, then added, "The impact would be far more severe than the current situation."

If the Old World's collapse could shut down instances worldwide, then the consequences of the Second World collapsing were unimaginable.

Unfortunately, although Gu Mian had encountered several instances suspected to be from the Second World, he couldn't find the world's core.

The core of the Old World is the Law Code. The Second World's core was originally a book, but who knows what it has become by now.

Thinking of the cage underneath Lianhua University... Gu Mian said, "It seems Lianhua University has merged with the Second World. We plan to check it out again tonight."

Countless players had been lured to their deaths in Lianhua University during the college entrance exam event. If the global game hadn't started, such a place would undoubtedly have become a renowned haunted site.

Perhaps I can find some clues there, Gu Mian thought.

Mr. Green was taken aback. "Merged?"

He clearly didn't know about this.

Gu Mian nodded. "Yes, things unique to the Second World have appeared in Lianhua University. It seems the Second World has begun to erode reality."

Mr. Green clearly hadn't expected this. So soon? he thought, then stammered, "But why go to such a ghostly place at night?"

So soon? Gu Mian mused, getting back on a horse. Does that mean the Low-Dimensional Worlds had this planned all along?

Ever since Mr. Green had been carried out of the instance and the ticket seller had spoken of "landing," Gu Mian had harbored this suspicion.

Fatty poked his head out from the side, ignoring the first part of Mr. Green's question. "Going during the day is too dangerous."

He thought for a moment, then repeated with conviction, "Yes, going during the day is too dangerous. It's better to go at night."

Mr. Green's face wrinkled, as if he couldn't comprehend Fatty's logic.

Gu Mian glanced at Mr. Green. "So, why did you come looking for us this time? Surely you didn't just stumble upon us while wanting to enjoy the amusement park?"

Only then did Mr. Green straighten his clothes, speaking with a hint of pride. "I am, of course, here to monitor you. The instances won't reopen for fifteen days. To prevent you from any radical actions during this time, I must stay by your side. This is, naturally, an order from the higher-ups."

As an instance NPC, even though Gu Mian had dragged him into the real world, Mr. Green could still contact other NPCs. Clearly, he had been assigned this task by his superiors.

"Of course, after these fifteen days, I'll have to find a way back to my instance," Mr. Green sighed, almost imperceptibly.

Gu Mian pondered for a moment before asking, "These Low-Dimensional Worlds will eventually completely invade reality, right? If so, you don't need to rush back. Just wait for the Low-Dimensional Worlds to fully descend upon reality."

He showed no awareness that his own world was being eroded.

Mr. Green didn't refute Gu Mian's speculation, seemingly acknowledging it by default as he replied, "You don't understand."

Gu Mian didn't continue to tease the poor Host. The pony he was riding circled the pole merrily, emitting the sounds of a childish nursery rhyme.

Meanwhile, Xiao Hong had eagerly boarded the Pirate Ship. She seemed never to have encountered such novelties before and was utterly captivated, reluctant to leave her seat on the vessel.

「As night fell, Fatty turned on the neon lights in the amusement park.」

Dappled lights filled the entire amusement park. The Ferris Wheel, adorned with colorful lights, spun slowly in the dark night like a giant cog. In the distance, a European-style castle emitted a sacred, solemn white glow, resembling a nobles' palace.

The night was quiet; no one else was here.

The entire park shimmered like an iridescent candy wrapper, glowing with vibrant colors.

Quiet and enchanting.

Only Xiao Hong's cheerful voice echoed through the night—she was on the drop tower, experiencing freefall.

Ordinary players certainly wouldn't plan an "amusement park day trip."

「Liannian lay in bed, covered by a thin sheet, her room dimly lit.」

She didn't have extra money to buy an electricity card, so there were no entertainment activities for her once night fell.

Like most people, she went to bed early, using sleep to escape the boredom.

She fell asleep not long after lying down.

But perhaps due to the impact of Fatty's amusement park day trip plan, or because she missed the long-lost feeling of happiness, she had a peculiar dream that night.

In her dream, she too arrived at an amusement park, and in front of her was a claw machine.

This claw machine was somewhat different. The dolls inside were peculiar: a Fatty with a large, round face; a sinister man wearing glasses; a beautiful female celebrity; a seductive landlady; a gray-haired foreigner; a faceless woman in a red dress; and a Doctor in a white coat, clutching a guitar.

However, all the dolls inside were roly-poly and looked exceptionally cute. Even the Doctor clutching the guitar was round, like an inflated pufferfish.

Instinctively, she maneuvered the joystick toward the roly-poly Doctor.

The process was surprisingly smooth; she successfully grabbed the doll. But just as the roly-poly Doctor was lifted, she suddenly sensed something was off about the other dolls.

But what was off? She couldn't quite say...

The mechanical claw carried the Doctor to the prize chute and released him. THUD! The round Doctor dropped into the opening. She had successfully caught her first doll.

Just as she was considering whether to continue, she suddenly saw the Fatty doll closest to the opening look extremely nervous. Then, PLOP! It rolled into the opening too.

Next was the gray-haired doll. It bounced off the glass and also leaped into the opening, seemingly in pursuit of something.

Then, the faceless woman and the beautiful female celebrity jumped in, one after the other.

Finally, the cunning doll with glasses kicked the reluctant landlady into the opening before rolling in himself.

And so, for one Game Coin, she got a whole pile of dolls.

Liannian woke up in the middle of the night, laughing in her sleep.

After waking, she expressionlessly rubbed her face, which was stiff from laughing. "I must be going crazy."

「While Liannian was dreaming of getting a pile of dolls for a single Game Coin, Gu Mian and the others had quietly slipped into Lianhua University.」

Chapter 540 Shooting the Head with a Revolver\_1

By the time Gu Mian infiltrated Lianhua University, Xiao Qiao had already woken up.

As soon as she opened her eyes, she saw a classical chandelier hanging above her head; if it fell, it could kill someone. To the side was a wooden wardrobe, its doors wide open. On the bottom shelf lay a

jumble of red dresses, evidently rummaged through carelessly. Following the wall, she saw an open door offering a clear view into the living room from her bed. With no power card inserted, the room was dim. However, there was a photo album on the bedside table. Xiao Qiao fumbled for it, flipped it open, and saw a child who bore a striking resemblance to Gu Mian. She then realized she was in Gu Mian's home.

Lainian, startled awake in the middle of the night, found she couldn't fall back asleep. She glanced at the clock on the wall—it was two-thirty in the morning. Her face feeling a bit stiff, Lainian quietly left her room and stepped into the hallway. The June weather was neither cold nor hot; the night air was slightly biting but tolerable. Wind gusted through the wide-open windows into the hallway, sweeping up her hair. The moon was bright that night, its silvery light making the deserted hallway seem particularly empty and serene. She leaned against the open window and looked out. The street below was chaotic, cluttered with abandoned vehicles. The once-orderly road had become a car junkyard. Moonlight also blanketed the derelict street, adding a touch of tranquility.

Just as Lainian was staring out the window in a daze, the sound of footsteps suddenly reached her ears. She straightened up, trying to discern the direction of the sound, then looked towards the stairs. Someone's coming downstairs?

Indeed, after a few seconds, she saw Xiao Qiao's figure. Although Xiao Qiao had changed clothes, Lainian could still recognize her. Xiao Qiao seemed not to have noticed Lainian and walked straight past the fourth floor, heading downstairs. Curious, Lainian took a few steps forward, thought for two seconds, and then followed.

Xiao Qiao was headed straight for Liu Ruyan's room. From afar, Lainian saw the celebrity knock on Liu Ruyan's door. After knocking for a while with no answer, Xiao Qiao seemed to lose patience. Her fingers, once gently tapping, clenched into a fist, and she began to pound on the door. The dull THUDDING echoed through the night. Lainian remembered that the first time she entered an instance and hid in a room, the ghost outside had knocked on the door just like that. The pounding made Lainian's heart leap into her throat.

As if finally roused by the noise, Liu Ruyan's door suddenly opened. From a distance, Lainian watched the landlady standing in the doorway. Her face didn't look good; she seemed pale and as if she had just woken up. Seeing Liu Ruyan open the door, Xiao Qiao leaped at her without a word.

"What are you doing?" Liu Ruyan exclaimed, surprised. She apparently hadn't expected Xiao Qiao to act this way.

Xiao Qiao, like a monkey, hooked her arms around Liu Ruyan's neck in a comical motion. She tilted her head up, stared at Liu Ruyan's chin for a long moment, then enunciated clearly, "Something's off."

With that, she withdrew her hands and seemed a little more normal.

Before Lainian could fully process what Xiao Qiao meant, Xiao Qiao turned and headed for the stairs. Feeling a pang of guilt, Lainian immediately spun around and scampered up the stairs.

「Meanwhile, Gu Mian and the others had arrived near the statue at Lianhua University.」

This gigantic trophy hadn't fallen during the earthquake; however, the ground around it had collapsed quite a bit. Fatty worried he might fall through as they walked on it. The underground entrance had caved in, not even leaving a small crack. Unless they brought in an excavator, it would be impossible to clear a path.

"Makes sense," Fatty mumbled, eyeing the completely blocked entrance. "Doctor, when we burst out in the Spirit Car, the stairs collapsed. With such a huge commotion, it would be truly bizarre if the entrance hadn't caved in too."

Even if the entrance were still accessible, Gu Mian couldn't risk another trip. He might step inside only to have it collapse right behind him.

"Besides the underground area, the cafeteria here is also different from before," Gu Mian continued. "I think it probably merged with a school cafeteria from the Second World."

According to the school badge Gu Mian had acquired, the school that fused with Lianhua University was named Songcheng College.

Gu Mian glanced at Chu Changge behind him. "Was the place you were born located under a school?"

Chu Changge shook his head faintly. "No, it was beneath a plain."

It appeared this place was used to dispose of failed experimental subjects. Now, those failed subjects from the Second World were being transported from the Low-Dimensional World to reality.

"Perhaps this event was just an experiment," Gu Mian gazed at the cracks in the ground. "The Second World encroached on parts of reality but didn't take the opportunity to send high-level NPCs. They probably weren't sure if this encroachment would succeed before the event started."

At that, Fatty chimed in, "Or perhaps they didn't intend to encroach upon reality in the first place, but since you caused an earthquake halfway through the event, Doctor, it triggered a bug."

"Would you just shut up?" Gu Mian slapped Fatty on the head and started heading towards the cafeteria.

"But I have a question," Gu Mian frowned. "If it's so difficult for people like you, Chu Changge, to sneak from the Low-Dimensional World to the high-dimensional world—so much so that only one person can escape from an entire world—then why can those ticket sellers come to reality so easily?"

The ticket sellers all came from the Low-Dimensional World, and in large groups. This contradicted what Chu Changge said about the difficulty of infiltration.

Before Chu Changge could speak, Mr. Green interjected, "It's quite simple. To use an analogy, your real world and our Low-Dimensional World are like two countries on bad terms, constantly on high alert against spies. People like Chu Changge are the spies who managed to infiltrate your world with great difficulty.

"But now, the relationship between the two countries has changed..."

Fatty poked his head out again. "Improved? Are the people of the two countries having friendly exchanges in each other's nations now?"

"Improved, my ass!" Mr. Green retorted loudly. "Your country built a high-altitude cannon and blasted a hole in our border! Now people from your side are constantly pouring into ours through that gap..."

A vivid analogy: he was talking about Earth initiating the Global Game, with players continuously flooding into the Low-Dimensional World.

"Since the war started, we had no choice but to build more strongholds and deploy more guards to defend the gap. The strongholds are the ticket booths, and the guards are the ticket sellers. But unlike spies, these guards can't move freely; they have significant restrictions. Do you understand now?"

"What about the supermarkets?" Gu Mian asked. "The cashiers in the supermarkets should also be NPCs from your Low-Dimensional World, right?"

"The supermarkets were built by Earth, and the cashiers are prisoners captured by Earth," Mr. Green sighed deeply, as if mourning for these prisoners.

To summarize, Earth, for some unknown reason, suddenly launched the Global Game, breaching the entrance to the Low-Dimensional World. The Low-Dimensional World then established strongholds at this breach. The rules of the Global Game were jointly formulated by both sides, mutually restricting each other.

"Historian" Wang Xianzhi spoke up again, "Even I, as a history student, know that conflicts between two countries always have a trigger. So why did Earth decide to attack the Low-Dimensional World this time?"

As they spoke, the group arrived at the cafeteria entrance. The ground was covered in cracks, making it hard to find a stable spot. The cafeteria in front of them had also partially caved in due to the collapses. Gu Mian couldn't help but suspect the building would immediately give way if he stepped inside.

Mr. Green, while answering Fatty's question, surreptitiously rolled his eyes at Gu Mian. "For that, you'll have to ask your omnipotent Doctor..."

But before he could finish his sentence, Gu Mian grabbed him.

Mr. Green's voice caught in his throat, his hat even tilting askew in his panic. "I... I just got sand in my eyes!"

Even if I can't go in, we have our omnipotent Mr. Green-brand drone!

Thinking this, Gu Mian pushed Mr. Green forward and thrust Fatty's [Strange Camera] into his hands. "You're an NPC; you're not afraid of dying. Go in and take some photos for us, why don't you?"

At this point, he suddenly stopped. Just as Fatty thought Gu Mian had a pang of conscience and wouldn't oppress Mr. Green further, Gu Mian continued, "Take plenty of photos of the third floor. Get all those windows. Don't come out until you have at least a hundred pictures."

As he spoke, he gave a hard shove, and Mr. Green, ever bold enough to roll his eyes at Gu Mian, was pushed into the cafeteria's dark doorway. It took several seconds for the host to react. Fatty heard a barely audible curse from inside.

Eventually, Mr. Green dutifully ascended the stairs.

As his footsteps receded, Fatty asked curiously, "Doctor, why did you make him photograph the third floor of the cafeteria?"

Gu Mian looked up at the pitch-dark windows of the third floor. "I visited the third floor of the cafeteria during the event. Back then, all the shops on that entire floor were different from before. Now that the event is over, if the cafeteria shops haven't reverted, it means a part of this school has been completely encroached upon by the Second World."

This implied that the Low-Dimensional World was beginning to possess the ability to encroach upon reality. It also meant that Earth had lost its advantage in this interdimensional conflict.

Fatty nodded, only half-understanding, then mused, "Doctor, you heard him earlier, right? Why did Mr. Green imply that you're the trigger?"

"How would I know," Gu Mian replied quite frankly. "Perhaps my long-lost parents might know why."

Ever since Gu Mian could remember, he had been encountering "accidents" arranged by Earth. He reasonably suspected that Earth, realizing it couldn't kill him, had angrily provoked a war against the

Low-Dimensional World out of frustration. Moreover, according to Chu Changge, people like them were the best chosen by the Low-Dimensional World and sent to reality to protect Gu Mian.

In that case...

Gu Mian withdrew his gaze from the third floor. Could I be a living bomb planted on Earth by the Low-Dimensional World?

The Low-Dimensional World plants a bomb on Earth and waits gleefully for Gu Mian to explode. Unexpectedly, Earth angrily initiates the Global Game, and Gu Mian gets pushed around as a result. It's like Russian roulette: whoever the bullet lands on is finished.

Mr. Green returned quickly, apparently also afraid of being buried by the precarious building.

"Here, for you," he reluctantly thrust the camera into Gu Mian's hands. "I've photographed everything."

Gu Mian looked down at the camera screen. Indeed, the third floor was still the same as during the event; it hadn't reverted to its previous state.

It seemed Earth was already at a disadvantage in this game.