

Collapse 611

Chapter 611 Astonishing Everyone, Gu Bong Bong_1

Small cages were haphazardly strewn across the muddy ground, and the people inside them also appeared disheveled.

The light was dim, and Gu Mian could only clearly make out the attire of the people nearby.

They wore vibrant, varied masks, somewhat resembling clown masks. These large masks covered their entire faces, leaving only two gaping holes for their eyes.

Beneath the masks, they wore ragged, single-layer clothes in faded, dull colors, with clearly visible patches.

Their clothes didn't fit well; most were too short. Their thin trousers rode up their bent legs, exposing much of their calves.

The huddled figures could only clutch their exposed calves and ankles, trying to preserve what little warmth they had.

It was still dark, a time that should have been for sleep, but the cold had awakened those in the small cages. Some sat with eyes wide open, hugging themselves, while many others trembled with their eyes closed, apparently trying to force themselves back to sleep.

Dozens of such small cages were scattered across the muddy open ground. Not far away stood large, red-and-yellow striped tents.

The tents, resembling yurts, were quite large, each covering an area half the size of a sports field.

Gu Mian had seen such things before; real-world circuses also used similar red-and-yellow striped structures.

Three yurt-style tents encircled the cluster of small cages, and a few nearby searchlights provided the only illumination.

Gu Mian quickly understood the situation.

This is the Circus Dungeon, he thought. Considering the current situation, I'm still a Lower Class Person, and I'm locked in a cage... It seems they want us to perform on stage.

Gu Mian knew circus animals were kept in these kinds of small cages. And now I'm locked in one, he mused. This means our status is equivalent to circus animals in the real world; the audience watches us perform.

As he was thinking, he quickly glanced around but didn't see 007.

He glanced around and saw the eastern sky beginning to turn a pale gray; morning was likely approaching.

Gu Mian had never been one to be trifled with, even as a child. Forcibly confining him was harder than reaching for the sky.

In elementary school, some boys had tried to scare Gu Mian by locking him alone in the equipment room as a prank. Unexpectedly, the powerful Gu Mian kicked open the dilapidated door. Two boys outside couldn't dodge in time and had half of their front teeth knocked out.

For a long time afterward, those boys felt a phantom toothache and would burst into tears whenever they saw Gu Mian.

Therefore, a mere cage could hardly stop Gu Mian.

Especially since he had brought his chainsaw.

This time, the instance hadn't confiscated his... tools of the trade.

But Gu Mian soon realized he wouldn't need the chainsaw. The rusty small cage wasn't locked. The door yielded to a gentle push; in fact, a gust of wind slightly stronger than usual could blow it open a crack.

Puzzled, Gu Mian pushed the door open and stepped out. He glanced at the nearby cages; all were unlocked, yet no one inside showed any intention of escaping.

Those who heard the sound looked up at Gu Mian for a moment, then lowered their heads again, showing no reaction.

The circus cages Gu Mian was familiar with were always securely locked to prevent the animals from escaping.

This Circus was different. The cages weren't locked, and the people inside showed no desire to flee, likely believing escape was impossible even if they tried.

Of course, I didn't come out just to escape, Gu Mian thought. First, I need to find 007 and have her store the chainsaw. Such a large item could easily attract the attention of the Circus NPCs. Besides, I remember the instance mission: to gain 'Lu Yi's recognition.' This Lu Yi is probably in the Circus, so I need to stay here and find him. Mr. Green said the Circus Dungeon contained a key NPC for the global game, someone I need to find to ask some questions.

Mulling this over, he navigated through the chaotically placed small cages.

The rain showed no sign of abating. Soon, his clothes and hair were soaked, and the biting wind felt exceptionally cold.

The people in the small cages were faring much worse. Drenched by the rain all night, they shivered violently.

These were all Lower Class People, devoid of any rights.

There were no guards patrolling, and the cages weren't locked, yet these Lower Class People made no attempt to escape.

Gu Mian recalled that in the Slaughter's Game instance, the Lower Class People had been brave enough to take the mine owner hostage. Here, however, they seemed to have lost all fighting spirit, not even trying to escape.

Have the Upper Class People become even more perverse after the destruction of the forbidden zone?

As Gu Mian pondered, a faint call reached his ears. It was 007's voice.

Following the voice, he spotted a person crouched in a small cage, caked in mud, face obscured by a clown mask, weakly waving an arm to beckon him.

Despite the disguise, Gu Mian instantly recognized 007.

He quickly walked over and crouched by 007's cage. Her hands were caked in mud, and her clothes were, for some reason, also covered in it. By her feet was a small muddy hole, apparently one she had dug herself.

Gu Mian silently observed the pit 007 had made, then turned to the unlocked door of her cage, casually swung it open. "Were you planning to dig a tunnel out from under the cage?"

"I'm not blind," 007 retorted, wiping her muddy hands on her trousers. "My clothes are too different from theirs. Smearing mud on them helps me blend in."

By "theirs," 007 meant the Lower Class People in the surrounding cages.

Indeed, Gu Mian's and 007's clothing looked quite out of place among this group. After 007's mud treatment, the contrast was less jarring.

"With that mask, I almost didn't recognize you," 007 remarked, eyeing Gu Mian's rain-soaked lab coat from her cage. "Good thing that white coat is so distinctive."

"Distinctive is right. An enemy could spot me from a mile off," Gu Mian said. He took off his rust-stained white lab coat and handed it to 007. "Put this in your inventory. I have an enemy in this instance who'll recognize me the moment he sees this coat."

Gu Mian was referring to Teacher Slaughter, the host of the Slaughter's Game, who had watched the forbidden zone collapse.

I wonder if Teacher Slaughter has missed me since I left? Gu Mian mused. Will I run into him in this instance? What will his expression be like when he sees me again?

007 looked puzzled but still took the lab coat.

Next, Gu Mian handed her the chainsaw. She took it and stored it away with the same mechanical motion.

Upon entering this instance, 007 had been extremely cautious, not daring to move rashly. It was only upon seeing Gu Mian that she finally dared to leave her cage.

Their movements attracted a few glances from the nearby Lower Class People, but they quickly averted their eyes.

"What should we do now?" 007 asked, looking around in confusion. She clearly didn't understand the current situation.

The instance's premise had bewildered her from the start, and this scene only deepened her confusion. This instance felt very different from any she had encountered before.

"The instance mission is to gain 'Lu Yi's recognition.' So, we need to find this Lu Yi," Gu Mian said.

"Find him and get his recognition?" 007 echoed.

"No," Gu Mian said, getting to his feet and heading towards one of the red-and-yellow striped tents. "We should try *not* to get his recognition, at least for now."

I came to this instance to find a key NPC and ask some questions. If we meet Lu Yi right away, and he's so taken by my heavenly good looks that he immediately gives his 'recognition' and boots me from the instance, then we're screwed.

Chapter 612 Gu Bengbeng Pulls Out the Weeping Willow_1

Gu Mian shared his worries with 007, who responded with a strange expression, "Is there really such a good thing?"

"I didn't enter this instance for the Beast Tamer profession; I came here to find an NPC," Gu Mian said as they approached a tent. "Given the personalities of the previous instances, I think there's a good chance Lu Yi will be smitten by my sublime looks. If that happens, we'll have to leave the instance once the task is completed, and I can forget about finding the person I'm looking for."

007 thought about it and felt Gu Mian had a point. Gu Mian's astonishing destructive power had left many an instance in tears. Now that he was in this one, the instance probably wanted to throw Lu Yi directly at them as soon as possible.

Thinking about this, 007 grew serious. "Then we must be careful. If we meet someone named Lu Yi, let's grab him and beat him up first. We absolutely mustn't let him develop any positive feelings for us."

If any other players were around, they would likely have considered these two to be lunatics. Luckily, only Gu Mian and 007 were in the instance, so their unhinged behavior wouldn't attract questioning glances from others.

"So, what kind of person are you looking for?" 007 asked, her feet sinking into the rain-softened mud and leaving footprints. She was somewhat worried their tracks would be exposed.

Gu Mian replied seriously, "I don't know."

Mr. Green had only heard rumors that there was an important NPC in the Circus Instance. As for their name, characteristics, or identity, he had no clue.

"I guess it's an NPC like the circus ringmaster," Gu Mian said, stroking his chin. "The game's important high-ranking NPCs can't possibly be these Lower Class People..."

007 took out a notebook, flipped it open from the back, and began planning with a ballpoint pen in hand. "So, are we going to kidnap the high-ranking members of the circus one by one and interrogate them?"

Probably influenced by Gu Mian, she unconsciously started to follow his way of thinking whenever they entered an instance together.

"That would be too time-consuming. I have another way." Gu Mian stood before a red and yellow striped circus tent.

The sound of writing came from 007's notebook. Gu Mian glanced at it. Even though it was raining, the writing on its pages wasn't blurred by the water. He saw 007 drawing three circles on a piece of paper, likely a rudimentary map of the area where the circles represented tents. However, the contents of the adjacent page drew more of Gu Mian's attention.

"Are you keeping accounts?" Gu Mian asked, eyeing the page next to the map.

The page was crammed with numbers and calculations. The two lines at the bottom read: " $128 + 1,000 = 1,128$ " and " $1,128 - 1,100 = 28$ ".

A few days ago, when Fatty had asked if she wanted to enter the Circus Instance, she had let slip that she was out of money. However, 007 had just received 1,000 Game Coins as compensation from the garbage dump instance. These two lines of calculation must have been her most recent accounts. After receiving 1,000 Game Coins in compensation from the garbage dump instance and then immediately spending 1,100, poor 007 was left with only 28 Game Coins.

007 looked a bit embarrassed. "Yes, I'm keeping accounts."

Gu Mian was very curious about what luxury item she could have bought that cost over a thousand Game Coins.

She explained, "You know I haven't found my mom and dad yet, and there are no fast means of transportation available in the real world. The only Spirit Car driving license instance is also defunct... but fortunately, special transportation-type items can also be found in instances..."

Transportation tools can be found in instances? Gu Mian had never heard of such a thing.

"Another player obtained a special transportation-type item in an instance, and I exchanged everything I owned for it..."

"So you spent one thousand one hundred Game Coins on a vehicle?"

"No... the vehicle was something I exchanged for earlier. This one thousand one hundred Game Coins were spent just on fuel."

Gu Mian asked curiously, "Fuel? What kind of vehicle uses such expensive fuel?"

Besides, a vehicle from an instance is most likely a Spirit Car, and she probably can't drive it without a license.

007's expression grew even more embarrassed. "Actually, it can't really be considered a vehicle."

At this point, she lowered her voice. "It's something you see often, in shopping malls and on the streets... It's a children's coin-operated ride. You put in money, and it goes. It's really fast, faster than a regular car, but it just burns through money."

Gu Mian: "..."

Of course, such things were common. They were children's favorite toys; put in a coin, and it would rock while singing, "This heaven-defying cultivation, the sky collapses, the earth shatters, the purple-gold hammer."

It seemed 007 had spent over a thousand Game Coins to relive her childhood.

Although Gu Mian now felt like hearing the song, he didn't unreasonably demand that 007 take out the kiddie ride for him to try.

"Hmm, let's get back to discussing the current situation," Gu Mian said, forcibly steering the conversation back on track. "I want to find an NPC who knows the inside story of this game. Not only do I need to find out who they are, but also where they are. This circus is so large; if we try to tie everyone up and question them one by one, we might not finish even by next year."

Gu Mian was mainly afraid that before he could finish tying everyone up, Lu Yi would suddenly appear and be awestruck by his devastatingly good looks.

"Besides, the NPCs in this world don't seem to realize they're in an instance." Gu Mian remembered that Teacher Slaughter had shown no awareness whatsoever of being in an instance world. The NPCs in this world were different from Mr. Green, Coach Che, and the others.

Ordinary NPCs don't know they are in an instance world, but a high-ranking NPC definitely would.

This fact could be used to identify who the high-ranking NPC is.

Gu Mian touched the mask on his face. "Mr. Green once said that an NPC in this instance buys clown masks at a high price and then throws them into a recycling bin. The clown mask is the only way to enter the Circus Instance. Clearly, this person knows about instances, and it's likely they're the one I'm looking for."

007 stopped writing. "The person you're looking for will definitely react upon seeing the clown masks on our faces, but at the same time, we'll also expose our identities as players."

"In any case, the only method now is to wear our clown masks everywhere and show them to people, observing their reactions." Gu Mian touched his own mask.

007 looked uneasily at the cage behind them. "But as performers, as Lower Class People, I'm afraid we won't have many opportunities to just wander around, will we?"

Gu Mian pondered. "So, we have to perform on stage. The circus is a very popular entertainment show in this world; the higher-ups will definitely be watching. But before that, we should first get a clear understanding of the situation here."

As he spoke, he looked at the circus tent in front of them. The two of them were now standing to the side of the tent, from where they could vaguely see the entrance. Lights were on inside. There were three such tents in the vicinity. Looking further out, there were large trucks and distant white buildings. In the distance stood a three-story, grayish-white, low building that somewhat resembled the circus's office.

"Should we go take a look over there?" 007 asked softly.

Her voice had barely faded when the sound of footsteps reached their ears. The Lower Class People here showed no inclination to move, so the footsteps must have come from someone else. Gu Mian recognized that the sound was coming from the tent entrance. He sidestepped backward slightly to hide, and 007, beside him, also slipped into the darkness.

The footsteps grew clearer, and Gu Mian heard two people exiting the tent.

This was followed by a familiar voice, "Oh, this damn rain! I remember it was a rainy night like this when the accident happened in the restricted zone. That was a truly unpleasant day."

Chapter 613 Almost Didn't Update Today_1

It was Teacher Slaughter, the host of the Slaughter Game show. It seemed that after the forbidden zone was destroyed, he had been transferred to work here.

It felt like two lifetimes since Gu Mian had last seen him, and he suspected Teacher Slaughter wasn't too keen on a reunion either.

The camera following Gu Mian had been crushed during the collapse of the Slaughter Game's forbidden zone. Consequently, no one knew why the zone had collapsed, nor did they know it was related to Gu Mian.

Teacher Slaughter obviously hadn't linked the collapse of the forbidden zone to Gu Mian. He assumed it was just an accident in the forbidden zone and that Gu Mian had died during its collapse.

Gu Mian wondered what kind of spectacular expression would cross Teacher Slaughter's face when he saw him again.

Teacher Slaughter was still muttering to himself, "Damn Jin Hu! He must have known something about the forbidden zone's destruction. It's a pity he was completely dead by the time we found him."

At this moment, the tall-hatted man beside Teacher Slaughter spoke up, "I heard he was still smiling when you found him?"

"Smiling? He was practically beaming! His body was so stiff; it's a wonder he could maintain such a vibrant smile." Teacher Slaughter paused for two seconds, then continued, his voice tinged with an inquisitive tone, "To be smiling like that... what on earth did he see before he died...?"

Eavesdropping from a corner, Gu Mian looked up at the dark sky. The sun is quite strong today, he thought wryly.

"That episode of the show was originally very popular. Unfortunately, the forbidden zone collapsed midway through, so the program had to be suspended," the tall-hatted man said.

Gu Mian heard Teacher Slaughter scoff. "It's because that episode had a real troublemaker. The audience was dying to see his expression at the moment of death. Too bad his tracker malfunctioned when he died, so we didn't get it on camera. Still, you can just imagine, his dying expression must have been absolutely spectacular."

His tone was utterly confident, firmly believing the troublemaker was dead.

Gu Mian could already picture Teacher Slaughter's face upon seeing him again. That expression would surely be far more spectacular than the one Teacher Slaughter was fantasizing about for the troublemaker.

007 couldn't quite follow their conversation, but her intuition told her Gu Mian was somehow connected to this "troublemaker."

After a short while, the two walked off. Teacher Slaughter chattered incessantly, his complaints audible even from a great distance.

"Seriously! If the forbidden zone were still around, I wouldn't have to come to such an arduous place, kowtowing to that old geezer and working this early. Have you finished setting up the venue over there? There's a big performance today..."

Only when the two figures had receded into the distance and disappeared from sight did 007 dare to speak. "Those two don't seem to know about the instance world."

Gu Mian nodded. "I don't know about the other one, but the guy in the pink shirt, black dress pants, and black leather shoes definitely doesn't know about the instance world."

"You know him?" 007 asked curiously.

Gu Mian nodded and cautioned, "Of course, I do. Keep my clothes well hidden. Don't let him see them."

He had stripped this white lab coat off Jin Hu. If Teacher Slaughter, with his sharp eyes, recognized it as Jin Hu's, things would get complicated.

It seemed he and Teacher Slaughter were bound to run into each other sooner or later, Gu Mian thought, but definitely not now.

Gu Mian touched the mask on his face. "From what they were saying, there's a public performance today."

"A performance," 007 corrected. "This isn't a talent show."

After correcting him, something occurred to her. "You're not going to do something like blow up the audience during the performance, are you?"

007 remembered Fatty suggesting she bring some bombs into the instance. But she only had about twenty-odd Game Coins left. Forget bombs; she could barely afford an egg.

"Do I look like that type of person?" Gu Mian disputed.

007 stated firmly, "Yes."

The sky was already beginning to lighten on the horizon; dawn was imminent.

Gu Mian ignored 007's response. He glanced at the pale grey skyline. "The instance's death protection mechanism has been deactivated. And this is a highly dangerous, role-based special instance. You need to be careful."

007 looked up at Gu Mian. "Careful not to get caught in the blast from the bomb you're planning to hide in the audience, you mean?"

Gu Mian: "..."

Before the sun had fully risen, the two of them scouted the surrounding terrain. By the time the people in the tents awoke, they had returned to their respective cages.

Gu Mian, of course, planned to attend the performance Teacher Slaughter had mentioned. That way, more people would see the clown mask on his face, giving him a chance to find the high-level NPC in this instance.

007 would also help him keep an eye out.

By now, the sun had fully risen. With its appearance, the light drizzle gradually dissipated. The sunlight dispelled some of the chill, and the people in the cages no longer shivered from the cold.

Gu Mian basked in the sunlight, contemplating.

It seems Teacher Slaughter is doing quite well after the collapse of the forbidden zone. The Upper Class People don't appear to have been much affected by the monsters from the forbidden zone either... Jin Hu's vision for a beautiful new world has failed. Thankfully, he's already dead and unaware of this sad truth.

I wonder if Mr. Slaughter knows about high-level NPCs. Judging by his behavior, he doesn't even seem to realize he's in an instance world, so he probably doesn't know much... But who was that old man he mentioned last night?

Speak of the devil. The saying certainly held true. Just as Gu Mian was lost in thought, head bowed, a shadow suddenly fell over him, enveloping him completely.

He looked up to see a man in a pink shirt and dress pants standing before the low cage, his back to Gu Mian, directing those in the cages ahead.

"You lot, get on that truck! The one at the very front! Hurry up, don't dawdle!"

He puffed out his chest and pointed. Over there, five large trucks were parked, resembling those used for hauling pigs.

The people in the cages were obedient. They crawled out one after another and staggered towards the trucks.

Gu Mian watched Teacher Slaughter's back. After dispatching one group, Teacher Slaughter started cursing and grumbling as he ordered another group towards the second truck. He even kicked the person lagging at the end, yelling, "Hurry up! Don't waste time!"

The kicked man stumbled and fell but scrambled up immediately and ran towards the truck.

Teacher Slaughter rolled his eyes. "See? You can move fast when you want to! Do you worthless Lower Class People need a kick before you'll budge? Always playing pitiful."

After speaking, he went on to direct others onto the trucks. 007, blending in with the crowd, boarded the fourth truck. She huddled at the very edge of the truck's entrance and glanced towards Gu Mian.

Once the fourth batch of Lower Class People had boarded, only Gu Mian and a small group of Lower Class People remained in the area.

Teacher Slaughter, frowning impatiently, turned around. "You lot! Get on the fifth truck! Hurry up..."

The last small group began to move towards the fifth truck.

Just as he was about to see who was lagging at the very end, his gaze was involuntarily drawn forward, captivated by a figure ahead.

He saw the back of a young man.

This person?

A strange feeling suddenly welled up in Teacher Slaughter's heart. He couldn't explain why he felt this way; an ominous premonition gripped him.

Just as he opened his mouth, unconsciously lifting a foot to get a better look at the person in front of him, a loud noise suddenly erupted from the other side.

BOOM!

It was the sound of an explosion.

Teacher Slaughter jumped, startled, and looked towards the sound. However, he saw no sign of an explosion, only a round object rolling on the ground. That was what had made the noise.

Clearly, it was a prank.

"What the hell was that? Who threw it?!" he immediately cursed.

007 had thrown it.

Fatty had told her to bring a bomb, but she hadn't been able to get one. She had only managed to acquire a special item that could pretend to be a bomb by mimicking the sound of an explosion; it couldn't replicate anything else.

She had thrown it stealthily. After releasing it, she quickly ducked her head to avoid being spotted by Teacher Slaughter.

After this interruption, when Teacher Slaughter turned back to look for the young man, he was already gone.

"Strange..." he muttered to himself. Without giving it much more thought, he went to instruct the drivers to set off.

Chapter 614 The Notoriety of the Intermittent Playing Dead is Indeed Well Deserved!_1

Gu Mian sat in the jolting carriage.

The road surface here was uneven, with sizeable potholes appearing at regular intervals.

The truck transporting them had been in operation for an unknown number of years. Every time it went over a pothole, the vehicle's body would SQUEAK and CREAK as if it might fall apart at any moment.

The people inside the truck didn't seem to care about its state of disrepair. They sat huddled with heads bowed; no one spoke or stirred, and the atmosphere was oppressively gloomy.

Mr. Green had mentioned that there would be a significant performance that day, and Gu Mian and the others were being transported to the venue.

The event location was a considerable distance from where they were kept, and the truck had been in motion for over twenty minutes without showing any signs of stopping.

The carriage doors were tightly shut, so Gu Mian could only judge the situation outside by sound.

Shortly after they boarded, it had been quiet outside. The most audible sound was the friction of the tires against the road, with occasional bird calls coming from overhead.

Now, however, the noises from outside had grown louder and more diverse.

Gu Mian could occasionally hear the sounds of people talking and laughing, as well as other vehicles passing by.

The jolting of the truck had also lessened considerably. It seemed they had traveled from the remote, rugged countryside to a major city with well-paved roads.

The last time Gu Mian entered this world, he had been sent directly into a forbidden zone upon opening his eyes. He had never seen what a major city here looked like; it seemed he would have the chance this time.

Of course, the Upper Class People of the major city would also have an opportunity to broaden their horizons.

The others in the truck remained deathly still, seemingly unaffected by the painful jolting of the ride or by the voices from outside.

Gu Mian sat at the very back of the carriage, amusing himself by listening to the sounds from outside, while the others swayed like corpses with the vehicle's motion.

Teacher Slaughter wouldn't ride in the same vehicle as Lower Class People. Before they set off, Gu Mian had seen him get into a separate small black car, which was probably trailing them now.

007 was in the fourth vehicle ahead; there was no way for the two to communicate for the time being.

Before long, Gu Mian heard the sound of a loudspeaker from outside the carriage.

It was the sound of a mechanical, looped announcement.

"Welcome to the City of pleasure, home to the world's largest and most popular circus of love and justice..."

As the loudspeaker announcement grew louder, the truck slowed down and gradually came to a stop.

The tires let out a harsh SQUEAL as they scraped against the ground, followed by the truck jerking to a halt. Everyone in the carriage pitched forward. Some people's heads hit the carriage walls with a heavy THUD; it was clearly a hard impact.

But those who had hit their heads merely cried out in pain once, without any exaggerated reactions.

Even before the truck had fully stopped, Gu Mian could hear considerable chatter from outside.

They were unfamiliar voices—Upper Class People conversing nearby.

"The circus's annual carnival is starting again, huh? Did you get a ticket?"

"No, there were just too many people scrambling for them. Besides, we can watch the live broadcast, anyway."

"Ever since the forbidden zone was decommissioned, more and more people have been coming to see the circus performances. There weren't this many people scrambling for carnival tickets last year."

"The Slaughter Games and the circus here are the two most popular entertainment programs. Now that there's no forbidden zone, people naturally come here to watch shows."

"The last season of the Slaughter Games featured a very interesting Lower Class Person. Unfortunately, the forbidden zone suddenly collapsed before we could see his ending. What a pity."

"Yes, he just died in there, and we didn't even get to see how. It's so rare to come across such an interesting Lower Class Person. We were all waiting to see what he'd look like at the moment of his death..."

Gu Mian crouched in the carriage, silently listening to the discussions of the people outside.

Their regret would surely be filled soon enough. They were about to see the person they yearned for once more.

As Gu Mian thought this, he reached up to touch the mask on his face.

At this point, the truck had come to a steady stop.

The rear carriage door was pulled open from the outside. Blinding white light flooded in, making everyone's eyes ache.

Gu Mian looked up and saw a strangely dressed person with a deathly pale face standing at the carriage entrance, impatiently beckoning to them, "Everyone out."

The skin of the Upper Class People in this world looked as if it were coated in a layer of white powder, making them easy to recognize.

Upon hearing the command, the people in the carriage started to move.

Strangely, these people shed their earlier gloom and quickly surged towards the door, as if they couldn't wait to participate in this carnival.

Gu Mian frowned at their rushing figures, somewhat puzzled.

They looked half-dead just moments ago. Could there actually be some benefit for them in attending this carnival?

Puzzled, he followed at the back of the crowd, the last one to get off the truck.

It was broad daylight outside. Gu Mian surveyed his surroundings. He found himself standing on a four-meter-wide road. The four trucks ahead were parked neatly, and the people from all four had disembarked and were standing on the road.

On both sides of the road were slightly yellowish lawns, somewhat resembling the low-quality artificial turf of a school sports field.

The lawns were quite expansive, with pale-faced Upper Class People milling about.

Looking further into the distance, there was a row of three-meter-high iron mesh fences enclosing the area where they were.

Turning around, he saw a massive building in the center of this lawn area.

The building was oval in shape, about five stories high, and its size and design were reminiscent of a sports stadium.

However, the colors of the building were a bit bizarre.

The surface of the oval building was painted with stripes of red and yellow, resembling the tent Gu Mian had seen before.

The front of the building featured a large entrance, three meters high and four meters wide. People had specially designed a bright red doorframe for it. A huge sculpted clown crouched atop the doorframe, looking as if a real clown were perched there.

He couldn't see Teacher Slaughter anywhere and wondered where he had gone.

While Gu Mian was still observing his surroundings, the people who had disembarked from the carriages began to run excitedly towards the clown-adorned main entrance.

"Stop running! You can't enter this way!" The complaining voice of an Upper Class Person came from behind. "All of you, go to the left! Enter through the small gate on the left."

Indeed, many Upper Class People were queuing at the clown entrance for ticket inspection. It would indeed be an eyesore if the Lower Class People went through there.

Hearing this, the surrounding Lower Class People turned and ran excitedly to the left.

Gu Mian really couldn't understand why this group of people was suddenly so happy.

He took a moment to look for 007 and saw him joyfully running along with the group of Lower Class People up ahead. His cheerful demeanor fit right in with those around him.

Watching the happy 007 and the excited Lower Class People around him, Gu Mian also started to run cheerfully to blend in.

Chapter 615 Murmuring and muttering_1

There was a small side door on the left of the main entrance.

Not many people were around this area, and the Lower Class People who alighted from the truck were squeezing through this small door.

Entering the door led to a long corridor, which ended in a huge room that seemed to span several hundred square meters.

This room was somewhat like a university classroom, with shabby tables and chairs arranged in rows. Instead of a wall, they were facing a vast swath of dark red velvet, like a stage curtain.

It looked like they were setting up for a performance.

Just then, Gu Mian heard the voice of Teacher Slaughter from behind the curtain.

"The audience will be arriving soon. Have the seats been arranged?..."

So this was the waiting room. The other side of the velvet curtain was the stage, and they would be performing from here soon.

At this point, 007 had already quietly sidled up to Gu Mian.

"The guy in the pink shirt recognized you when we were getting on the truck, didn't he?"

Despite Gu Mian wearing a mask, Teacher Slaughter had picked up on something. Fortunately, 007 had thrown a fake bomb; otherwise, Gu Mian and Teacher Slaughter would have had an awkward 'family reunion' right then and there.

Gu Mian nodded slightly. "I previously entered another instance. He was originally in that instance."

007 remained silent for half a minute. "Then you must have tormented him, right?"

She suddenly felt the white coat Gu Mian had given her was burning hot.

Gu Mian chuckled dryly. "Haha, how could that be? All the NPCs who've met me think I'm a good person. Some even wanted to leave their respective instances to roam the world with me..."

007 also forced a smile.

While the two exchanged awkward smiles as a sign of respect, the others sat quietly in their seats, craning their necks to look at the red velvet curtain up front.

Gu Mian knew that Teacher Slaughter had brought the Lower Class People here for the purpose of performing on stage, but since he had jumped the queue, he did not know the performance process, nor why these people were so excited.

Back then, the Lower Class People selected for the Slaughter Game were terrified, quite unlike these people.

Could it be that this Circus offers generous rewards for performing?

Gu Mian didn't believe the Upper Class People would offer any decent rewards to the Lower Class People; they weren't known for such kindness.

Teacher Slaughter seemed very confident about this group of people. There were no guards overseeing them, likely based on the assumption that no one would attempt to escape.

Perhaps someone had tried to escape before, but the outcome was probably not ideal.

007 lowered her head and whispered, "When I was in the truck, I asked the others some questions... You know they don't talk much, and I couldn't ask anything too foolish, or I'd reveal my player identity. So, I just asked a few things hastily and got some clues. This Circus has been around for a long time, along with an entertainment program called the Slaughter Game. They're supposedly the two most popular shows in this world... Speaking of the Slaughter Game, it rings a bell. I think I've seen it on the bulletin."

Gu Mian touched his chin. "It was indeed on the bulletin."

007 looked at him and continued, "The Circus and the Slaughter Game have been around for many years, decades even. The Slaughter Game recently went off the air due to an accident."

As she said this, 007 stopped and stared at Gu Mian for a while, as if trying to catch a guilty expression.

Unexpectedly, this fellow looked completely unabashed, as if to say, "My heart and my actions are as clear as a bright mirror; all that I do is righteous."

007's face twitched as she continued, "This carnival of the Circus only started three years ago. There was no such festival before, and the Slaughter Game has been off the air for less than a year. Because the Slaughter Game went off the air, this year's carnival is exceptionally lively. It's said that those who come to watch the carnival are all high-ranking officials."

High-ranking officials?

Important NPCs.

Then I should really show them my talents!

With that thought, Gu Mian proudly straightened his chest.

Upon seeing Gu Mian's sudden pride, 007 rubbed her temples. "But we don't even know what we're supposed to perform! What if we get on stage and just stand there like idiots? Will we be forked to death on the spot?"

Before entering this instance, she had carefully read the background information. In this world, Lower Class People had no human rights, and the chances of being forked to death on the spot were high.

"That's certainly possible," Gu Mian nodded. "These perverts probably enjoy watching things like people being forked."

007's scalp tingled.

Just as she was touching her tingling scalp, she heard Gu Mian beside her say, "I think the performance later might be something like doing 28 consecutive backflips while carrying a little girl."

007 asked puzzledly, "What little girl?"

She looked up at Gu Mian, only to see him staring in a certain direction. Following his gaze, she saw a lower-class person sitting in a dilapidated seat.

All the people in the room wore masks, making it impossible for 007 to see the man's face, but she could make out his attire.

He wore shabby blue work clothes on his upper body and a pair of grubby cropped pants on the lower half. Of course, cropped pants were not a trend among Lower Class People; it was purely because the pants didn't fit, only reaching halfway down his calves.

His hair was uneven, still damp from being soaked in last night's rain.

Beneath his matted hair was a dark green mask, unlike the clown masks on Gu Mian and 007. His mask was diamond-shaped, dark green overall, and decorated with complex patterns. The mouth was a single, straight, pursed line, somewhat resembling a snake's head.

It was unclear if he had caught a chill the previous night or was overly agitated, but he clenched his fists tightly, his whole body trembling slightly.

Looking at his back, 007 felt she might have found the reason for his trembling.

There was a person on his back.

A little girl.

Pale face, blood-red lips.

She wore a red dress, her hands tightly wrapped around the man's neck. Her head was pressed sideways against the back of the man's neck, her face directly confronting Gu Mian and 007, splitting into a bizarre grin.

The others seemed to not notice her at all, still immersed in their own excitement.

007 stiffly turned her neck. "That doesn't seem like a little girl!"

Gu Mian stroked his chin. "A little female ghost, perhaps?"

Don't make it sound so cute!

007 swallowed hard. "She's watching us."

Targeted by a ghost so soon after entering the instance; this was truly an inauspicious start...

Gu Mian frowned. "There's actually a ghost in this instance."

"Wouldn't it be a problem if there weren't any ghosts!"

"No," Gu Mian shook his head. "I've entered this world before. I always thought the only danger to players came from the Upper Class People. They would throw Lower Class People into extremely dangerous places. But even in what the Upper Class People considered the most dangerous 'forbidden zones,' there was only one ghost, and it was harmless to humans."

He was referring to Jin Hu.

That lower-class person who had yearned so intensely for the lifestyle of the Upper Class People that, even after death, they were still striving to climb the social ladder.

"So, the only ghost in the last forbidden zone was a mission NPC. Is it the same this time? Is she Lu Yi?"
Gu Mian stared at the pale-faced girl.

007 recalled Gu Mian's instructions. "So, should we rush over now, pull her off, and give her a beating?"

Chapter 616 Dumbfounded_1

"No," Gu Mian patted 007 on the shoulder.

007, seeing Gu Mian stop her, pondered seriously, "I also feel this girl is more peculiar than any other ghost I've encountered. Without understanding her, it's better not to act rashly..."

"What if, after we take her down, they use the excuse of a critical NPC suffering mental trauma to kick us out of the instance? That wouldn't be good."

007: "..."

She really couldn't grasp the thought process of people like him.

"So, you're suggesting a gentle approach? To keep her emotions around, 'This person hammered me a few times, so my opinion of him has plummeted, but I can still go on, I can still counter and take him down'?"

Gu Mian pursed his lips. "That sounds very difficult."

It seemed easier to just knock her out swiftly.

Catching Gu Mian's thoughts, 007 pointed out, "Unfortunately, I don't think you can even take her down now."

How come?

Gu Mian looked towards the girl.

The pale-faced girl had somehow disappeared, and the man whose neck she had been embracing was still shivering slightly.

"What's going on with him? The ghost isn't even on him anymore, yet he's still trembling. Is he happy?" 007 had also noticed the strange excitement of this group of people, but this particular man seemed excessively thrilled, almost hysterically so.

Gu Mian, glancing at the man with the snake-head mask, commented, "He's really happy, probably happier than when I escaped from bank robbers."

"...What exactly have you been through over the years?"

"Now is clearly not the time for me to recount my past heroic deeds."

Gu Mian brought the conversation back on track, focusing on the snake-head masked man. "His excitement gives me an idea."

What kind of idea? 007 looked up at Gu Mian.

"As I've mentioned, I've entered other instances in this world, so I have some understanding of the Upper Class People's methods. Based on my experience in the Slaughter game instance..." Gu Mian paused to recall. "The Upper Class People must have offered a very attractive prize, something like 'the best performer in the Carnival can shed their Lower Class People status.' That's why these people are so excited."

Of course, Gu Mian knew such an outcome was impossible.

In this world, there were no Upper Class People beyond those with white skin.

Even Jin Hu, working diligently in the Forbidden Zone for the Slaughter game, was nothing more than a laughingstock in the eyes of the Upper Class People.

Although such an outcome was impossible, lies could still be fabricated.

"The Carnival started three years ago?" Gu Mian asked 007 beside him.

007 nodded slightly. "As far as I know, yes."

Gu Mian mused, "The Circus has been around for decades, but the Carnival only appeared three years ago. Is there a reason for its appearance...?"

"Why did that little girl show up here? Does she have a grudge against the snake-head masked man? Or did she just randomly pick someone to cling to?"

Judging by the girl's face, she appeared to be an Upper Class child. Why would the ghost of an Upper Class child be in the Circus?

From her expression, it seemed she wanted to torment these Lower Class People even in death. The Upper Class People in this world amused themselves by tormenting the Lower Class People; children were no exception. Some children were even more twisted and cruel than adults.

Bratty kids exist in every world.

"A little girl's ghost appearing in the Circus is likely connected to the instance mission. Even if she isn't Lu Yi, she must be someone related to Lu Yi," 007 said, eyeing the snake-head masked man not far away. "Actually, I have a thought. Gu Mian, you entered this instance to find a high-level NPC who knows the game's secrets. Could the NPC you're looking for be related to this 'Lu Yi' from the mission?"

That's possible.

Gu Mian stroked his chin. "The NPC I'm looking for is definitely not among these Lower Class People. Many Upper Class People will attend today's performance, but the area is so vast it will be hard to pinpoint the one I'm looking for."

007 frowned. "Even if the person you're looking for would react upon seeing the clown mask, with so many people in the audience, it would be difficult to notice any change in anyone's expression."

"If only we had someone familiar with this place to help us."

007 asked, "Are you thinking of some kind of horrible plan?"

Exactly.

Gu Mian was thinking fondly of Teacher Slaughter.

Teacher Slaughter, who was checking the facilities on stage up front, suddenly shivered. Why did it suddenly get cold...

He didn't give it much thought. After a shiver, he continued his inspection on stage. "The audience will be entering soon. This year's Carnival is extremely important; we can't screw it up."

Everyone around him agreed.

Teacher Slaughter was somewhat displeased. If the Forbidden Zone hadn't been destroyed, some of the audience should be watching my Slaughter game.

But complaining about it now was pointless. In his spare time, Teacher Slaughter was constantly racking his brains about how he could make a comeback, brainstorming better entertainment ideas than the Slaughter game.

"Hmph," he snorted while deep in thought. "Once I've finished setting things up here, I'll go backstage to see what those Lower Class People are up to. I never thought that old fool from the Circus could pull off this Carnival thing in the past few years, even promising rewards for Lower Class People who participated. That old fool is as idiotic as ever."

At this moment, backstage, 007 swallowed nervously. "You're not seriously considering targeting that man in the pink shirt, are you?"

In a normal instance, it would be fairly standard for Gu Mian to grab an NPC for a 'friendly exchange.'

But the premise of this instance was different from typical ones.

They were both playing the roles of Lower Class People, and capturing an Upper Class NPC would likely be extraordinarily difficult.

Gu Mian contemplated, "This room isn't guarded; it should be easy to leave. Maybe I can go out and find some clues."

While he was at it, he could observe if there were any NPCs that looked like high-ranking figures in the instance.

007 felt a bit of a headache. "So, are we still participating in the performance?"

The Lower Class People apparently didn't have a choice whether to participate in the performance or not; 007 simply wanted to ask if Gu Mian would return after leaving.

"Of course, we have to participate. The performance is a good opportunity to showcase the clown mask, even though we still don't know when the performance starts or what the act will be..."

Gu Mian looked around, but no performance schedule was visible.

"Just standing motionless on stage would be too risky," 007 frowned, pondering for half a second before her gaze locked onto the man with the snake-head mask. "I'll try to get some information from him about the performance acts."

With that, she subtly moved in that direction, looking as if she were about to employ some cunning tactic.

Gu Mian figured that because the man with the snake-head mask had been ridden by the ghost, 007 felt a strange sense of affinity towards him, which was why she specifically chose him to try and get information from.

While 007 was diligently trying to find out about the day's performance, Gu Mian noticed the door to the room had opened at some point, and several new people were standing there.

They had the same chalk-white faces and blood-red lips.

If he hadn't known this was the fashionable attire of the Upper Class People, Gu Mian might have mistaken them for ghosts.

These were a few new children.

Judging by their relatively normal expressions and exaggerated body language, these children seemed to be here for a visit.

"So, they *are* here," the child at the front said, looking at the people inside the room and pinching his nose in disgust. "How disgusting."

"Are these the ones performing later? So filthy!" the little girl beside him chimed in, surveying the room and commenting brazenly.

The other children barely spared them a glance, only occasionally shooting them disdainful looks from behind the first two.

In the real world, children visiting a circus might go to see the animals in their cages before a performance. Here, however, these children didn't even seem to regard them as animals; their expressions were like those of someone looking at an utterly disgusting cesspool.

Chapter 617 Ostensibly Tough but Soft at Heart Gu Beng Beng_1

These three or four children appeared to be about the same age as the ghost from earlier, suggesting a possible link between them.

In instances, children are never synonymous with innocence and cuteness.

From the very first instance, Gu Mian had been deeply aware of the astonishing destructive power children possessed.

Looking back, none of the children he encountered in instances seemed to be good sorts. The Upper Class children in this worldview certainly wouldn't be paragons of sunshine and goodness.

Naturally, the real world also has no shortage of troublesome children. In childhood, before a sense of right and wrong is fully formed, most people cheer for thrilling and sensational scenes. Thus, animal cruelty is a common behavior among this age group, ranging from dismembering ants to torturing cats and dogs. Gu Mian had once seen an elementary school classmate insist on teaching chicks to swim. Ignoring their struggles and cries, he put them into a half-meter-high water bucket, clapping and cheering from the sidelines. Of course, all those chicks ended up dying. But this still wasn't enough to satisfy the child's desires. Later, he glued the dead chicks' claws to the side of the bucket to prevent their bodies from sinking, cheering excitedly, "They learned! They learned!"

The immense destructive power of children stems from their self-centeredness, unbridled curiosity, and ignorance of the world. Ignorant children, if guided even slightly, can easily go astray and cause greater destruction. To instill correct values in them, regulations suddenly appeared, such as: "No ghosts in supernatural novels," "No hauntings in school stories," "No suicide among minors in stories," "No retelling fairy tales as dark tales," and "No animal cruelty scenes involving minors in stories."

Gu Mian felt that if he were the protagonist of a novel, that novel might face a 404 error at any moment.

As people grow older, their understanding of the world gradually increases, while their curiosity and destructive urges decline. Adults no longer ponder such questions as how to teach chicks to swim. Except for a few mentally unhinged individuals, others wouldn't torture animals.

Of course, the above applies only to people who grow up in a normal world. The world they were in now was clearly not a normal one. In this world, the inherent cruelty of children is infinitely magnified.

A little boy at the door spoke up, "I want to take one to play with... but they're so dirty."

Due to the rain last night, rain stains were visible on their clothes, and their damp-dried garments emitted a sour stench.

The Lower Class People in the room also saw the figures standing at the door. Upon noticing the children, they all instinctively took a few steps back, and the previously joyful atmosphere instantly vanished. Judging by the reactions of these Lower Class People, they must have suffered terribly at the hands of these children. Perhaps these children had used these Lower Class People for experiments like, "Can a person hold their breath underwater for three hours?" "How much force from several horses can one person withstand?" or "Can internal organs remain intact if the skin is cooked seven-tenths of the way through?"

Although they complained about the dirt, the children at the door didn't leave immediately. Instead, their eyes darted about, their disdainful gazes lingering on the group as if selecting pets. It was clear that they were very bored. Children can't sit still; they will find something to do before a performance begins.

Soon, one child's gaze fixed on Gu Mian.

Among this slovenly group, Gu Mian was indeed a conspicuous presence.

"That one looks good!" The little boy staring at Gu Mian pointed a finger at him.

Gu Mian was quite gratified; it was rare for someone to see past his impenetrable mask to his handsome face.

The boy's words immediately attracted the others' attention. The other children also looked at Gu Mian and nodded in agreement. "Indeed, not bad."

Gu Mian puffed up his chest with pride. The people in this world might not be all there mentally, but their taste is pretty good!

He wore a mask, so others couldn't see his expression, but his puffed-out chest and defiantly raised chin clearly conveyed Gu Mian's joyful mood.

"He actually looks happy?" The surrounding Lower Class People thought this person was completely unhinged.

The children also noticed something was amiss.

"What's wrong with him?" the children at the door muttered amongst themselves.

This wasn't how Lower Class People usually reacted when chosen by them. Fear and trembling were the expected reactions. But this person before them not only showed no normal emotions, he exuded an aura of pride and self-satisfaction, perhaps even a hint of... approval?

Looking at this man exuding an aura of pride, the children cracked cruel smiles. "You, come here..."

Hearing this, Gu Mian immediately became excited. He grinned, eagerly taking a large stride toward the door.

As he took that step, a strange feeling arose in the hearts of the children at the door.

At this moment, Gu Mian was already impatient to take the next step.

But a voice abruptly came from the corridor outside the door, interrupting Gu Mian's advance. "Children, what are you doing here?" The voice, cheerful in tone, belonged to Teacher Shi Shilu. Judging by it, he seemed to know these children.

"Uncle Slaughter," the children turned towards the newcomer, a smile on their faces. "It's too boring outside. We wanted to play with them for a while."

This so-called "play for a while" was, of course, not genuine play. They just wanted the Lower Class People to join them in some cruel games.

"Today is Carnival. These people all have to go on stage later, so I can't lend them to you," Teacher Slaughter bent down and smiled. The smile on his pale face was particularly terrifying. "But after the performance, you can choose any of them you wish. You can even take them all."

Upon hearing this, the children pouted. Though it was meant to be a cute expression, the gesture held no cuteness when they made it. "Then we'll go find Uncle Lu Yi to play with first, and come back after the performance."

As they spoke, they shot a vicious glare at Gu Mian.

But Gu Mian was engrossed by the title "Uncle Lu Yi," completely ignoring the children's expressions.

The instance mission was to 'gain Lu Yi's approval.' The 'Uncle Lu Yi' they mentioned must be the mission target.

Chapter 618 Onlookers Burst into Applause_1

Teacher Slaughter, his lips curled in a crimson grin, shooed the children away from the doorway.

It was worth mentioning that his expression didn't resemble that of an uncle coaxing children, but rather the big bad wolf from fairy tales, intent on tricking little girls.

Perhaps due to their profoundly distorted worldview, the smiles of these Upper Class People invariably sent chills down one's spine and made one's hair stand on end.

Before leading the children away, Teacher Slaughter glanced into the room. He had no intention of wasting his gaze on the despicable Lower Class People, merely wanting to ensure they were behaving.

Unexpectedly, however, he spotted a familiar figure.

Teacher Slaughter's pupils constricted.

That Lower Class Person... He's the one I noticed this morning.

A strange sense of dread washed over Teacher Slaughter. He froze momentarily, sensing a vague familiarity, yet no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't recall where he had encountered this person before.

For an Upper Class Person to feel fear towards a Lower Class Person was utterly inconceivable.

Damn it, why do I have this feeling, as if I've seen him somewhere before... Could he have participated in the Slaughter Game previously? No, only a few Lower Class People survived the more than one hundred installments of the Slaughter Game. My memory of those survivors is crystal clear, and he certainly wasn't among them...

If he takes off his mask... If he takes off his mask, perhaps I could recognize him.

Thinking this, Teacher Slaughter straightened up slightly, his gaze fixated on Gu Mian's mask.

However, his height of less than 1.6 meters made the scene somewhat comical; to stare at Gu Mian, he had to tilt his head up slightly, adopting an almost reverent posture.

Mr. Green failed to notice this.

He walked straight to Gu Mian, staring him down. "You, remove your mask."

The children looked up at Teacher Slaughter in confusion, and the Lower Class People also turned their gazes towards Gu Mian.

The atmosphere in the room instantly became strange.

007, who had been about to try and gather information, froze. She cautiously edged a few steps closer to Gu Mian, ready to hand over the chainsaw he had entrusted to her for safekeeping.

Gu Mian, however, was in a predicament.

He looked down at Teacher Slaughter standing before him.

Because he had removed his white coat and was wearing a mask, the "anchor" that marked his identity was gone, preventing Teacher Slaughter from recognizing him at a glance.

But if he removed his mask now, Teacher Slaughter would definitely recognize him.

Gu Mian had initially planned to secretly search for the high-ranking NPC in the instance without revealing his identity, but now it seemed his plan needed to change.

A new strategy was already forming in his mind.

If I remove my mask now, Teacher Slaughter will undoubtedly meet a grim end. My only option is to capture him and threaten him into leading me to the person I'm searching for. The process might be convoluted, but a good outcome is all that matters.

The children, who had already run back, were excited. They had been itching for trouble, and having their initial chosen target thwarted had clearly annoyed them. Now, seeing Teacher Slaughter target Gu Mian, they grew even more thrilled, craning their necks to watch the show unfold.

Gu Mian looked at Teacher Slaughter before him, then at the children at the doorway eagerly waiting for a spectacle. He sighed and raised a hand to the clown mask on his face.

Meanwhile, 007 had stealthily moved behind Gu Mian, ready to produce the chainsaw at a moment's notice.

In her mind, she was already fantasizing about the ensuing scene: "The deranged chainsaw serial killer, wanted in multiple nations, appears! A malnourished, dwarfish man and several innocent, weak children are viciously chased, while onlookers cheer wildly!"

Just as 007 was lost in her fantasy, about to join the imaginary crowd in cheering, a voice abruptly shattered her reverie.

"What's this? Instead of inspecting the facilities out front, our Teacher Slaughter is backstage, bullying these poor Lower Class People?"

The voice, clearly that of an older man, came from the doorway.

007, her fantasy interrupted, looked up.

A man was leaning against the doorframe, having appeared as if from nowhere.

Like Teacher Slaughter, the newcomer's skin was also deathly pale—a distinctive trait of the Upper Class People.

The man appeared to be in his forties or fifties and was somewhat heavysset. He wore a loose, light-blue shirt under a gray sweater vest, his paunch straining the fabric. Below, he had on baggy brown sweatpants and black shoes with white soles. A yellow hat sat atop his head, though thinning, light blond hair, streaked with a considerable amount of gray, peeked out from the sides.

"Team Leader Lu Yi," Teacher Slaughter said, turning to the man in the doorway, his tone provocative. "You always show such remarkable concern for these Lower Class People, don't you?"

Gu Mian looked at the new Upper Class Person. Lu Yi? Is this their mission target? He seems to be the ringmaster of the Circus.

"The audience loves their performances, so naturally, I value them," Lu Yi replied. "But what brings you backstage? Shouldn't you be inspecting the stage equipment? After the Forbidden Zone was destroyed, you were begging for a job here. I didn't expect you to grow restless so soon, wandering about at such a critical time."

Gu Mian could practically see Teacher Slaughter's hair bristle with anger.

The destruction of the Forbidden Zone was indeed a sore spot for him.

"I'm not wandering aimlessly. I've just found someone suspicious," Teacher Slaughter retorted, struggling to suppress his anger as he pointed at Gu Mian. "This man is very strange."

"Oh?" Lu Yi shifted his gaze to Gu Mian, his eyes lingering on the mask for a few moments. "Then pray tell, Mr. Slaughter, what exactly is so strange about this employee of mine?"

This question stumped Teacher Slaughter.

He couldn't very well say that the sight of this Lower Class Person filled him with dread.

And if he claimed familiarity, he still couldn't recall who this person was.

Teacher Slaughter frowned. "I feel like he's very familiar, that I've definitely seen him somewhere. If he takes off his mask, I'm sure I'll remember who he is!"

"You must be joking," Lu Yi said with a smile. He stepped forward and patted Teacher Slaughter's shoulder. "Over the years, the only time you've had contact with Lower Class People was during the Slaughter Game. Across more than a hundred installments of that show, almost no one managed to leave the Forbidden Zone alive. The few Lower Class People who did survive are accounted for, and you know perfectly well where they ended up. Other than those few, there are no other Lower Class People who could possibly be acquainted with you."

Chapter 619 What is an upper-class person like you doing in a dump!_1

In the end, Teacher Slaughter was led away, all the while yelling and screaming.

Before leaving, he struggled to touch the mask on Gu Mian's face with his flailing arms, but to no avail.

Lu Yi watched as Teacher Slaughter was taken away, a strange smile appearing on his face.

He then turned his gaze back inside the room, finally resting his eyes on Gu Mian.

The man with white-streaked hair didn't speak. He simply stared at Gu Mian for a few seconds, then moved his gaze away and left.

007, not far behind, looked puzzled, "Does this man know you too?"

Gu Mian shook his head, "I've never seen this man before."

But it's not out of the question that he's seen me.

Didn't that ghost in the Death instance claim to have seen me in some crematorium? Perhaps Lu Yi has also seen someone who looks exactly like me.

Gu Mian recalled Lu Yi's expression just now. It seemed as if he recognized him.

"Hey," the other Lower Class People finally gathered around once they saw Teacher Slaughter being taken away, "did that Upper Class man in the pink shirt know you?"

They didn't know Teacher Slaughter's name, so they could only refer to him like this.

Gu Mian looked at the people who had gathered around. On the truck, this group had seemed utterly listless. Now, they were suddenly full of energy? And even striking up conversations?

At this moment, the man with the snakehead mask came closer. He looked Gu Mian and 007 up and down, "I've never seen you two before. You must have been transported from another area, right?"

So, these Lower Class People are all from different places?

This would certainly make matters easier for Gu Mian.

007 immediately replied, "Yes, we haven't been here long."

The man in the snakehead mask rubbed his hands, "I've been at the base for many years now. You know about the base, right? It's the place where we were staying yesterday..."

Upon hearing this, Gu Mian understood. It was the place where they had first entered the instance.

The man in the snakehead mask looked at those around him, "There weren't many Lower Class People at the base before, only about a dozen or so. But then suddenly, a group of Upper Class People brought you all here. I thought something had happened. It was only when the truck brought us here today that I realized the Carnival had started and we're the chosen lucky ones!"

His tone changed with excitement as he got to this point.

Gu Mian touched his chin. No wonder these Lower Class People had looked so utterly dejected in the truck; back then, they didn't even know where they were being taken.

But to hear him describe it...

Lucky ones?

There wasn't a single thing Gu Mian could connect with luck.

And this fellow in front of him, reduced to the ranks of the Lower Class People, still used the term "lucky ones" to describe himself. There was probably something wrong with his head.

Just as Gu Mian was staring at the head of the man in the snakehead mask, wondering where to begin the craniotomy, the other Lower Class People around them began to chime in.

"I've heard that if a Lower Class person performs well in the Carnival and is noticed by the Upper Class higher-ups, they can live a good life from then on. Is that true?"

"I heard that in the Carnivals of the past two years, some Lower Class People performed very well. After the Carnival ended, they were taken away and never had to suffer like us again."

The man in the snakehead mask interrupted the others, "I know about this. I've been in the Circus for many years. Our Team Leader Lu Yi is indeed a good man. He's not like other Upper Class People!"

Both Gu Mian and 007 frowned.

Lu Yi, a good man?

It was truly a fantastic tale that, in a world like this, an Upper Class person could actually be called a "good person" by someone from the Lower Class.

The man in the snakehead mask continued, "As I mentioned earlier, I've been at the central base for a long time. I've been here since I was ten years old. That's over ten years now.

"As far back as I can remember, I had no parents. I guess everyone here is the same. The conditions for us Lower Class People at birth were awful. There were no hospitals for our mothers to give birth in, and pregnant women couldn't get nutritious food. Most of the children born had congenital diseases and died shortly after birth.

"Those children who weren't sick were mostly abandoned because there was no money, no food. The adults couldn't even feed themselves. The Upper Class People certainly wouldn't provide us with contraception, so Lower Class children were born one after another, only to be unsupportable. The corpses of children could fill an entire city block.

"I remember living in No. 49 Block, in the Lower Class district. There were only a few dilapidated houses there. Because there was a garbage dump nearby, the Lower Class People often abandoned their dying children in No. 49 Block.

"I was very young when my memories began, and the Upper Class People wouldn't want a little kid like me as a slave. Without food, I had to forage in the nearby garbage dump. Anything the Upper Class People didn't want or had leftover from their meals was thrown there. I barely got by on that trash."

The man in the snakehead mask said all this in one go, as if reciting his autobiography.

"Then, when I was ten years old, I met our team leader..."

The main part of the story was finally here.

So Gu Mian and 007 listened as the man in the snakehead mask described Team Leader Lu Yi's kindness and enthusiasm.

"I'll always remember that day. It was raining and extremely cold. I rummaged around in the trash heap for an hour before I found a few pieces of green, moldy bread, soaked by the rainwater. Filling my stomach was already an incredibly difficult feat; of course, I didn't care if the food was moldy. I just wanted to stuff it into my mouth. But then, a hand reached out and stopped me.

"That was the first time I met Team Leader Lu Yi. I was skin and bones, practically starving to death. Every time I fell asleep, I didn't know if I would see the sun the next day. I knew I could die at any moment.

"Until Team Leader Lu Yi appeared. He asked me if I wanted to work in the Circus. Of course, I did!

"I knew those Upper Class People enjoyed tormenting us, and that if I went with him, I might be assigned the filthiest jobs or even subjected to perverted abuse. But I was too hungry. Ever since my memories began, I'd never had a full meal. I fantasized about hot soup and flatbread. I thought if I could just eat like that once, it would be worth it even if I died immediately after.

"So I followed the Team Leader to the Circus. To my surprise, I wasn't tortured or abused. Here, I finally ate hot food. I'll never forget that feeling: the hot soup sliding down my throat into my stomach, the warmth spreading from my belly, making my entire body feel cozy.

"I discovered there were many other Lower Class People like me in the Circus. They had all been brought here by the Team Leader. He treated us well, just assigning us regular performance work, and never abused or beat us like other Upper Class People did."

Listening to him, Gu Mian felt like he might be reading from the wrong script.

The Team Leader Lu Yi that the man in the snakehead mask described was beyond Gu Mian's understanding of Upper Class People.

This question was beyond the scope of the test.

"Only, at that time, Team Leader Lu Yi wasn't the Team Leader yet; his father was. His father was as brutal as other Upper Class People. He never treated us as human beings, so our lives were very hard back then."

Now *this* sounded more like the usual script. Gu Mian nodded inwardly.

Chapter 620 Sneaky 007_1

Just as the snake-headed man was describing his autobiography to the other Lower Class People, 007 suddenly leaned close to Gu Mian and tugged him towards the edge of the crowd, "Don't you feel like something's off?"

Gu Mian nodded in agreement, "Indeed, the appearance of Lu Yi, as an Upper Class person in this worldview, is quite odd. I suspect there might be something wrong with his mental state..."

Of course, a more pleasant way to say it would be that he suddenly realized the meaning of universal love, adopting world peace and equality for all as the goals in his heart.

007 twitched the corner of her mouth, "That's not what I'm talking about. I mean..."

She paused for a moment before continuing, "Why would an Upper Class person like him go to a garbage dump for no reason?"

Gu Mian stroked his chin, "He certainly didn't go there because he was bored."

"Do you remember why you wanted to go to the Princess and the Seven Little Dwarfs instance?" Since 007 couldn't quite remember the full name of the garbage dump instance, she repeated the name of this instance roughly from memory. After all, Knights and Little Dwarfs weren't that different.

Strangely, Gu Mian actually understood which instance 007 meant despite the mangled name. "Because Mr. Green said that the NPCs of this instance didn't want players to enter, so he bought up high-priced Dungeon Entry Tickets and threw them in the garbage dump."

It was because of this NPC who carelessly discarded Dungeon Entry Tickets that they had gone to the garbage dump instance.

Did Lu Yi go to the garbage dump to throw away a mask? A bold idea popped into Gu Mian's head.

Mr. Green had once said that all trash from all worlds is thrown into the garbage dump instance.

Therefore, it was highly probable that this world first consolidated its trash at its own garbage dump before collectively disposing of it in the garbage dump instance.

So, the clown mask Lu Yi threw away at the garbage dump near No. 49 Block ended up in the garbage dump instance.

But Snake Head Mask met Lu Yi at the garbage dump next to No.19 Block ten years ago. Could Lu Yi have already, with such foresight, planned ahead back then, discarding clown masks to guard against fire, theft, and Gu Mian?

If Lu Yi was really throwing away the clown mask ten years ago, it implies that he knew his world would become an instance as early as ten years prior.

Has this world been plotting for the past ten years?

Thinking of this, Gu Mian felt a slight headache.

Things seemed to be getting complicated.

007 had obviously thought of this too. "It seems the Low-Dimensional World has been scheming for a long time; Dungeon Entry Tickets appeared as early as ten years ago. Do you remember Yuan Qinghua from the Werewolf Killing Dungeon? We actually found traces she left in the real world. Perhaps the Low-Dimensional World established a connection to our world a long time ago."

As she said this, she suddenly frowned as if remembering something.

Gu Mian looked at 007's suddenly strange expression, "What's wrong?"

"Speaking of Yuan Qinghua, I suddenly remembered something."

"What is it?" Gu Mian asked, looking at 007 curiously.

007's brows were tightly furrowed. "There's something I never told you. In the Werewolf Killing Dungeon, before I died, I once saw Chu Changge and Yuan Qinghua talking alone."

"You know my role in that instance was a ghost, so I was always sneaking around and accidentally overheard their conversation..."

Always sneaking around...

007 really knew how to use idioms to describe herself.

Hearing 007 say this, Gu Mian also recalled something.

Before Yuan Qinghua died, she had said one last thing to him.

"You promised me."

To this day, Gu Mian still couldn't figure out what he had promised her. Could it be that Chu Changge had tricked Yuan Qinghua using the school emblem?

While thinking, he asked, "When you were creepily eavesdropping on their conversation, did you see Chu Changge's face? Did it look the same as usual?"

007 replied, looking puzzled, "I saw it. It was the same, I think?"

It seems he wasn't using the school emblem to disguise himself at that time.

"What did he say to Yuan Qinghua?"

007 recalled, speaking slowly, "When I got there, I just heard Chu Changge's voice. I remember he said..."

The scene back then was so bizarre that 007 remembered it vividly; she'd even dreamed about it a few times.

She remembered player Chu Changge and NPC Yuan Qinghua discussing something in a shadowy corner; the two seemed quite familiar with each other.

First, it was Chu Changge's deep voice, "You should understand they are different."

Then came Yuan Qinghua's slightly anxious voice, "I know, but I..."

But even though she was being very careful, Chu Changge immediately sensed someone else's presence.

Upon hearing him exclaim, "Who's there?" 007 fled in panic. From beginning to end, she had only heard those three sentences.

"I see." Gu Mian stroked his chin. It seemed there were unspeakable secrets between Chu Changge and Yuan Qinghua.

He wondered who the "they" Chu Changge mentioned were.

He also didn't know if Yuan Qinghua's last words had anything to do with Chu Changge.

Although he was eager to get to the bottom of it, now was not the time to investigate such matters.

"If Lu Yi went to the garbage dump to throw away the clown mask, then he's an insider regarding the instance. In that case, the NPC I'm looking for is him... and he's also our mission target," Gu Mian said, furrowing his brows.

Gu Mian changed the subject so quickly that 007 was momentarily stunned.

She quickly realized that now really wasn't the time to discuss Yuan Qinghua and Chu Changge.

She heard noisy chatter and uneven footsteps from behind the red velvet curtain. Presumably, the Upper Class People had already taken their seats in the audience, which meant their performance was about to begin.

But even now, 007 still didn't know what was on the program for today.

Gu Mian was still muttering to himself, "If Lu Yi is the person I'm searching for, he should have recognized us when he saw the clown mask earlier."

Thinking about it now, Lu Yi's gaze did linger on his face for a few seconds before he left.

He was looking at the clown mask.

The high-level NPC Mr. Green mentioned is most likely him.

"If you've found the NPC you're looking for, then we don't need to go on stage, right?" 007 pricked up her ears, listening to the commotion outside. "Our original plan to go on stage was to use the clown mask to test the audience. Now we can just go find him directly."

The voices from behind the velvet curtain grew louder, and soon, loud music began to play, probably as a warm-up for the upcoming performance.

This sudden music made the other people in the room pause.

Then someone spoke up, "Hey, does anyone know what we're actually here for today?"

"They probably want us to perform on stage, right? The stage is behind the velvet curtain; we can go over directly later."

"But what are we supposed to perform? I don't know anything. I was just brought here today. Before arriving, I didn't even know I was coming to a carnival."

007 was somewhat puzzled, "These people are just like us, completely clueless. Weren't there any rehearsals before the carnival?"

Gu Mian grinned, "That works in our favor."

At this point, everyone else in the room turned their attention to Snake Head Mask. Only those who were originally part of the Circus knew more about the carnival; after all, it was organized by the Circus.