

Collapse 621

Chapter 621 The Keyboard turns into a Skillful Sprite!_1

The snake-head mask obscured the man's face. Gu Mian couldn't see his expression, but the man's tone indicated some confusion.

"Seems like the carnivals from the past couple of years were also like this...

"I wasn't chosen in previous years, but others from the base who attended said they were unprepared too. They were taken directly to the stage. Apparently, the Upper Class People designed five acts for us to improvise on the spot."

From the back row, Gu Mian faintly nodded, softly speaking to 007, "In the real world, circus audiences love wild beast performances because they're unpredictable and hard to tame. It's challenging to get them to remain calm while jumping through flaming hoops. Viewers love these contrasting performances. Similarly, if a wealthy man suddenly goes bankrupt and becomes a beggar, those who know him would be excited to watch the spectacle."

007's expression seemed a bit unnatural.

Gu Mian took no notice of 007's expression. He continued, "But this world's circus differs from the real world. The performers are submissive Lower Class People. They will do whatever is asked of them. Upper Class spectators have no interest in seeing mundane performances rehearsed by Lower Class People. That's why a no-rehearsal carnival is more stirring for the Upper Classes."

The Upper Classes love to see their panic-stricken faces, so the acts they assign would be anything but easy.

A resounding male voice echoed from behind the red velvet curtain.

The footsteps were fading, suggesting that the audience had taken their seats. The man speaking was possibly the host of the "Carnival" program.

It was not Teacher Slaughter's voice. It looked like he was out of a job since his circus stint.

Gu Mian turned, listening to the voice coming from behind the velvet curtain—

"Welcome to the third annual Carnival! I'm sure each of you has been eagerly awaiting its arrival throughout this past year!"

Whistles and cheers echoed in response.

The host's tone was quite similar to Teacher Slaughter's, sounding just as perverse.

007 frowned hearing this, "The host has arrived. Once the performance starts, it might be difficult to escape. Should we leave now?"

She didn't want to see Gu Mian on stage, not out of a protective instinct, but because she found him too unpredictable. She worried he might pull out a saw and perform something earth-shattering, like dismembering bodies on stage. If that happened, they'd likely get kicked out of the instance before ever finding the person they were looking for.

There were no guards here; it would be easy to leave.

But they had no idea if any Upper Class People were out in the corridors.

If any Upper Class People spotted them, they'd likely be executed on the spot.

"I want to go directly to Lu Yi. But it's my first time here, and I don't know where he could be. If any Upper Class People find us en route, it'd be troublesome," Gu Mian said, furrowing his brows. "Maybe he's in the audience."

The snake-head mask might know something, 007 thought.

007 considered this for a moment, then looked at the snake-head-masked man amidst the crowd and moved closer. She politely asked, "Hello, what role would Team Leader Lu Yi generally play during the carnival?"

The host's voice still echoed from behind the curtain—

"Like previous years, this year's Carnival will feature five acts, and five groups of Lower Class People will perform. We'll assign numbers to the Lower Class People, and you can vote for the one who brings you the most joy..."

This was akin to a talent contest, with the winners earning the Upper Class People's favor. It was another matter whether it was truly a favor or not.

The snake-head-masked man seemed to find it odd to meet someone as polite as 007.

They, the Lower Class People, usually did all the heavy lifting for the pleasure of the Upper Class People. They rarely had enough strength left over even to talk. If they needed to say something, they'd use the fewest possible words. When they were tired, they didn't even want to move their lips.

Yet, this newcomer, a Lower Class Person, was actually using formalities like "hello" and "please."

The snake-head-masked man seemed puzzled for a moment, then said, "I don't know where he is, but people who've attended the Carnival have said that once the performances end, he'd come here and take away the Lower Class Person with the most votes, promising them a better life..."

007 felt dismayed. Lu Yi would take away the person with the most votes at the end of the performance. Indeed, that would be the most straightforward way to find Lu Yi. But the idea of having Gu Mian perform on stage was truly horrifying. Imagining Gu Mian on stage, then picturing the audience below, 007 closed her eyes, finding the mental image too gruesome to bear.

For some reason, 007 remembered the arm skin Gu Mian had ripped off when she first met him.

She vividly remembered waking up from her stupor to find her arm skin missing. Gu Mian had shown her the flimsy piece of skin, waving it before her eyes with one hand before stuffing it into her other, as if to say, 'See? I didn't hide your human organ.'

She wondered if the skins of these Upper Class People resisted tearing...

She turned to look at Gu Mian and saw an impatient look on his face.

007 suspected that if it weren't for the curtain obstructing him, he would have already rushed onto the stage.

If Gu Mian took off his mask, his face would surely be screaming, 'Let me go up and seize first place!'

007 clenched her fists, feeling that their prospects weren't promising.

As Gu Mian was lost in the thrill of anticipation, a sudden, oppressive silence descended around him.

At first, Gu Mian couldn't figure out what had happened until he noticed that all eyes were fixed in a single direction—behind him.

The host behind the velvet curtain was still grandly delivering his lines, but no one here was interested in what he was saying anymore. They were all staring fearfully in the same direction.

This was akin to players running face-to-face with ghosts in an instance.

Driven by curiosity, Gu Mian turned around and finally saw what had silenced the other Lower Class People.

It was the kids.

They had snuck back, seemingly unable to give up on Gu Mian.

The boy at the front, revealing a set of unnervingly white teeth, gazed at Gu Mian. "We came back to play with you."

Chapter 622 April Fool's Day AKA "Gugu" Day

"You, come with us. Play with us."

A boy with pearly white teeth pointed at Gu Mian. "The adults aren't here this time. You must come with me."

The children didn't care whether the carnival would proceed as usual; the absence of a single Lower Class Person wouldn't make a difference anyway.

Behind Gu Mian, 007 muttered to herself, What's so great about Gu Mian? They always want to play with him.

Seeing the "there's no way you can escape" expressions on the children's faces, 007 thought they might be overthinking it.

After all, Gu Mian was such a good person, so understanding and fond of playing with children!

While thinking this, she looked towards Gu Mian. He was currently looking down, his hands clutching the corners of his clothes. He then spoke hesitantly, "If I play with you, then I can't perform on stage."

007's mouth twitched. It seems he really wants to perform on stage!

She knew Gu Mian was desperate to perform on stage, but others didn't see it that way.

They only saw Gu Mian's indecisiveness and assumed he was scared—scared of being taken away by these children, scared of being tormented by them.

The Lower Class People in the room looked worriedly at Gu Mian.

The Snake Mask quietly tugged 007 into a corner and whispered, "You're with him, right? Don't go with them! They used to come to our base to find people to 'play' with. Those they took away... barely any ever returned..."

"Barely?" 007 latched onto the key word. "So, some who were taken away did come back?"

At her words, the Snake Mask flinched and whispered so softly it was almost inaudible, "Two people were sent back. They..."

007 had a feeling this topic wouldn't be a pleasant one.

Indeed, she saw him swallow hard before continuing, "When they came back... they were... torn apart..."

As he said this, he shivered violently, as if recalling horrific memories.

Torn apart?

007 knew this "torn apart" was definitely not like the internet meme she often saw.

Literally torn apart...

"Anyway, never go with them!" After uttering this warning, the Snake Mask clamped his mouth shut, not daring to say another word. The children had already noticed the commotion from their corner and were turning their heads to look.

"Do you two want to play with us too?" the lead boy asked, looking at 007 and the Snake Mask with a chilling giggle.

The Snake Mask stumbled back several steps, practically wishing he could disappear into a crack in the floor.

007 pursed her lips. If she were taken away with Gu Mian, that might be acceptable. But she was afraid of being separated from him midway; that would surely mean no return. Then again, if Gu Mian left and she had to perform on stage alone, that would probably be an ordeal too.

Meanwhile, Gu Mian, who had been struggling with his decision, finally made up his mind.

Just as the children's attention shifted to 007 and the Snake Mask, Gu Mian finally spoke, his voice laced with hesitation, "Alright, I'll play with you. But this means I'll miss my chance to perform on stage. You'll have to compensate me, okay?"

007 had never heard Gu Mian speak in such a hesitant tone before; it sent a shiver down her spine. For some reason, hearing Gu Mian use that tone made him sound... a bit twisted.

The children's attention snapped back to Gu Mian.

The smile on the lead boy's face grew even more chilling. "That's a wise decision. You must have overcome a lot of fear to agree to come with us, right? Even though you've agreed, you must still be terrified inside. Don't worry, we'll be sure to compensate you well."

"Huh?" Gu Mian scratched his head, feigning confusion.

Children are active creatures; they get bored if they stay in one place for too long.

By now, some of the other children were growing impatient.

"Hurry up and make him come with us! It's so boring here."

"Let me think... what should we play later? We haven't played 'teppanyaki' in a while, have we?"

"I want to bring out that toy we used on the Lower Class People last time..."

The boy in front of Gu Mian turned, his smile radiating cruelty. "Well then, come with us. We'll take you to play some really fun games."

Saying this, the boy headed for the door.

Gu Mian immediately followed.

Upon reaching the doorway, Gu Mian suddenly remembered his instrument. He turned and hurried back into the room.

Hearing the movement, the boy spun around, his gaze cold and hard. "Are you trying to run?"

Gu Mian didn't answer him, striding instead to 007. "Where's my guitar?"

"Um..." 007 shrank back slightly, reaching behind her.

Since she was standing in the corner, she had some cover for retrieving things from her inventory.

Then, quick as a flash, 007 pulled out a bulging guitar case from behind her and handed it to Gu Mian, adding politely, "Are you sure you'll be okay going alone? Should I volunteer to go with you?"

Gu Mian glanced at her. "Do you enjoy playing games with children?"

Remembering the earlier talk of being "torn apart," 007 shook her head with heartfelt sincerity.

"Then forget it." Gu Mian had already slung the guitar case onto his back.

007 hesitated. "I stuffed your white lab coat in the case. By the way, will you be coming back?"

Gu Mian thought for a few seconds. "I'll come back when they've had their fun."

Had their fun...

Hearing this, 007 looked at the children standing by the door and, from beneath her mask, gave them a 'good luck with that' expression.

Of course, the children couldn't see her face under the mask, so they naturally didn't receive the signal.

Guitar in hand, Gu Mian quickly walked over to the children, enthusiastically introducing his instrument. "This is my guitar! I originally brought it to perform on stage, but I guess I can't do that today. So, I'll play something for you all with it in a bit!"

Seeing Gu Mian's excitement, the lead boy's expression turned a little odd. He snorted coldly. "Don't try any tricks."

With that, he led the other children down the corridor.

Gu Mian followed close behind, as if afraid **they** might run away.

Outside, as expected, there were other Upper Class People.

A few individuals with deathly pale skin milled about in the corridor. They all noticed the masked Gu Mian. However, since he was with the children, these people merely glanced at him a few times without taking any further action.

The absence of guards backstage didn't mean escape was possible; any Lower Class People attempting to flee would be captured and severely tortured.

Gu Mian cheerfully watched the group of oddly dressed, disturbingly chattering children ahead of him. They really are perfect human shields!

As if sensing something, the boy who always liked to pick fights turned back to Gu Mian. "You, take off your mask. You must be terrified, right? Scared stiff? Probably on the verge of tears? All the Lower Class People before were like that. We love seeing that expression the most. Hurry up, take off your mask and give us some entertainment."

Hearing this, Gu Mian reached up, grasped the edge of his mask, and lifted it.

And so, the children were met with a beaming, cheerful face.

Chapter 623 One Title_1

What's wrong with this guy?

The boy stared blankly at the Lower Class Person in front of him.

The man's face was pale, with dark eyeshadow—acquired from who-knows-where—smeared on his eyelids. He even seemed to have smudged some onto his lips, making him look as if he'd been poisoned.

The joyful expression on his face vanished in an instant, as if it had only been an illusion.

Gu Mian had applied foundation the previous night. After boarding the vehicle today, he had deliberately smeared his face with soot from the carriage to avoid being recognized by the Upper Class People once he removed his mask.

He had applied his makeup in the darkness of the carriage; it was undoubtedly a mess.

But seeing the boy's expression...

Gu Mian touched his chin. Am I really that ugly? For him to be looking at me with such an expression.

"Mike, what's the matter?" Several children in front turned to look at the boy who had suddenly stopped, only to see Gu Mian's unconventional face.

For a moment, everyone fell silent.

Then, mocking laughter erupted in the corridor.

"HAHAHAHAHAHA! What kind of look is that?"

"So ridiculous! I've never seen such a funny-looking Lower Class Person."

"You've smeared your face so white, are you envying us? Envyng our Upper Class status? Hmph, don't even think about it. No matter what you smear on your faces, you Lower Class People are and will always be lowly. That will never change."

The children continued their barrage of taunts.

Gu Mian seemed oblivious to them. With sudden realization, he looked at the boy before him. "So, you're Mike."

"Shut up! Who said you could call me by my name?" Mike looked disgusted, yet he couldn't help but look up at Gu Mian again.

Gu Mian's expression was placid, showing no excitement.

Mike blinked hard. Something's not right. He had clearly seen a strange expression on this person's face the moment he took off his mask, but it had vanished instantly.

Could I have been mistaken?

Mike frowned, lost in thought. Vaguely, he felt that this Lower Class Person before him looked familiar, as if he had seen him somewhere.

The Slaughter Game, being the most popular show in this world, was naturally favored by many Upper Class People.

Men and women, old and young, everyone loved that show, and these children were no exception.

Of course, they had seen Gu Mian before.

It was only on the television screen that they had seen Gu Mian, dressed in a white coat with a clean face.

Moreover, Gu Mian's guitar case hadn't appeared on camera when he participated in the Slaughter Game.

This time, he had deliberately taken off his white coat and carefully applied makeup to his face, removing all familiar points of reference.

Unless one knew him well, it would be very difficult to recognize him.

Mike stared at Gu Mian for a long while but still couldn't recall where he might have seen him.

The children ahead, seeing Mike standing motionless, were growing impatient. "Mike, what are you doing just standing there?"

"It was hard enough for us to get out today; don't waste time."

Then, a little girl suddenly started complaining, "It's all because the Forbidden Zone was breached! Monsters are rampant everywhere, so the adults don't let us go out whenever we want."

Gu Mian thought, It seems the destruction of the Forbidden Zone has affected these people after all.

While thinking, Gu Mian looked out at the lawn beyond the window. The edge of the distant lawn was enclosed by a high iron fence. He had noticed it when he got off the vehicle; it was presumably to prevent incursions from Forbidden Zone monsters.

"The adults are already clearing out the monsters," a child said, glancing at Gu Mian. "Even though those monsters are very strong and powerful, we have many slaves... As long as these Lower Class People charge ahead, our losses will be minimized. The number of monsters is much lower now compared to when the Forbidden Zone was first breached."

Quite the qualified background commentator, Gu Mian thought to himself.

"Alright, let's get going," the little girl at the front said. "Let's go to our usual spot."

Upon hearing this, Mike stopped scrutinizing Gu Mian. He furrowed his brow, turning his head away, and tried hard to recall if he had seen the man somewhere before.

Gu Mian took the opportunity to count the children.

There were five in total: three boys and two girls.

They all looked like a handful.

The weather was pleasant today. The sky, washed clean by the rain, was a fresh, clear blue. Sunlight streamed unimpeded through the corridor window, casting warm patches on the floor.

Everything felt warm and beautiful.

The occasional passing Upper Class People with their eerie smiles were the only discordant notes in this otherwise warm scene.

Gu Mian thought, It doesn't matter. They might all be gone soon anyway.

Just as Gu Mian's thoughts began to wander, the children had already led him around a bend and up a flight of stairs.

The building they were in was oval-shaped and hollow in the center. A ceiling covered the uppermost level, while below was the area where the Upper Class People watched performances. The solid circular ring to the side housed a series of rooms that weren't too crowded. As Gu Mian walked along, he saw many tightly closed doors, probably offices or storage rooms.

Of course, the Upper Class People wouldn't miss the carnival's exciting performances. When Gu Mian first came out, he still ran into a few adult Upper Class People, but as time went on, they encountered fewer and fewer individuals.

By the time the group stopped, there was no one else around besides these children.

At that moment, a tremendous cheer erupted—a cacophony of voices mixed with music and jeering laughter.

It was like the roar of a crowd before a performance begins in a TV show.

Gu Mian looked in the direction of the sound, but a wall blocked his view.

The children, of course, also heard this sound.

Mike, who was closest to Gu Mian, turned back to look at him again. "The performance down there has started, you know. But that has nothing to do with you anymore."

Gu Mian affected a look of regret.

A mocking voice came from the side. "Judging by your expression, you want to win the Most Popular Award too, don't you? I heard that the Lower Class People who win that award get to live a good life. It's a pity you won't get a chance to perform. You must be heartbroken, right?"

Gu Mian puffed out his chest and declared with an air of great righteousness, "How could I be such a shallow person! I don't perform to win awards. I perform so that more people can see me, to spread the radiance of art, to make the audience gasp in awe at my spectacular performance!"

After listening to Gu Mian's impassioned speech, the children all fell silent.

The children even stopped laughing. They just stared woodenly at Gu Mian, looking at him as if he were a lunatic.

Chapter 624 - 'Golden Cuckoo Hatches'_1

"We all know," Mike said, chuckling and turning his head to others, pointing to his head, "with so many Lower Class People, there are bound to be a few nuts. Don't take his words to heart."

Indeed, in a worldview like this, the incidence of insanity would be high.

Gu Mian nodded sagely in agreement.

"Alright, let's continue ascending," Mike glanced at Gu Mian, then told the others.

Gu Mian had already climbed several flights of stairs with the children. If they climbed further, they would reach the rooftop.

He calculated the height while looking up the stairs.

Looking up from the opening of the stairwell, it was evident that with a few more turns, they could reach the rooftop.

「Meanwhile, 007 was still in the preparation room behind the velvet curtain.」

The Carnival consisted of five performances, each set to be performed by a different group of people.

She noticed individuals guiding groups towards the other side of the velvet curtain, towards the stage. This was probably based on the order of arrival. When the first group was led away, cheers, applause, and lively music rang out from behind the curtain.

The host's voice interjected from time to time, but the cheering from that side was so loud it almost completely drowned out the host, and 007 couldn't hear what he was saying.

Why are they so happy? 007 pondered as she stared at the velvet curtain. Could the performances of the Lower Class People bring such joy to the Upper Class People? Performances by the Lower Class People must be common in this world, so why are these Upper Class People acting as if they were on a high? Or were the affairs underway more than mere performances?

The more she thought about it, the more perplexed she became. She noticed the man with the snakehead mask hadn't been taken on stage, so she shuffled over to inquire, "Do you know what's going on up there? Haven't people from your base participated in the Carnival before?"

Although the man in the snakehead mask had been with the Circus for a long time, he was not clear about what was happening on stage. He shook his head, "Those who returned never revealed the specifics; they only mentioned it being an impromptu performance."

So that was it. 007 nodded slightly. Those who returned had never revealed what they were going to do on stage.

Suspicious indeed. Could it really be some nefarious performance, unfit for public viewing?

007 thought deeply, Those Upper Class People might come up with some perverted performance. It's probably best that Gu Mian and those children left. At least he will not be at a disadvantage if a fight breaks out. But speaking of those children...

As she contemplated, she turned to the man in the snakehead mask and asked, "You recognized the children from earlier and you know what they're capable of, that's why you were afraid. But there are a lot of people here who were brought for the first time today, who are meeting those children for the first time. Why were they also afraid of those children at first sight?"

Within this world, the Lower Class People were extremely fearful of the Upper Class People, but the level of fear displayed by this group of Lower Class People towards those unfamiliar children seemed over the top.

Hearing her words, the man in the snakehead mask suddenly swiveled to face 007, the holes in the mask revealing his eyes that stared at her, unmoving, as if scrutinizing something.

Seeing this, a chill ran down 007's spine.

Did I say something wrong?

She discreetly clenched her fists, maintaining an outwardly calm demeanor.

The atmosphere was rather eerie.

This strange silence lingered for several seconds before the man in the snakehead mask finally broke it.

He spoke in a puzzled tone, "Where did you come from?"

007 stiffened. She surely didn't know the divisions of this world.

However, in a split second, 007 recalled an instance Gu Mian had once wrecked in this world, and a location he had previously mentioned.

"I was recently near the restricted area," she clenched her fists, her voice calm, yet internally she was extremely nervous.

The man in the snakehead mask uttered, "AH! No wonder. There shouldn't be many children around the restricted area. After all, it's quite dangerous."

Did she manage to deceive him? 007's tightly clenched fist relaxed a bit, red marks left by her nails imprinted on her palm.

The man in the snakehead mask continued, "You probably haven't had much contact with children before, which is why you underestimate them. The children of the Upper Class People are the most dangerous. They're highly curious and have endless energy. They can come up with ten thousand ways to torment us, which makes them more fearsome than the adults.

"There are times when the adults lack energy; sometimes they're so busy they hardly have the energy to pay us any attention. But it's different with those children. They enjoy tormenting us so much that they could do it all day without tiring. They come up with wicked ideas even the adults can't think of. When you're around them, you never know what terrifying things they're plotting next.

"That's why we're always scared and avoid the children of the Upper Class People."

So that's why.

Indeed, children are energetic beings and never tire when engaged in something they're interested in.

Whereas adults have far fewer interests, and lack the boundless energy of children.

This was the same in reality.

At this point, the vibrant cheers from the audience were emanating from behind the velvet curtain. From the start of the performance until now, their cheering seemed incessant.

007 disregarded the noisy cheers and began considering Gu Mian's safety.

Even though there are many children, five in total, Gu Mian should be able to handle them, especially since he has a saw. Moreover, the adults are presumably all in the audience stand now. So, Gu Mian's fight with the children will likely go unnoticed by the adult Upper Class People...

The man in the snakehead mask beside her couldn't see 007's face, but he heard some subtle murmurings coming from under her mask.

He queried in confusion, "What are you saying? Fight children?"

"Nothing," 007 looked at him. "I've indeed had little contact with children before, so I didn't know how tough they could be..."

As she spoke, she remembered the ghost of the little girl in the red skirt that she had seen with Gu Mian earlier.

She remembered that the little girl had lain upon this man's back.

That little girl might have a significant role in this instance. As she thought of this, she cautiously asked, "You said those few children we saw earlier often visit the Circus base. Aside from them, do other Upper Class People's children frequently visit too?"

At her question, the man in the snakehead mask shook his head. However, he suddenly stopped shaking his head as if remembering something.

Did he remember something? 007 looked at the man in front of her.

Yet, the man in the snakehead mask didn't provide the answer 007 wanted. After he ceased shaking his head, he was silent for two seconds, before finally stating a dry, "No."

Chapter 625 - Black Heart Collapse_1

Gu Mian had originally planned to ask the man if he recognized a little girl in a red dress. Now, there was no need to ask; his reply had directly choked off 007's question.

Although the man claimed he hadn't seen any other children, 007 could tell he was hiding something.

007 lowered her head, thinking. Perhaps he knew the little girl in red. Otherwise, why would that girl cling to his back and no one else's?

But since he had denied it, pressing further would seem forced.

If they used the torture instruments now, they might get more information, but torture wasn't her department. 007 began to miss Gu Mian, who had just left with the torture instruments. I wonder if he's started his performance yet?

Gu Mian had followed the five children to the rooftop.

This bird's-nest-like structure wasn't hollow; its topmost layer covered the space below, presumably to protect the delicate audience members from getting drenched during rain.

At this moment, Gu Mian stood at the very top of this carnival-like building.

Like most buildings, accessing the rooftop required passing through a large door. Gu Mian was standing right in front of the door leading to the rooftop.

Before him was a three-meter-wide, double-leafed iron door, its surface coated with deep brown paint. Due to frequent use, the paint had been rubbed off in many places.

A thick, long chain was wound several times around the door handles, and where the chain met, it was secured with a large, somewhat rusty lock.

The door was locked very securely. Gu Mian surveyed the sturdy door before him.

Is it to prevent people from breaking in? Or to stop those on the rooftop from escaping?

Gu Mian remembered the little girl saying something like, "Let's go to our usual place."

It seems this is the 'usual place' she mentioned. Considering what the snake-headed mask said earlier, these children must be bringing their chosen Lower Class People here to 'play.'

Mike reached into his trouser pocket and pulled out a brass Key.

He took two steps forward, walked up to the slightly rusty large lock, raised the Key, inserted it into the keyhole, and turned it gently.

CLICK. The large lock on the chain sprang open.

Mike removed the rust-stained lock and threw it onto the ground at his feet, where it landed with a heavy thud.

After removing the lock, he reached out to push the iron door.

Presumably because the iron door was too heavy, Mike couldn't budge it.

He stopped, turned to Gu Mian with a malicious look, and said, "You open the door."

At this, all the children turned to look at Gu Mian, their faces bearing the same malicious expression. Gu Mian knew without a doubt that there was something behind the door intended to give him the "shock of his life."

Gu Mian had seen such expressions many times before.

It was the typical look of eager onlookers anticipating trouble.

When someone looked at you like that, you were usually about to be the target of a prank.

Once the prank succeeded, the spectators would surround the miserable, tricked person, laughing triumphantly.

Seeing this expression, Gu Mian grew vigilant.

There must be some kind of prank behind the door. I can't fall for it. A prank involving a door would most likely mean a bucket of water falling when it's opened, soaking the person from head to toe—a chillingly 'refreshing' experience.

Gu Mian had no desire to put on a 'wet look' show here.

He adjusted the hem of his clothes and, amidst the children's sinister smiles, took a few steps forward and stopped before the heavy iron door.

Then he kicked it open with a violent thrust.

BANG!

The two leaves of the door, propelled by immense force, slammed into the walls on either side. Bright light streamed in from the wide-open doorway, and Gu Mian took in the scene before him.

Surprisingly, no basins or buckets fell from above. The atmosphere, however, turned peculiar. For some reason, Gu Mian felt the smiles on the nearby children's faces had frozen.

Then, hushed discussions began.

"What the hell is he? I've never seen a Lower Class Person open a door with such force before!"

"They all say he's not right in the head. He doesn't seem scared of us at all. But that's what makes this type interesting. Those other Lower Class People we brought here before were scared to death of us; it was no fun at all."

"We need to teach him a lesson! It's more fun to make people like him, who aren't afraid of us, wet their pants in fear the next time they see us. Wait until he sees what's on the rooftop; he won't be so cocky then. It'll scare him to death!"

Their discussion was punctuated by scornful laughter.

By now, Gu Mian's gaze had already swept across the rooftop twice.

Looking in through the wide-open doorway, the first thing he saw was the clear, azure sky in the distance. A breeze swept in from the distant sky, carrying a fresh scent.

The sun shone brightly, bathing the entire rooftop in a pleasant warmth.

Directly opposite the door, a large sheet of oilcloth was spread on the ground. It rustled in the wind and, judging by the signs of wear, had been there for a long time.

One corner of the oilcloth was weighed down by a large blue barrel.

The barrel was one and a half meters tall, made of sheet iron, and in a dilapidated state. Much of its paint had peeled off, especially near the bottom and around the rim.

Unwashable stains covered the barrel, with dark brown patches clinging to its surface. It somewhat resembled the barrels chicken vendors at the market used to collect blood when slaughtering chickens.

But a chicken vendor's barrel wouldn't be this big.

This thing doesn't look like it's for killing chickens. More like...

At that moment, Mike stepped forward, crossed the threshold onto the rooftop, and glanced back at Gu Mian smugly. He seemed to be showing off his collection, eagerly anticipating Gu Mian's reaction to these "treasures."

Gu Mian, for his part, was examining the scene with great seriousness.

Under the children's gazes, he took a few steps forward, crossed the threshold onto the rooftop to get a clearer view.

His gaze moved past the barrel that looked like it was for killing chickens to several stacks of transparent rubber tubes. Beside the stacks of tubes was a pile of folded transparent oilcloth, weighed down by a large stone to prevent it from being blown away by the wind.

On the ground next to the oilcloth was something resembling a suitcase. The large case was open, revealing its contents.

Only upon seeing what was inside did Gu Mian realize it wasn't a suitcase, but a toolbox.

Inside the box were items he was very familiar with.

They were often used in craniotomies or amputations.

However, the instruments used in surgery were much cleaner than what he was seeing now. All the tools in this large box were stained with dried blood. He couldn't tell if this was intentional or if the person responsible for them was too lazy to clean them.

Looking at the filthy tools in the large box, Gu Mian's expression turned to one of disgust.

Mike, standing nearby, was intently observing Gu Mian's face, trying to detect fear or horror on it. The Lower Class People they had brought here before had always shown such expressions upon seeing the bloodied tools.

Unexpectedly, after waiting for a long time, the only expression he saw on Gu Mian's annoying face was disgust.

No fear, no horror—just disgust.

Disgust? That's not right. How could he be showing **that** kind of expression?

Mike stared hard at Gu Mian's face, trying to pick apart his expression for other emotions, like fear or panic.

To his surprise, after staring for a while, the look of disgust on the face before him only deepened.

Looking at the incongruous expression on Gu Mian's face, Mike's head began to throb, and he felt an overwhelming sense of frustration.

Chapter 626 - Vacuum Collapse_1

The purpose of these tools was clearly evident. Nearby, on the edge of the roof, large handcrafted items made with these tools were dangling.

There was a framework assembled from iron rods, somewhat resembling the clotheslines used to dry quilts outside dormitory buildings. But what hung on the clothesline before them were not quilts, but huge, transparent vacuum bags. Gu Mian often saw these types of packaging bags in supermarkets, usually containing items like air-dried chicken.

However, these vacuum bags were much larger than those in the supermarket—large enough to fit a person inside. Of course, vacuum bags of this size weren't used for storing air-dried chicken. Other things were sealed inside these bags, all the air sucked out.

Wind often blew across the rooftop. As it blew, the vacuum bags clipped to the clothesline swayed back and forth, and the people inside swayed with them. Perhaps because they contained little moisture, even a mild wind could make them swing violently. Like a row of curtains, an entire line of vacuum bags containing Lower Class People trembled in the wind.

The people inside the bags were either curled up or stretched out, their torsos covered in shriveled Skin. The faces of those inside were severely deformed, but Gu Mian could tell their deaths hadn't been peaceful.

"These are all our works," Mike's voice said from nearby. "To make them look fresher, we put them in while they were still alive. We put them in, then sucked the air out. Of course, we left a tube in—one end in their mouth and the other outside—so they could still breathe inside the bag. We only pulled the tube out once they died. A natural death makes our works look a bit better."

He sized up the person before him as he spoke.

Mike had drawn inspiration for this game from vacuum-sealed food; he had only recently come up with it. His little companions also greatly enjoyed putting the Lower Class People into vacuum bags to dry them out and would enthusiastically observe the transformation process of the "vacuum-sealed Lower Class People." They would compete to see whose "vacuum-sealed Lower Class Person" was more perfect, more aesthetically pleasing.

Many vacuum bags containing Lower Class People hung on the rooftop, so whenever new Lower Class People were brought up and saw these, they would tremble in fear, too scared to utter a word. Mike enjoyed their terrified expressions. He was also eager to see this newcomer's look of uncontrollable terror.

But unexpectedly, the newcomer didn't show the expression Mike was hoping for. Instead, after hearing Mike's words, he even nodded in agreement.

Dying of starvation indeed looks better than suffocating. When starving to death, one wouldn't have the strength left to make a ferocious "I don't want to die yet!" expression, Gu Mian mused seriously.

Seeing Gu Mian's deeply agreeable expression, Mike fell completely silent. The others, who were waiting to see Gu Mian wet his pants, also fell silent when they saw that strange expression on his face.

What on earth is wrong with this person? Isn't he scared at all?

Finally, one of the children grew impatient, seemingly abandoning his plan to "pierce through your false strong front and see you piss your pants in terror."

He glared and shouted fiercely, "This guy is no fun at all! Kill him quickly so we can find the next one!"

Gu Mian was aghast. How could a mere child say such things?

But now, even if these children wanted to switch to playing with someone else, it would be impossible. It wasn't because Gu Mian wouldn't let them, but because the carnival below had already started. It was unlikely any Lower Class People were left to play with them. From up here, they could faintly hear the cheers from below.

Mike, off to one side, stared intently at Gu Mian. Amidst his frustration, he found Gu Mian's face increasingly familiar, yet he just couldn't recall where he had seen it before.

Just as Mike was pondering this, Gu Mian abruptly stood up and walked toward the main door.

Mike thought Gu Mian was trying to escape. He abruptly stood up and yelled, "What are you doing!"

Gu Mian moved quickly, reaching the door by the time the child's question rang out. But he didn't flee. Instead, he bent down to pick up a chain from outside the rooftop door, then stepped back onto the rooftop and casually shut the door. He then took the chain and tightly wrapped it around both door handles, finally snapping the large padlock shut and tossing the Key into his own pocket.

Mike watched his actions, eyes wide, and repeated his earlier question, "What are you doing!"

The other children also stared, wide-eyed. It was the first time they had encountered such an unconventional Lower Class Person; it was truly astonishing.

Gu Mian turned to look at them and said sincerely, "I gave up the chance to perform on stage to come here with you guys. And now you want to kick me aside to find someone else? That's not happening!"

Mike: "?"

The mental state of the Upper Class People in this world could hardly be considered normal, and their children were even more unhinged. Now, this group of children actually began to suspect Gu Mian was the crazy one.

A boy sneered, "You're nuts! Who do you think you are, making demands?"

As he spoke, he strode over and reached out to shove Gu Mian hard towards the edge of the rooftop, apparently wanting to quickly dispose of Gu Mian so they could find another Lower Class Person to play with.

However, Gu Mian didn't budge an inch. He reached out, poked the boy's forehead, and sent him stumbling back two steps. Then, Gu Mian revealed a serene smile. "You're too weak. I could kick over ten like you with one foot, you know."

This is outrageous!

Mike clenched his fists. What's wrong with this Lower Class Person? The Lower Class People he'd encountered were all weak and frail, never daring to resist their commands. But this one today... he wasn't afraid of them at all!

The boy Gu Mian had poked retreated a few more steps, clutching his forehead in disbelief. "You actually dared to poke me!"

Lower Class People weren't allowed to touch the noble Upper Class People without permission, let alone poke an Upper Class Person with a finger and make them stumble backward.

Clutching his head, he angrily kicked out at Gu Mian. But how could a child's physique compare to an adult's, especially since Gu Mian had long legs? Before the boy's furious kick could land, Gu Mian sent him flying several meters backward with a kick of his own.

There were only children here—children he could knock over ten at a time—and no adult Upper Class People. So, Gu Mian dropped the act.

He hefted his guitar case, looked at the stunned children around him, and said, "Little friends, I have some questions for you. Answer obediently, and you won't have to be punished, okay?"

Chapter 627 So I Leave? _1

These upper-class children had never been treated like this. Usually, Lower Class People wouldn't even dare to raise their voices when speaking to them, let alone be kicked down and subjected to such outrageous words.

Of course, they weren't intimidated by Gu Mian's words. Their faces flushed with anger, their eyes blazing as if they wanted to execute Gu Mian on the spot.

The Upper Class People lived in luxury, and their children were consequently very healthy and boisterous.

They were completely unaware that Gu Mian was different from the other Lower Class People they knew. In no time, several of them lunged at Gu Mian, intending to teach him a lesson.

Lower Class People were expected to endure insults without retorting and beatings without fighting back. Consequently, these children had no clear understanding of an adult's combat capabilities.

Fortunately, Gu Mian was a charitable soul, always happy to help.

He successfully made these children understand the true power of an adult.

Without even using his saw, he kicked them to the ground one by one. They rolled around on the rooftop, clutching their stomachs and muttering curses.

"Help! Somebody, help!" Mike, the slightly smarter one, had already run to the rooftop door, pounding on the locked gate and shouting at the top of his lungs.

But before he could shout more than a few times, he felt his collar being grabbed from behind. His perspective shifted higher and higher—he was being lifted!

"The adults are all watching the show; they don't have time for you little rascals," Gu Mian said, smiling as he looked at Mike, whom he held dangling in his hand. "Normally, when you're making your 'handicrafts,' the adults are nearby, aren't they? If a few struggle or don't cooperate, you just shout for an adult to help. But now, they can't hear your cries."

Mike glared resentfully at the enlarged face before him. "You despicable lower-class trash, how dare you treat us like this! After the carnival is over, you'll pay for this!"

Once the carnival ends, our parents will come for us, and then this lower-class person will definitely be severely punished!

Gu Mian's face beamed with a warm, enthusiastic smile. "Do you think I'll give you a chance to snitch? Or that I'll just wait obediently on the rooftop for those Upper Class People to arrive? Don't worry, by the time anyone finds this place, they'll only discover a few dead children. As for who the murderer is... who knows?"

Mike felt his head might explode as he shrieked, "You dare! How dare you kill us! You filthy lower-class scum...!"

He'd never imagined any Lower Class Person would dare to say, "I'm going to kill you," to him.

Lower Class People were dogs—no, they were worse than dogs.

A dog that usually just barks is now saying it's going to kill him? How utterly ridiculous!

If any other Lower Class Person had said such a thing, Mike would have laughed until his stomach hurt, mocking their naive foolishness.

But when this man before him said he was going to kill him, Mike felt a genuine, deep-seated fear. He knew this man wasn't joking.

Gu Mian held the boy up. "So, you'd better answer my questions properly. That way, you can die a little more peacefully."

He said this, smiling as he pointed to the 'handicrafts' dangling by the edge of the rooftop. "You wouldn't want to end up looking so unsightly, would you?"

Mike looked at the vacuum-sealed bags nearby, his face turning deathly pale.

He realized this Lower Class Person was different from any he had encountered before.

"You..." Mike stared at the man before him.

Gazing at the enlarged face, he suddenly recalled something. The reason this man looked familiar was that a face in his memory bore a striking resemblance to this one.

Mike's eyes widened as the two faces overlapped in his mind.

He finally remembered where he had seen this man before.

Mike froze for a few seconds before it hit him. Then, he shrieked, "No.9! You're No.9!"

He wasn't calling out to someone else; he was addressing Gu Mian.

No.9?

Gu Mian didn't understand what he was talking about.

"So you didn't die in the Forbidden Zone!" Mike continued to shriek.

The Slaughter Game, the world's most popular variety show, was watched by nearly all Upper Class People. Gu Mian's season, being the grand finale of the Slaughter Game, had naturally left a profound impression on them.

Most people remembered Gu Mian's face, Mike included. He vividly recalled how this player, filmed by the No.9 follow-up device, had led a Fatty and a Four-Eyed Boy to obliterate their Order Guard.

After the Order Guard was wiped out, the audience was enraged. They only wanted to see how No.9 would ultimately be killed. But then the follow-up device malfunctioned, and the Forbidden Zone suddenly collapsed, leaving the audience's desires unfulfilled.

No one could possibly survive the collapse of the Forbidden Zone; that's what everyone believed.

The audience lamented not witnessing the death of No.9 with their own eyes.

Mike was no exception. At the time, he had practically glued himself to the television screen, desperate to witness No.9's death firsthand. He was deeply disappointed not to have seen it.

But unexpectedly, this guy wasn't dead!

He'd even infiltrated the circus to participate in the carnival!

And now he was even threatening them!

Mike gritted his teeth, staring at Gu Mian's disguised face. If not for this disguise, he would have recognized No.9 much sooner!

"No.9?" The other children were initially puzzled, but they quickly caught on. "Now that you mention it, he really does look like that No.9 from the Slaughter Game!"

Gu Mian was a bit puzzled. Do these people usually give nicknames to contestants on shows?

Gu Mian wasn't annoyed that his cover was blown. He wiped his face and said, "Looks like I'm quite famous. You all must have really enjoyed watching my season, right?"

Enjoyed it? Like hell we did!

Not only was the Order Guard wiped out, but the Forbidden Zone also collapsed later. The Slaughter Game was completely suspended after that. Just thinking about it made them feel unlucky.

Mike adopted a provocative expression, staring at Gu Mian without showing any weakness. "I'm surprised you actually managed to escape the collapsed Forbidden Zone. Heh, I bet watching you scurry around, hiding everywhere, must have been hilarious. Just imagining it makes me want to laugh."

As expected of an upper-class brat, his words are truly vile.

"It seems there's something you all don't know," Gu Mian said with a chuckle. "About why the 132nd installment became the finale of the Slaughter Game... why do you think the Forbidden Zone suddenly collapsed?"

"How would I know?" Mike retorted, rolling his eyes. Then, as if realizing something, he added, "You're not going to say the Forbidden Zone collapsed because of you, are you?"

The moment he voiced this, he almost laughed. A mere Lower Class Person causing the Forbidden Zone to collapse? That's more absurd than any daydream.

Chapter 628 Mike Gaga's Miserable Life_1

"What do you think?" Gu Mian didn't answer directly. He estimated the time; he had been here for quite a while already.

He didn't want to continue showing off here. He also didn't want to tell these kids how fragile the barriers of the Forbidden Zone were—how they'd be shattered with a slight touch.

There were more important matters to attend to now.

Gu Mian needed to find the Circus Team Leader; he had come to this instance specifically to find this important NPC.

Mike was still looking at Gu Mian in disbelief, constantly doubting what he knew about the Forbidden Zone.

"Alright," Gu Mian said, somewhat impatiently tugging Mike a few steps towards the edge of the rooftop. "I don't want to waste any more time. If you answer my questions honestly, I can let you die a bit more peacefully."

Before Mike could respond, Gu Mian asked his question, "Where is Team Leader Lu Yi's office?"

If Lu Yi wasn't in the audience seats, he was very likely in his office.

Considering Lu Yi didn't visit this place often, he might not have an office here. After thinking for a couple of seconds, Gu Mian added, "Or is there a lounge here?"

A peculiar expression crossed Mike's face.

This Lower Class Person had only just arrived and was already asking for the Circus Team Leader's location.

Some children had also come during previous carnivals, and they knew Team Leader Lu Yi wasn't in the audience seats during performances. No one knew where he actually was.

Mike's eyes darted around for a few moments, then a smile spread across his face. "You want to find Uncle Lu Yi? I know where he is. I can take you there."

As long as I can get out of here, Mike thought, everything else can be dealt with. Then I can get people to capture this despicable Lower Class Person!

Hearing this, Gu Mian also broke into an amiable smile. "It's not that I absolutely have to ask you. I could find it myself if I searched carefully. I only asked you because I thought I could make use of trash. But now, it seems you have no value left to exploit."

As he spoke, he reached into his guitar case.

Meanwhile, the children behind him had launched several more sneak attacks, but none had succeeded.

After kicking over a child who lunged at him, Gu Mian pulled out a gleaming weapon that had been hidden in his guitar case.

Staring at the saw glittering under the sunlight, Mike's head buzzed.

He even began to doubt his own eyes, wondering if the scene before him was real. It wasn't until the man flipped the switch on the electric saw, and its loud roar echoed across the rooftop, that Mike was sure he wasn't hallucinating.

"You... you..." Mike's mouth fell open. He stumbled backward and landed hard on his bottom.

The other children reacted similarly.

The usually arrogant Upper Class children were now all sitting on the ground, their earlier insolent expressions gone.

They truly hadn't expected him to pull something like *that* from a guitar case.

This man is really going to kill us!

At that moment, an intense chill surged through their hearts. Watching the electric saw roaring in the sunlight, their fear reached its absolute peak.

"Excuse me," Gu Mian said politely, "but I need to silence some witnesses, so I'll have to trouble you to die first."

The surrounding children scattered, scrambling and crawling away. Two of them even rushed to the rooftop door, banging on it and screaming "Help!", but the adults were happily engrossed in the show in the audience seats and couldn't hear their cries from the rooftop.

The chains meant to prevent Lower Class People from escaping had, in the end, trapped the children themselves.

Gu Mian, carrying the saw, walked towards Mike, who was closest to him.

"Wait!" Mike, his face deathly pale and lips trembling, stammered, "My parents are powerful and influential! If you let me go, I can spare your life when I get out..."

Gu Mian: "..."

Spoken like a true Upper Class Person, Gu Mian thought. Even when begging for his life, his words are full of threats.

"No!" Seemingly realizing his poor choice of words, Mike corrected himself, "If you let me go, my parents can let you enjoy everything Upper Class People do! You might even have a chance to become an Upper Class Person in the future!"

What a grand plan to transform a Lower Class Person, Gu Mian mused.

Of course, Gu Mian didn't believe his bullshit. He remembered how Jin Hu had been deceived by similar lies, waiting faithfully in the Forbidden Zone for many years, only to die a miserable death.

Seeing that the man wasn't swayed by his empty promises, Mike's lips quivered, and a fierce look appeared in his eyes. "Actually, there was a Lower Class Person just like you before."

Like me? Gu Mian paused.

"He was arrogant, thinking he was born to change everything, so he was disrespectful to Upper Class People. His end, of course, was tragic..."

"Have you ever seen someone fall from a great height and get smashed into a meat patty?" a low voice suddenly interjected from the side.

Gu Mian turned to see another child standing not far to his side, staring intently at him, eyes full of menace. "That was his end. After enduring endless torture, he was thrown from a building dozens of stories high. When he hit the ground, his limbs were scattered over ten meters apart. You don't want to end up like that, do you?"

Gu Mian paused.

Seeing Gu Mian stop, the children grew excited.

He's scared!

So, the children began to press their advantage, trying to appeal to his reason and fear. Even the two who had fled to the door returned. They surrounded Gu Mian, their voices laced with threats.

"Brains splattering everywhere, head separated from the body... just thinking about it is exciting, isn't it?"

"When he hit the ground, his eyes were wide open. He died with his eyes open, unable to rest in peace."

"He definitely regretted it," Mike said, his eyes glinting with a strange light. His face drew closer and closer to Gu Mian's, his tone increasingly smug. "It's been a long time since we've seen such a sight. What a shame. I wonder who will have the honor of letting us witness it again."

As he spoke, his face was almost touching Gu Mian's, his eyes fixed on him with a provocative and self-satisfied smirk.

He stared at Gu Mian, opening his mouth to say more.

But before any sound came out, Mike felt his collar tighten, followed by a dizzying sensation of weightlessness.

The last sights of his life were the building seemingly rushing upwards and the ground rapidly approaching.

THUD!

With that massive impact, the life of this Upper Class child came to an end.

Gu Mian stood at the edge of the rooftop, casually dusting off his hands as he looked down at Mike, now a splatter on the pavement below. "Well, now you've seen it again, haven't you?"

Chapter 629 Getting Close with Mother Earth_1

The Upper Class people in the audience watched the performance, their joy and excitement palpable. None of them noticed the child stuck to the ground outside the building.

BANG.

A Lower Class person plummeted onto the stage floor, inciting even greater excitement from the audience.

It was now time for the second group of Lower Class people to perform. The act assigned to them was "Aerial Acrobatics."

Before her family fell into hardship, 007 often went with her parents to watch circus performances, and "Aerial Acrobatics" was an act she frequently saw. However, the performances she had seen before had all been by professionals.

The Lower Class people on the stage had clearly received no professional training; their attempt at aerial acrobatics was laughable. The main appeal of aerial acrobatics lay in the thrill of watching performers tossed through the air. But the current performance inspired no anticipation whatsoever.

Several trembling Lower Class people were fixed to the ceiling, trying to catch the performers tossed into the air. Predictably, they failed to catch anyone. Heavy thuds echoed repeatedly, accompanied by sporadic screams.

These heartbreaking cries were soon drowned out by the excited yells of the Upper Class people. The host continually directed other Lower Class people backstage to clear away those who had crashed onto the floor, half-dead.

007 was also ordered to help carry the Lower Class people who were immobilized. This gave her a premature taste of what it was like to be onstage. Cheers from all directions enveloped her; beams of light shone on her from everywhere, leaving her nowhere to hide. A slight upward glance revealed the audience's scrutinizing gazes, creating an incredibly oppressive sensation.

Get these people off the stage, quickly!

007 didn't want to linger. She bent down, grabbed the person on the ground by his shoulders, and forcefully lifted him.

As she struggled to lift the person at her feet, a sudden wave of cheers erupted from the audience below.

What happened?

007 was momentarily taken aback. She stole a brief glance toward the audience, only to see them all excitedly looking toward the ceiling above her. Following their gaze, she too surreptitiously looked up and saw someone swinging back and forth not far above her and to the side. This person was the reason for the audience's cheers.

After nearly ten Lower Class people had been "scrapped," one of those clinging to the ceiling finally caught a performer. The first success made the Upper Class audience cheer unceasingly.

At that moment, the two were gripping each other's hands tightly. The caught Lower Class person's legs flailed, sheer terror in his eyes.

"I'm out of strength... Don't... Don't let go..." 007 heard the caught man say in a trembling voice.

The audience's fervent cheers immediately drowned out the Lower Class person's words. But before this brief burst of cheers could fade, the thud of a heavy body hitting the stage echoed once more.

The Lower Class person had fallen after all, landing right beside 007.

He died instantly. His fox mask cracked in half, revealing a pair of wide, unblinking eyes behind it.

So, 007 had another body to carry.

When she returned backstage, her sleeves were stained crimson with blood. The half-dead and the dead were dragged to the side of the stage and piled up haphazardly in a corner. Occasional groans and a twitching hand emerged from the blood-soaked heap.

Because so many Lower Class people had been "scrapped," they could no longer form a full team, and the second act drew to a close.

Now, it was time for the third group of Lower Class people to take the stage.

007 leaned against a corner, staring blankly at the crimson stains on her sleeve. She was in the fourth group, safe for now.

The clamor from the audience outside continued unabated, but it didn't affect her at all. She sat on the floor, her gaze vacant, replaying the scene in her mind. He let go.

"What?" A passing Lower Class person wearing a snake mask heard 007 muttering to herself and leaned in to ask.

007 snapped back to reality. She brushed off her pants and stood up. "Nothing."

The second batch of performers was now coming offstage, trickling back into the backstage area. Only five returned. They were the ones who had been secured to the ceiling from the start. Relatively safe from harm, they had survived to the end.

007 instantly recognized the one who had let go. He had clearly grasped the fox-masked man's hand but had released it in the end. 007 had seen it clearly. He hadn't lost his grip due to exhaustion; amidst the cheers, he had simply let go.

"I'm sorry," the man was saying to the person beside him, his voice low and apologetic. "I just ran out of strength, so I couldn't hold onto him..."

Of course, 007 wasn't foolish enough to go up and expose him. She had no desire to play the hero in this situation. 007 glanced at him a few more times, committing him to memory. Remember him. He's not a good person. Stay away.

The conversation continued nearby.

"It's not your fault."

"You did your best."

"Don't take it to heart."

Everyone around him was consoling him.

Watching this scene, 007 felt a strange unease creep over her. What's going on? Such a harmonious atmosphere? So many of their companions had died, yet these people seemed completely unaffected. They only spoke in unison to comfort someone else.

No, besides those offering comfort, a small group was discussing other things.

"We'll be on soon. Let's give it our all!"

"Yeah, we have to help each other once we're on stage."

"Of course."

No one cared about the pile of broken bodies by the stage, as if those people had nothing to do with them.

007 sat stunned for a moment, thinking back. She realized this peculiar feeling had been present since the first group took the stage. They showed no concern for the lives or deaths of their companions. Even when they said encouraging words like, "Let's do our best together!" there was a palpable detachment, as if the comfort and encouragement were mere empty courtesies.

007 watched as the man who had let go was comforted by those around him. She stared blankly for a long while before the realization suddenly struck her.

That's right, the grand prize of the Carnival is "to live the life of an Upper Class person."

And there was only one spot for that prize. Out of this room full of people, only one of them would receive it.

But the fewer people remaining, the greater one's chance of winning.

The fewer people left...

Involuntarily, 007's gaze shifted to the pile of broken bodies beside the stage. Clearly, those individuals were no longer eligible for the prize. This meant that from the moment the Carnival began, the Lower Class people had become mortal enemies, merely maintaining a facade of civility on the surface.

A chill ran down 007's spine. She took a few small steps back, her cold back pressing against the wall.

So, she wasn't just facing one bad person, but a room full of mortal enemies...

At that moment, she suddenly missed Gu Mian intensely. If only I'd gone with him!

Meanwhile, Gu Mian, the object of her thoughts, had just finished his work and was happily descending from the rooftop. After Mike achieved his dream, the other four little ones had shrieked with excitement and run off. Gu Mian, however, patiently helped each of them fulfill their wish to get "close and personal" with Mother Earth.

Chapter 630

The Upper Class People were cheering in the audience, so for a short while, no one would notice the five children stuck to the ground outside the building.

But nothing is absolute.

If an Upper Class Person decided to step out for a breath of fresh air, Gu Mian's handiwork would be discovered immediately.

There was no time to waste. He had already left the rooftop and begun to roam this circular building.

The children hadn't told him where the Circus Ringmaster's office was, so Gu Mian had to find it himself.

While searching for Lu Yi's office, he also worried about the stage. I don't know which act they're on now. I wonder if I can get back to perform after I finish this business.

On this floor, Gu Mian could hear cheering from the Upper Class audience.

The building was circular, somewhat resembling a bird's nest.

The circular corridor was very wide. On one side, doors were spaced at regular intervals; on the other, bright windows.

He glanced out a window.

From there, he could see the vast lawn outside. At the edge of the lawn stood a tall iron fence, designed to prevent monster invasions from the Forbidden Area.

It seemed the destruction of the Forbidden Area's barrier had significantly impacted the Upper Class People.

Leaning out a little further, he could see the ground below.

Like other areas, the ground below was covered by a shallow layer of turf. Five small figures were lying there in a neat row. Their orderly arrangement had a certain artistic quality.

An uninformed passerby might think these Upper Class children were engaged in some form of performance art.

Gu Mian, the great artist, glanced at the ground below, then shifted his gaze to the doors on the other side of the corridor.

Judging by the spacing between the doors, he roughly estimated that each floor had about forty rooms. These rooms only had numbers on them, with no other information.

There were forty rooms on each floor. This oval-shaped building had five floors. The first floor was the carnival venue, so it had no rooms. This meant the remaining four floors contained a total of one hundred and sixty rooms.

Gu Mian needed to find Lu Yi among these one hundred and sixty rooms.

Of course, the Circus Ringmaster might not be in any of these rooms. He could be strolling in a corridor or be somewhere else entirely.

If he was in a corridor, he could still be found.

But if he was elsewhere...

Gu Mian glanced out the window again. Outside the building lay a wide grassy lawn, its expanse visible to the very end.

It would be easy to find him on the lawn.

But if Lu Yi had impulsively driven away, Gu Mian wouldn't be able to find him even if he dug three feet into the earth.

I hope he doesn't have ADHD.

Muttering this prayer, Gu Mian reached for the handle of a nearby door.

The door wasn't locked; it opened with a gentle turn.

Any sensible Upper Class Person would be at the first-floor carnival hall. Thus, Gu Mian wasn't worried about finding anyone in these rooms.

The room wasn't large and contained little furniture—just two tables against the wall, both covered in a thick layer of dust.

Opening the door stirred up dust that danced in the air. Gu Mian quickly entered, ran his hand over the two tables, and searched the drawers, but found nothing.

After he opened the door, the sounds from downstairs became clearer.

His gaze fell on the window in the room.

The sounds were coming from there.

Gu Mian took a few steps to the window and gently peeked outside.

The room was on the inner side of the circular building, offering a view of the carnival hall below. He saw throngs of Upper Class People in the audience, waving jackets and small, colorful flags.

From this angle, he could barely see the stage. Gu Mian spotted a group of Lower Class People emerging from backstage, walking in a line towards the stage.

He scanned them but didn't spot 007.

The audience was entirely focused on the stage and had no time to look up, so no one noticed Gu Mian peeking from above.

Gu Mian watched from the window for only a few seconds before retracting his gaze; he didn't have time to watch the performances.

Clearly, these upper floors were rarely visited. Every room was thick with dust. The hall below was probably only lively once a year, during the carnival.

Gu Mian checked several rooms in a row. None were locked, and they were practically bare of furniture.

More than ten minutes later, he had thoroughly searched all the rooms on this floor. Forget people; there wasn't even a ghostly shadow.

Given the state of this floor, Gu Mian began to doubt whether Lu Yi's office was even in this building.

Slapping the white coat he had just put on, he said, "Not a single strand of human hair. It'd be nice if a ghost showed up to liven things up a bit!"

If other players in the instance were present and heard this, they would surely consider it an unreasonable request.

Gu Mian had always been an unlucky person, so encountering a ghost while going down the stairs wasn't a strange occurrence for him.

Having searched that floor, Gu Mian quickly reached the stairwell, preparing to descend to the next level.

Just after he had descended a few steps, he noticed a small red shoe lying on the stairs not far below.

The shoe was small—a child's shoe.

He recalled that just moments before, this spot had been clean; there had been nothing there.

Clearly, this was a supernatural event.

A red shoe in the stairwell—the very name of such a ghost story promised terror.

Normally, anyone who saw such a supernatural red shoe would turn and flee, but Gu Mian was not a normal person.

He took two steps forward, picked up the red shoe from the stairwell, and said with a chilling tone, "Could those little artists have come back?"

Standing in the dimly lit stairwell, he pondered for a moment. Among the children from earlier, none seemed to be wearing red shoes.

Speaking of red...

Gu Mian suddenly remembered the little girl in a red dress he'd seen not long ago—or rather, the little ghost girl in a red dress.

Back then, she had been clinging to someone's back, her dress hiding her feet, so Gu Mian couldn't see what color shoes she wore.

Now that he thought about it, a red dress and small red shoes made quite a pair.

Could it be her?

Pondering this, Gu Mian continued downstairs, shoe in hand.

He didn't know why this girl had appeared or who she was, but she seemed like an important character in this instance.