

Collapse 731

Chapter 731 Wishing Everyone a Happy New Year_1

"This instance lasts for three days. Usually, the game won't put players in danger right from the start," Chu Changge said, looking at Zhao Tiankuo's reply. "The instance somehow restrains the ghosts, keeping them far away from the players. But as time passes, this restraining power lessens. Three days later, if he's really a ghost, he'll definitely come to meet you if you invite him again."

But Gu Mian didn't know if there would be a "third day" in this instance.

He always felt that the game developers were scoundrels, always creating shoddy, defective instances. These instances always had minor problems, and any small issue would make players scream, 'Ah, I'm going to die! I'm doomed! You guys get out of here!' As a result, ever since global gaming descended, he had almost always rolled out of instances.

Keke stared at the bloody picture Zhao Tiankuo had sent. This Zhao Tiankuo was dangerous, ghost or not. It was chilling to imagine the scene when he met 'Xiao Mianmian' and discovered 'she' was a man.

Meanwhile, the restless Gu Mian took out Chu Changge's cell phone again, leaned against the fourth-floor railing, and started texting Xia Yutong.

"Hey, silly, what did you have for lunch?" Gu Mian wanted to trick her into sending a food picture; that way, he might be able to tell which restaurant she was at from the photo.

But Xia Yutong, perhaps busy weaving her web of deceit, didn't reply.

Chu Changge, who had little interest in his girlfriend, was currently staring out the window.

Keke watched the phone in Gu Mian's hand for a moment. Seeing no reply, she looked away, bored. Before meeting Gu Mian, she'd never thought she could feel "boredom" in an instance.

Previously, in instances, even amidst bustling crowds, even when no danger was apparent, she could rarely enjoy a moment's peace. A ghost could appear from any corner: from the sewer by her feet, from

behind a curtain stirring without wind, or it could even be a teammate who had suddenly turned into one.

Now, she no longer had to worry about that. She felt very safe.

As Keke was thinking this, she looked up at Gu Mian, but halfway through lifting her head, she realized something was wrong.

The person standing before her wasn't Gu Mian at all!

This was a woman wearing low-heeled boots and a deathly pale long dress. Looking up, Keke saw a checkered shirt with embroidered patterns. Her eyes fixed on the woman's face: it was a stiff, expressionless mask, utterly devoid of emotion, as if its owner had died at that very moment.

Keke recognized her. It was Xia Yutong.

What was going on? How could Xia Yutong suddenly appear? And where was Gu Mian?

Keke turned her head towards Chu Changge, and something even more terrifying happened: Chu Changge had also vanished, replaced by another woman in the same deathly pale long dress—also Xia Yutong.

Two identical dead faces stared at her, motionless.

Two of them. Two Xia Yutongs!

Keke looked around frantically and saw a third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth...

She almost broke down.

All of them wore that same ghastly white dress, staring at her with identical faces, and splitting into hideous smiles at her.

Keke took a few steps back, her calf was tripped by something, and she stumbled backward.

"What's wrong?" Gu Mian grabbed Keke, pulling her back just as she was about to fall over the railing.

This was the fourth floor. If she'd fallen from here, she probably would've been dead before she could even shout, 'Xia Yutong pushed me!'

Only then did Keke come to her senses. With that pull, the women in white dresses dispersed like reflections in water. Gu Mian's large face appeared in her vision, looking at her curiously.

"I... I..." Keke panted, looking at the two people before her. She repeatedly checked their player panels above their heads before finally sighing in relief. She realized she might have been hallucinating. "I saw Xia Yutong just now."

Then she recounted to Gu Mian what had just happened. Afterwards, she still looked back with lingering fear. If Gu Mian hadn't pulled her, she'd probably be a smear on the ground floor by now.

"It was a hallucination," Chu Changge frowned. "This ghost can deceive people's vision."

Gu Mian rubbed his chin, looking at Keke. "So, it was a hallucination. I thought you were about to gloriously sacrifice yourself for our cause of luring out Xia Yutong."

"But now we don't need to lure her out. A ghost can't make people hallucinate from miles away. Since it could make Keke hallucinate, it must not be far from us—most likely within this school." Gu Mian looked around. There were no women in deathly pale long dresses with deadpan faces as Keke had described.

There was, however, a man with a deadpan face nearby—that would be Chu Changge.

"The ghost is mixed in with these people?" Keke asked quietly. She looked at the crowded dining hall; there were too many students coming to the cafeteria, making it impossible to distinguish who the ghost was.

Actually, distinguishing them would be simple: take a knife and slash everyone; whoever didn't spurt blood would be the ghost. However, considering this might get him packaged off to the police station, Gu Mian suppressed this practical idea.

"What should we do?" Keke had no idea.

Gu Mian sat down at a nearby empty table. "We can't identify the ghost, so let's just discuss it here. By the way, Chu Changge, did you hallucinate just now?"

Chu Changge also sat down and shook his head.

"It's a bit odd. Xia Yutong is your romantic target; even if she were hunting someone down, it should be you. But why would she target Keke? If Keke had fallen just now, her head would definitely have split open." Gu Mian mused, "Indiscriminate attacks?"

Keke touched her head, her scalp tingling a little.

"That's possible, but I didn't expect the ghost to show murderous intent so early," Chu Changge tapped the table. "Ghosts are usually suppressed by the instance's rules and wouldn't try to kill people right away. This situation means the instance's suppression of the ghost is gradually breaking down."

Gu Mian thought of the game's two sponsors: one favored the instance worlds, the other, the human world. Perhaps the power of the sponsor favoring humans was gradually weakening, allowing the ghosts in the instances to progressively overturn their restraints.

Keke was still thinking about the ghost's indiscriminate attacks. "This time, five of us entered the instance, and we were matched with five ghosts. If the ghosts really attack indiscriminately, isn't it possible for all five ghosts to attack one person simultaneously?"

Gu Mian nodded. "Theoretically, yes."

Five ghosts attacking one person... Even he would get punched a couple of times.

Chu Changge pushed up his glasses. "There's a pattern to everything. Unless someone does something particularly outrageous, they shouldn't be that unlucky."

Of course, that excluded Gu Mian. With his level of bad luck, even if he were just lying in bed sleeping, a ghost could fall from the sky and land on his head.

Chapter 732 Thanks to GT's Silver Alliance who loves his wife_1

Gu Mian didn't want to be chased around by five ghosts, screaming and shouting, so it was best to lure them out one at a time and defeat them individually.

He sat at the dining table, contemplating how to lure Xia Yutong out from such a large crowd. Logically, the restroom is the place with the densest yin energy, making it a prime spot for ghosts to appear. Many ghost stories are set in restrooms, especially girls' restrooms in schools. But he couldn't just walk in there; he'd probably be mistaken for a pervert and thrown out. Letting Keke go in alone was also out of the question. Judging by the earlier situation, if Keke really went into the girls' restroom by herself, she would most likely go in alive and come out dead.

Feeling somewhat frustrated, Gu Mian put his mobile phone back into his pocket. The canteen was packed, and right next to him sat a student eating pig hocks from a clay pot. The aroma wafting from the student reminded Gu Mian of Fatty, who hadn't entered the instance.

He wondered if Xiao Qiao had gone to steal food made by Fatty again.

"Speaking of which..." Keke suddenly remembered something, "I borrowed a special item from Miss Xiao Qiao before entering the instance. Now that I think about it, it might come in handy."

Indeed, Xiao Qiao had many useful things on her. Gu Mian knew of two in particular.

One was the [Big Data Search], and the other was the [Ghost Census List].

"It's the Ghost Census List," Keke hesitated, wondering whether to take it out. "If I take it out, all the nearby ghosts will come and fill in their names. It's likely to lure Xia Yutong out, but there are too many people around here..."

It might have undesirable effects.

The original intention of the person who designed this item was to have the form hold the ghosts' attention for a while, giving players more time to escape. Little did they know that once it landed in Gu Mian's hands, its purpose changed, turning it into a potent tool for luring ghosts.

Actually, she had a similar special item, [Money Can Make Ghosts Grind]. When taken out, it could compel ghosts chasing her to involuntarily start grinding the mill, which should also attract them. However, the price was losing all her Game Coins. Before teaming up with Gu Mian in instances, her entire savings amounted to only three digits, so she could afford to use it a few times back then. Now, after several instance runs with Gu Mian, her savings had gradually increased to over several thousand. She was completely unwilling to use this item now. Besides, the item itself was quite large; producing a mill out of thin air in the crowded canteen would be rather inappropriate.

Upon hearing this, Gu Mian immediately scouted the surroundings and led the two to an empty corridor at the edge of the second floor. The canteen had four staircases: two in the middle and two in the corners. Most students used the middle two staircases, so this area near the edge staircases was less crowded.

"Take it out," Gu Mian said to Keke, after making sure no one was around.

Keke nodded, and with a slight pause, a form appeared in her hand.

[Ghost Census List]

[Description: The Third National Ghost Census List]

[Function: When this form is used, nearby spiritual entities will consciously gather and fill in their names on it.]

The last time Xiao Qiao used this special item in the garbage dump instance, it had lured Emperor over as soon as she took it out.

The same thing happened this time. Half a second after the Ghost Census List appeared, a pale hand stretched out from Gu Mian's pocket.

Gu Mian silently stuffed the hand back in. "This list isn't for luring you."

While stuffing Emperor's hand back into his pocket, he looked up to observe their surroundings. The special item didn't specify how close 'nearby' was. He wondered if Xia Yutong was still within this 'nearby' range.

Students were coming and going not far away, but none of them seemed to be heading in their direction.

Xia Yutong must have left this area.

The trio waited for about half a minute, but no one approached them.

"She might have left," Keke said, holding the Ghost Census List and carefully observing their surroundings. "Should I put this away?"

Actually, this thing doesn't have an expiration date; it could be held all the time. That way, if they passed near a ghost, it could be lured over.

The only problem was Emperor in his pocket. He kept extending his hand, apparently wanting to sign his name on the list. Perhaps the Ghost Census List's allure for ghosts was so strong that Emperor extended his other hand as well.

Now Gu Mian had two hands to stuff back into his pocket.

As he was doing so, he suddenly felt that something was wrong.

Because a third hand emerged from his pocket.

Could it be that the Ghost Census List was so alluring that it made Emperor sprout a third hand out of sheer craving? No, that wasn't right. He'd never been this desperate, not even for his sister.

Before Gu Mian could figure out what was happening, a fourth hand came out. This fourth hand, however, didn't reach for the Ghost Census List; instead, it reached out to twist the hands that had previously emerged.

At that moment, Chu Changge, who was standing beside them, suddenly spoke, "They're all right hands."

By now, Gu Mian also realized something was amiss. He reached out, grabbed one of the arms that was struggling to extend, and yanked it out forcefully.

The arm was pulled out cleanly.

To his surprise, the arm wasn't connected to a body; its base was only attached to a mobile phone.

It was one of the mobile phones issued to players by the instance.

The arm seemed to have emerged from the mobile phone.

Gu Mian frowned and pulled out the other three arms. The bases of these three arms were connected to two mobile phones and a CD, respectively.

The one in the CD was Emperor.

The ones in the mobile phones were Gu Mian's three love interests; they had crawled out from the phones.

The scene was quite mentally scarring. Keke, holding the census list, backed away several steps. "So the ghosts in this instance... were all hidden in the phones?"

No wonder Emperor always tried to hit the phone whenever Gu Mian was chatting on it! He must have discovered this long ago.

The instance's task required players to engage in an online romance with a ghost for three days, and the ghosts were hidden inside the phones.

Most players wouldn't discard their phones, thus maintaining close contact with a ghost for three days and nights.

If Keke hadn't taken out the Ghost Census List, Gu Mian wouldn't have known even now that the ghosts were hidden in the phones.

Keke looked at the list in her hand. "This kind of special item is usually taken out only when being chased by a ghost, to buy time. If no ghost is present, a normal person wouldn't take something like this out for no reason."

Therefore, even if the other two players in the instance possessed such ghost-attracting special items, they wouldn't just take them out casually.

Naturally, they wouldn't know that the ghosts they were dating were hidden inside their phones.

Chapter 733 Peeking Secretly_1

I'm not sure if these ghosts have purchased that labor protection contract. Last time, I just touched a ghost's neck and was kicked out of the instance. It was because the ghost in that instance had bought the "Instance Ghosts Labor Protection Contract."

The ghosts in this instance probably haven't bought that particular contract yet.

With such a hopeful expectation, Gu Mian grabbed the three right arms and, with all his might, yanked three pale faces out of the smartphone, much like uprooting radishes.

They were three familiar faces. Gu Mian immediately spotted his love interest. His love interest, Zhao Tiankuo, had a hideous scar on his left cheek, making his entire face look exceptionally fierce.

At this moment, Zhao Tiankuo's fierce face showed a hint of confusion, as if he hadn't yet grasped what was happening.

Before they could react, Gu Mian swiftly pulled again.

This time, more than half of each of the three ghosts' bodies were pulled out of the smartphone.

At this point, the three ghosts that had been pulled out finally reacted.

They turned their deathly pale faces, looking around.

Keke was standing quite far from Gu Mian. When Xia Yutong began to turn her head, she immediately saw Keke not too far away.

Although Xia Yutong didn't immediately understand what was happening, upon seeing a living person nearby, a strange smile appeared on her ghastly pale face.

Normally, anyone seeing such a peculiar smile would instinctively turn and run. No, the moment one sees a ghost, they should turn and flee immediately.

But this woman before them didn't run. Instead, she stood her ground, pursing her lips with an inscrutable expression, her gaze irresistibly drifting to a spot diagonally behind Xia Yutong.

Xia Yutong followed the woman's gaze and looked diagonally backward.

Then, she saw a large face looming down at her.

Her smile began to gradually fade.

Gu Mian was very perceptive; he immediately noticed Xia Yutong's mood souring. When this female ghost first appeared, her face was all sunshine and smiles, and she even gave Keke a kind, approachable smile.

But now, the smile on her face was disappearing at a rate visible to the naked eye, and her already white face became even more ghastly.

Gu Mian reached out to her, intending to soothe the female ghost's emotions.

Unexpectedly, as if she had seen something repulsive, she lunged outward, leaped out of the smartphone, and then scrambled away, vanishing without a trace in an instant.

She was so fast that even Gu Mian didn't have time to react.

"Your girlfriend ran away," Gu Mian said to Chu Changge.

"Your boyfriend is about to run away too," Chu Changge said, pushing up his glasses.

Only then did Gu Mian realize that Zhao Tiankuo, who was right in front of him, was surreptitiously crawling out of the smartphone.

Realizing his actions had been discovered, Zhao Tiankuo stopped acting furtively. He abruptly straightened up and desperately ran into the distance. Gu Mian reached out to grab him but missed, only managing to brush a corner of Zhao Tiankuo's clothes.

What Keke had been imagining ultimately didn't happen.

Zhao Tiankuo had violent tendencies, and she had even imagined Gu Mian being knocked to the ground by Zhao Tiankuo, left to sob while clutching his saw.

Gu Mian didn't chase after the two fleeing ghosts. There was still one ghost here, and Keke and Chu Changge were also present. He couldn't very well abandon the two people and one ghost to chase after the two that had fled.

After Xia Yutong and Zhao Tiankuo fled one after another, Gu Mian, with quick eyes and deft hands, pinned down the remaining one.

There were only three in total; I can't let this one escape too.

The unlucky one who was caught was Keke's love interest, Ai Zitao. His persona was that of a stuffy office worker; he didn't talk much and seemed like an Honest Person.

Clearly, he was the most docile of the three ghosts.

The other two ghosts had realized something was wrong much earlier and had already vanished without a trace. Ai Zitao, however, had only just noticed Gu Mian standing behind him.

Recognizing the situation, Ai Zitao's expression also changed, and he immediately turned to flee.

However, Gu Mian was already prepared and held him down firmly, preventing this ghost from running freely.

Judging by the current situation, these ghosts probably had no idea who they were chatting with before they came out.

Gu Mian recalled that Xia Yutong had merely glanced back at him, upon which her expression had changed drastically, and she had fled in a panic.

This scene was somewhat like an online dating meet-up gone disastrously wrong.

Three online love interests were scared off by the 'ugly' Gu Mian the moment they arrived, and Gu Mian had shamelessly pestered and pleaded just to barely keep one.

Gu Mian tightly held onto the love interest in his grasp.

Ai Zitao's already white face now turned even more ghastly pale. Realizing he couldn't escape, he simply closed his eyes, as if unwilling to face this cruel reality.

Seeing Ai Zitao's expression of someone ready to die for a noble cause, Gu Mian couldn't help but touch his own face, a little suspicious.

Am I really that ugly?

Fortunately, few people passed through this corridor. Otherwise, they might really think Gu Mian was some sort of pervert about to do something to the pitiful-looking man with glasses he was holding.

"Don't you remember me?" Gu Mian said, looking at Ai Zitao, who was playing dead with his eyes shut in his grasp. "I'm your love interest."

Strictly speaking, Keke was Ai Zitao's actual love interest, but Gu Mian had already forcefully stolen Keke's chance, snatching her phone and personally engaging in an online romance with him.

Ai Zitao remained still with his eyes closed, as if he couldn't hear Gu Mian's words.

Gu Mian smiled at him amicably and said, "I sent you a message, but you never replied. You never talk to me. Is it because you don't like me?"

Gu Mian had sent this message to Ai Zitao before, but Ai Zitao had never replied.

Now that they had finally, with great difficulty, met in person, Gu Mian could ask him face-to-face.

The ghost in his grasp didn't utter a word. Definitely an introvert, Gu Mian thought.

Chapter 734 Peeking Secretly_2

Gu Mian hadn't entered this instance for online dating. Seeing that Ai Zitao didn't bring up the topic of romance, he didn't press further and changed the subject.

"Speaking of which, this should be the Exile World, right?" Gu Mian said, still gripping Ai Zitao as he looked up towards the stairwell entrance.

They were in the school cafeteria. It was mealtime, so the floors above and below were bustling with people. Fortunately, this staircase was rather secluded, so hardly anyone used it.

"It should be," Chu Changge said, adjusting his glasses and also glancing towards the stairwell. "This world seems quite normal."

Among the seven worlds, the Second World and the Exile World are both similar to Earth and relatively normal. Chu Changge could sense this wasn't the Second World, so it was most likely the Exile World.

"When we returned to Earth from the Seventh World, the train conductor gave us a 'Chronicle of the Seven Worlds' History'." Gu Mian reached for his guitar case and took out a small, crudely made booklet from an outer pocket. It was the very same historical record the conductor had hastily written under Gu Mian's intimidation.

"The conductor said that each world has a key figure. Finding these key figures will tell us more about this game," Gu Mian said, flipping through the booklet with his free hand.

However, the booklet didn't specify who the key figure of the Exile World was; the conductor didn't know either.

In that case, they'd have to find out for themselves.

The Seventh World has practically collapsed, barely holding on through sheer Xingyun. It probably won't be long before Earth's curse spreads to the other worlds. When the Low-Dimensional Worlds completely collapse, Chu Changge, Xiao Qiao, and the others will all be goners.

Gu Mian's plan was to find these key figures and discuss with them how to save the worlds.

But right now, he doesn't even know who the key figure of the Exile World is, not even a name. Asking these bottom-tier ghosts probably wouldn't yield anything, Gu Mian thought, lowering his gaze to the Ai Zitao in his hand.

"Do you know any other NPCs?" Gu Mian asked, giving it a shot.

A ghost this substantial should know at least a few ordinary NPCs, even if it doesn't know any high-ranking ones.

But Ai Zitao kept his eyes tightly shut, remaining silent.

Looks like it's time for the thrilling and intense interrogation phase.

Gu Mian reached for his guitar case with practiced ease. Ai Zitao, as if knowing what was coming next, shuddered and opened his eyes.

He finally broke his silence. Just before Gu Mian could unzip the guitar case, Ai Zitao quickly pointed to one of the mobile phones on the ground, stammering, "...It... knows..."

Earlier, when Gu Mian had "unplugged" the ghosts, he'd casually tossed the three empty phone shells onto the ground.

Now, Ai Zitao was pointing at one of them.

Keke picked up the phone he was pointing at, examined it, and then handed it to Gu Mian. "It's Zhao Tiankuo's."

Gu Mian took the phone and waved it in front of Ai Zitao. "So, you're saying Zhao Tiankuo knows other NPCs?"

Ai Zitao's expression was one of pity. He nodded with difficulty, as if already mourning for Zhao Tiankuo in advance.

Looks like they'll have to find Zhao Tiankuo after all.

Gu Mian continued to interrogate Ai Zitao with a mix of threats and inducements for a while longer. When he realized he couldn't squeeze any more useful information out of him, he let Ai Zitao return to his phone to be by himself.

At Gu Mian's word, Ai Zitao scrambled back into his own phone as if fleeing for his life, terrified that if he were a second too slow, Gu Mian would open the guitar case and "serenade" him.

Meanwhile, Gu Mian was fiddling with the phone in his hand, musing, This phone can hold a ghost. I wonder if it can be taken out of the instance. I could put Xiao Hong in here. Inside, Xiao Hong might even be able to communicate with us by typing, instead of spitting out words one by one like she usually does when she talks.

Lost in thought, Gu Mian pocketed the other two phones, keeping only the one housing Ai Zitao in his hand.

First, I need to find the runaway Zhao Tiankuo. I have to get to the other NPCs through him. But who knows where Zhao Tiankuo has run off to? Finding him will be a pain.

So, Gu Mian opened the pink interface of the dating app and sent a message to the Ai Zitao inside: 'Do you know where Zhao Tiankuo is?'

Perhaps retreating into the phone had given him some courage, as Ai Zitao wasn't as timid as before. He replied swiftly; Gu Mian received Ai Zitao's response from the phone within two seconds of sending the message.

Ai Zitao: Don't know.

This ghost is completely clueless, Gu Mian thought. Seems pretty useless.

Keke, standing nearby, spoke softly, "It's a pity. When we entered the instance, I only borrowed the Ghost Census from Miss Xiao Qiao. I didn't borrow the Big Data Search. If I had, it might have helped us find Zhao Tiankuo's location."

"Even if you had borrowed it, it would've been useless," Gu Mian said, pocketing Ai Zitao's phone. "That thing can only be used once every seven days, and Fatty used it yesterday. My freshly washed shirt disappeared yesterday. Fatty borrowed the Big Data Search from Miss Xiao Qiao to find it and discovered Xiao Hong had hidden it under the bed."

Keke fell silent.

For a moment, she didn't know what to say.

Setting aside the use of such a valuable special item to find a shirt, the way the shirt disappeared was also quite odd—hidden under the bed by Xiao Hong. Come to think of it, a few days ago, I did see Xiao Hong sneakily crouching by the clothesline in the yard...

"So, how do we find Zhao Tiankuo now?" Keke stopped dwelling on Fatty using the Big Data Search to find a shirt and brought her focus back to the present issue.

Finding two hiding ghosts in an instance is like looking for a needle in a haystack. Keke suspected that by the time the instance ended in three days, they wouldn't have found even a single ghostly hair.

Gu Mian was also seriously pondering this problem.

If Zhao Tiankuo and Xia Yutong are determined to hide, they will indeed be rather hard to find.

As he thought, his attention shifted to the love interests of the other two players.

Ai Zitao, Zhao Tiankuo, and Xia Yutong are our trio's love interests. But there are two other players in this instance. I remember one is called Wind Blows Butt Cool and the other is Moonfall Crow Cries. Their

respective love interests are the college student Song Meng and the high schooler Feng Cheng. Those two players probably still don't know that the 'people' they're dating are ghosts hidden in their phones.

With this in mind, Gu Mian took out his phone again and sent a message to Ai Zitao: 'Can you contact Song Meng and Feng Cheng?'

We can't find Zhao Tiankuo and Xia Yutong for now. Catching Song Meng and Feng Cheng wouldn't be bad either. We might be able to get something out of them.

Chu Changge, who was looking at the phone screen from the side, remarked, "The ghosts inside the phones should be able to contact each other through the messaging app."

Sure enough, Ai Zitao inside the phone replied with a single word: 'Can.'

Gu Mian continued typing: 'Where are they now?'

After a good while, Ai Zitao sent a reply: 'Yifa Mall.'

Gu Mian figured that during the delay, Ai Zitao had gone to ask the other two ghosts. Song Meng and Feng Cheng are still unaware that Ai Zitao has fallen into my hands and already switched allegiances. The two unsuspecting ghosts readily revealed their location.

Chu Changge suddenly spoke up, "Yifa Mall isn't far from here."

Keke looked at him in surprise. "You know where that mall is?"

Chu Changge nodded. "When I went to the internet cafe to check the map earlier, I paid attention to the buildings in this area. Yifa Mall is west of this school. After leaving the main gate, head west, and it's just past one intersection."

Chapter 735 Thanks to the leader of Twenty-Four Winds_1

Now that they knew the whereabouts of the two ghosts, Song Meng and Feng Cheng, Gu Mian and company didn't hesitate any longer, promptly setting out from school towards Yifa Square.

At the same time, Wind Blows Butt Cool and Moonfall Crow Cries were still on their phones, discussing clues about the instance.

The mall was currently crowded. Wind Blows Butt Cool sat on a public bench, prudently observing his surroundings. "I wonder if there's any connection between the way out of the instance and the personalities of our love interests. You see, each of our love interests has a unique personality."

Moonfall Crow Cries, clutching her cell phone tightly, asked, "It has to do with their personalities?"

"Like your love interest Feng Cheng, who's an insecure high-school student," Wind Blows Butt Cool speculated. "If you keep encouraging him, boosting his self-esteem and making him brighter, he might not come after us to harm us."

"That's hard to say." Moonfall Crow Cries thought things weren't that simple. Ghosts weren't so easily appeased by mere coaxing. What if she managed to cheer up that insecure high school student, and he then enthusiastically came looking for her? What would she do then?

"Speaking of which, have you noticed that many students seem to be frequenting this mall?" Wind Blows Butt Cool stared at a group of people nearby who were clearly students. Could there be a school around here?

Their respective love interests were a college student and a high school student. The two had discussed earlier that it would be better not to approach schools to avoid bumping into them.

"Did you notice if there was a school around here when you came into the mall?" Moonfall Crow Cries suddenly seemed agitated.

"I was in a hurry when I came in and didn't notice." Wind Blows Butt Cool had already risen. "There might indeed be schools nearby. We should move away from here."

His love interest, Song Meng, was a poverty-stricken college student who had recently told him she was planning to find part-time work. If Song Meng was studying at a nearby school, then the likelihood of her

working part-time at this mall was very high. Wind Blows Butt Cool definitely didn't want to bump into his love interest; he was afraid that if they met, she would kill him on the spot.

The two quickly acted on their plan and left the mall, swiftly walking west along the main road.

Despite it being broad daylight with a fair number of people going back and forth, their fear of encountering their love interests kept them vigilantly scrutinizing their surroundings, attracting a few sideways glances from passers-by.

By now, the two had reached the vicinity of Paradise. The Paradise entrance was crowded with people queuing for tickets. A child in the crowd was crying and throwing a tantrum on the ground because his parents wouldn't buy him cotton candy. Several young couples, hand in hand, were queuing at the entrance, occasionally throwing glances at the child creating a ruckus on the ground.

This place was really noisy; the two men picked up their pace to leave as quickly as possible.

Just then, Wind Blows Butt Cool's cellphone buzzed—it was a message from Song Meng.

He immediately stopped to check his phone.

Song Meng: "School and part-time work are really tiring, and time is so tight. After class, I have to rush to the shop on my bike and still almost end up late. I barely made it in on time. Fortunately, the manager didn't see me, or else I would've been scolded again."

"Your love interest sent you a message?" Moonfall Crow Cries peered over at his phone.

Upon receiving Song Meng's message, Wind Blows Butt Cool took the opportunity to indirectly question her about her workplace. "Both school and part-time work sound tiring indeed. Where do you work that the manager is so stern?"

He wanted to find out Song Meng's workplace and then stay far away from that area.

Nearby, the child who hadn't gotten his cotton candy was still crying and making a fuss, the noise starting to annoy Wind Blows Butt Cool. He took a few steps to the side, moving next to the ticket office and putting some distance between himself and the noisy child.

Soon, Song Meng sent another message: "I work at a bakery near our school. I can't talk anymore; the manager's watching me, and I need to start working."

The message didn't specify the exact location, but at least he knew it was near a school. He just had to be careful not to go near any schools.

Thinking this, Wind Blows Butt Cool texted back: "Alright, go on then. Remember to message me when you get off work."

After sending the message, he didn't immediately turn off the screen. Instead, he stared at his phone for another two minutes, making sure she wasn't going to send any more messages before finally looking away.

He didn't dare miss any of Song Meng's messages. It would be bad if he missed one, didn't reply, and angered her.

Wind Blows Butt Cool put his phone away. Just as he was about to say something to Moonfall Crow Cries, he noticed her staring intently at the ticket office not far away.

He followed her gaze and saw a man in a red shirt standing by the window of the ticket office. The man had his back to them and was anxiously talking to the ticket seller inside.

Their location was not too far from the ticket office, so they could vaguely hear the conversation happening there.

The man in the red shirt was hurriedly asking the ticket seller, "Could you tell me the location of the Sunshine Insurance Company around here, the one that signs labor protection contracts?"

He sounded very anxious, and his voice was loud enough to make the tourists queuing nearby cast puzzled glances at him.

Wind Blows Butt Cool also found it strange. This is clearly Paradise; why would this man come here asking about insurance contracts? Is there something wrong with his head?

The ticket seller seemed a little upset too. He looked at the tourists around him and then, lowering his voice, started speaking to the man at the window. His voice was so low that Wind Blows Butt Cool could catch only bits and pieces of the conversation.

"...asking this for? ...you should go back... you don't work here..."

The man in the red shirt seemed to realize that his voice had been too loud. He lowered his voice this time and leaned in to whisper something to the ticket seller.

Next, Wind Blows Butt Cool saw the ticket seller's expression suddenly turn to horror. He even jumped out of his seat, exclaiming, "What?! He's here?!"

The sudden outburst startled the tourists outside the ticket office, who wondered why the ticket seller was suddenly acting so erratically.

Wind Blows Butt Cool watched as the ticket seller's face turned from white to red, then to green. He looked extremely upset. His expression was like someone whose ancestral grave had just been desecrated.

Then, the ticket seller stopped selling tickets, rushed out, grabbed the man in the red shirt by the window, and quickly pulled him off in a certain direction.

That's when Wind Blows Butt Cool got a good look at the man in the red shirt. There was a scar on his left cheek. He looked kind of familiar.

Wait a minute!

Wind Blows Butt Cool stared in the direction the ticket seller and the man in the red shirt had disappeared, his eyes wide. "Is he... isn't he that..."

"Yes," Moonfall Crow Cries, who was standing next to him, was also staring intently in the direction the two men had disappeared. She spoke in a barely audible whisper, "That's Zhao Tiankuo."

At the start of the instance, they had been shown photographs of all the love interests, and Moonfall Crow Cries had committed all their faces to memory, which is why she had recognized Zhao Tiankuo the moment he had rushed over to the ticket office window.

"He is the love interest of the player whose nickname is 'Doctor', right?" Wind Blows Butt Cool tightened his grip on the phone in his hand. "I wasn't expecting us to run into him."

"But he didn't look much like a ghost just now," Moonfall Crow Cries remarked, puzzled. "I've never seen a ghost in an instance display such a wide range of emotions. I mean, didn't you see how anxious Zhao Tiankuo looked when he was walking over to the ticket office? It was as if a ghost was chasing him."

Chapter 736 Heaven-sent Romance, Coach Che_1

Wind Blows Butt Cool also felt there was some truth to her words. "If Zhao Tiankuo were truly a ghost, then his emotions are indeed overly expressive..."

He had experienced quite a few instances before, and the ghosts in those instances didn't even show expressions; they just relentlessly pursued the living with terrifying appearances.

Yet, the Zhao Tiankuo from moments ago was emotionally agitated, his anxious tone laced with a hint of fear, as if he were afraid of something.

This was vastly different from the ghosts he had seen before.

Could it be that Zhao Tiankuo isn't a ghost?

Nearby, Moonfall Crow Cries mused, "If Zhao Tiankuo isn't a ghost, then the other love interests might not be ghosts either. So, where does the danger in this instance stem from?"

"Why don't we go over there and take a look?" Wind Blows Butt Cool turned his head towards the ticket booth. "Zhao Tiankuo seemed to know the ticket seller from earlier. Asking other employees in the amusement park might give us some clues."

"Alright. It would be more reassuring if we could figure out early on whether the love interests are human or ghost." Moonfall Crow Cries nodded and headed in that direction.

At this point, the tourists queuing outside the ticket booth had already started to complain.

"Why did the ticket seller just leave without a word? I was just about to reach the front when he took off!"

"Where's the manager? Are they just going to leave us hanging out here?"

"This amusement park is so unprofessional! The ticket seller just ran off for no reason."

As the tourists were complaining loudly, a tall, thin staff member hurried out from the main gate and apologized to the crowd at the entrance, "I'm sorry, everyone. Our amusement park's equipment has experienced some malfunctions, so we're temporarily suspending operations for today. We are very sorry."

This apologizing employee's attire was a bit odd. He was clearly wearing the amusement park's uniform, but he stubbornly wore a suit jacket over it, as if trying to flaunt some kind of status. His complexion was also terrible, looking somewhat greenish.

Meanwhile, Wind Blows Butt Cool saw through the main gate a large group of employees in work uniforms gathered inside, surrounding a person in a suit, who was likely the director of the amusement park.

One of the employees was visibly agitated, gesticulating wildly while speaking to the director. Wind Blows Butt Cool faintly heard him mention something about not having bought insurance.

Nearby, another employee quietly took out a sign, the kind stores hang on their doors. Wind Blows Butt Cool was too far away to make out the specific words on the sign, but he thought he saw the character for "dog" on it.

Wind Blows Butt Cool felt that these amusement park employees were all a bit strange, but he couldn't quite pinpoint what was odd.

By this time, the queuing tourists had already complained and started to disperse.

Seeing that the Paradise employee at the main entrance was about to turn and go back, the duo immediately went forward and called out to him.

"Excuse me, do you happen to know the ticket seller who was here earlier?" Moonfall Crow Cries took two large strides forward to ask the employee who was about to walk back in.

Hearing someone call him, Coach Che, his face still green, turned to look behind him.

When he turned, he saw two players standing before him.

Seeing these two made his face turn even greener.

Ever since his driving school instance had tragically fallen victim to Gu Mian, Coach Che had been drifting through various instances. Gu Mian, however, clung to him like a ghost.

Wherever he went, he was bound to run into Gu Mian. After losing his job, Coach Che first worked as a cameraman in the Sweet Lovers instance for a few days, then left because the pay was too low. Unexpectedly, not long after his departure, the Sweet Lovers instance was ransacked by Gu Mian, and the entire instance collapsed.

Later, he took a logistics role in the "Close Your Eyes" instance, only to unexpectedly encounter Gu Mian again, followed by that instance's collapse.

After that, he worked in various places such as the Food Processing Factory, Scream Court, and the Global Fugitive Train, but without exception, these instances all met a disastrous end at Gu Mian's hands.

Gu Mian was like a divinely ordained lover from a fairy tale; no matter where Coach Che was, Gu Mian would descend from the heavens to find him. This was the kind of plot you'd only find in romance novels.

If Gu Mian had been a beautiful woman, Coach Che might have found some solace in his suffering, perhaps even saying with a bitter smile, "Haha, how romantic."

Unfortunately, Gu Mian was not.

After Gu Mian had ruined multiple jobs for Coach Che, other NPCs treated him like a pariah, offering him no kindness.

After his previous job on the train was ruined, he had shamelessly begged the director of this instance for a long time to finally, reluctantly, get a job. The pay was very low, but at least it offered a glimmer of hope—the hope of retrieving his car from the junkyard and fixing it.

But happy days are always fleeting. Today was Coach Che's twelfth day working at the amusement park.

Just moments ago, the director had received a notice from higher-ups stating that Gu Mian had been matched into an instance in this world, located not far from the amusement park.

The instant the notice was received, everyone cast suspicious glances his way, as if he were the one who had led Gu Mian there.

Coach Che had unspoken bitterness but could only swallow his anger and keep quiet.

Now, he was stopped by two players asking if he knew the ticket seller from earlier. He took a closer look at the pair before him: one was Wind Blows Butt Cool, and the other was Moonfall Crow Cries. Weren't these two of the players from Gu Mian's instances?

Anything related to Gu Mian irked him. He rolled his eyes at the two of them and immediately turned back into the amusement park.

Entering the main gate, he saw the director on the phone, fuming, "Isn't this robbery? Asking so much just to rent a vehicle!"

Fortunately, there were no players in the amusement park instance at the moment. The director had urgently suspended Paradise's operations and was on the phone with the neighboring bus instance to rent a bus, preparing to take all employees to the Sunshine Insurance Company to buy insurance.

Although Coach Che was considered high-risk, he hadn't purchased insurance. He was practically penniless; his beloved little car had even been tossed into the recycling station. He had nothing left to lose, and nothing to claim for compensation.

Outside, Wind Blows Butt Cool and Moonfall Crow Cries were inexplicably rolled eyes at, leaving the two of them utterly puzzled.

"Did I say something to offend him just now? Why did he roll his eyes at us like that?" Wind Blows Butt Cool was very confused.

Moonfall Crow Cries also shook her head. "I don't know. It seems we can't find out anything here. I think this amusement park is strange; we should leave."

"Alright," Wind Blows Butt Cool said. "I agree, the atmosphere around these people is weird. Let's not linger."

With that, the two exchanged another glance at the Paradise employees inside, then quickly departed.

Just a few minutes after leaving the amusement park's main entrance, they saw several empty buses approaching, speeding past them as if to pick someone up.

These vehicles were all the same color and design; they must have come from the same depot.

Moonfall Crow Cries glanced back at the buses that had sped past them and noticed one had stopped at the amusement park entrance. The man who looked like the director was leading his employees onto that bus.

Once everyone was on board, the bus immediately revved its engine and sped off.

Chapter 737 'I am really silly, really' _1

"There's been no movement from Song Meng and Feng Cheng." Gu Mian was standing in front of the Good Fortune Mall, looking down at his phone.

Chu Changge glanced at the bustling mall, then turned to Gu Mian. "Can't Ai Zitao get any information out of them?"

"They say Wind Blows Butt Cool and Moonfall Crow Cries left here and went near an amusement park. After that, neither of those two ghosts responded anymore." Gu Mian was browsing his chat history with Ai Zitao.

Chu Changge pushed up his glasses. "Perhaps those two ghosts have realized something."

They (Song Meng and Feng Cheng) realized Gu Mian had entered this instance, and that Ai Zitao, who was with them, had become a traitor to the ghosts, Keke added silently.

Gu Mian glanced at the map he'd casually picked up from the roadside. "Walking west from here does indeed lead to an amusement park called Ronghua Amusement Park. That's where those two ghosts lost contact."

"Could Zhao Tiankuo and Xia Yutong, who might have escaped, have found the other two ghosts and told them about you entering this instance?" Keke asked.

That's a possibility.

There was no better place to go for now, so they decided to head to the amusement park to the west first. Song Meng and Feng Cheng had lost contact near there, so perhaps useful information could still be found.

Keke also leaned over to look at Ronghua Amusement Park's location on the map. "I once entered an instance related to an amusement park. We were supposed to act as guides for ghosts, recommending attractions to them. If we didn't meet our quota, we'd be chased by ghosts... It makes me remember that instance every time I see an amusement park."

Hearing this, Gu Mian felt Ronghua Amusement Park could indeed be an instance. After all, he'd previously found the food processing factory instance within a hide-and-seek instance. That was where he'd accidentally run into his old friend Coach Che and subsequently demolished their food processing factory.

Speaking of which, I wonder how Coach Che is doing now, Gu Mian mused. I haven't seen him since returning from the Seventh World.

"If Ronghua Amusement Park really is an instance, it must have NPCs in it," Gu Mian said, already envisioning a bright future. "Let's go check it out."

That way, we won't have to bother finding Zhao Tiankuo.

Without hesitation, the trio set off west along the main road.

They hadn't walked far when they saw several empty buses approaching. The driver of the lead bus spotted Gu Mian by the roadside. His expression turned to one of terror, and he slammed on the brakes. The speeding bus screeched to a halt, and the bus behind, unable to stop in time, rear-ended it.

Gu Mian, still walking, noticed the accident ahead. He took a couple more steps, wondering if he should go over and offer assistance.

Before he got close, he heard someone curse loudly, "Damn it! Why did you suddenly stop?! My bus's front is all smashed in!"

It was the driver of the rear-ended bus, still cursing.

The driver got out of his bus, still cursing, and walked towards the front bus, apparently intending to confront its driver.

Gu Mian heard the stream of curses getting closer.

"Do you have any idea how much it'll cost to fix this bus?! You're paying for this! And how am I supposed to get to The Voice of Evil Ghosts with my bus banged up like this..."

His words stopped abruptly. The driver, who had come forward to complain, saw Gu Mian observing them from nearby.

His expression became terrified. He retreated a few steps and hissed at the driver in the cabin of the bus he'd just approached, "What's *he* doing here? Why didn't you tell me he was here?!"

After asking, he waited for a long while without a response. He turned his head to look into the cabin; well now, the driver in there had already vanished.

Seeing this, he also turned to flee, but before he could, someone grabbed him by the back of his collar.

He stiffly turned his head back, only to see Gu Mian's magnified face right in front of his eyes.

The driver's heart skipped a beat, his mind went blank for a moment, and then he started to play dumb. "Haha, who are you? Why are you grabbing me?"

Gu Mian ignored him, instead turning to Chu Changge and Keke. "The Voice of Evil Ghosts sounds like an instance. It probably has plenty of judges, singers, and audience members. You could throw a brick in there and hit ten NPCs."

Hearing this, the driver wished he could faint on the spot.

Being caught by Gu Mian is bad enough, but now I'm being forced to lead him to disrupt other instances! How will the other NPCs look at me in the future? How could I ever hold my head high again? I heard about that NPC, Coach Che; Gu Mian chased him everywhere, like a plague. Everyone suspected Coach Che was a mole planted by Gu Mian, so nobody would associate with him. Am I going to end up like him, despised by everyone? I'm so stupid, truly. I only knew Gu Mian was nearby, and I actually volunteered to drive people to the insurance company. And now, look, I've been caught.

Amidst his despair, a sliver of relief flickered in the driver's heart. Gu Mian is going for The Voice of Evil Ghosts instance, not my bus company. At least my workplace won't be affected. I won't end up like Coach Che, destitute and wandering.

At this thought, he mustered his spirits and managed a strained smile, preparing to lead Gu Mian.

But just then, the sinister-looking Four-Eyed Boy suddenly spoke up.

"The exterior and interior of these two buses are identical. I'd guess they belong to the same company. There might be a bus station instance nearby." Chu Changge shifted his gaze to the driver Gu Mian was holding. "I imagine a high-level NPC at the bus station would definitely know about all the nearby instances."

Those who run a bus station have to know the local map well, otherwise, they can't pick up and drop off passengers.

"You're right. If we go directly to the bus station, we can just have them drive us to any instance we choose." Gu Mian nodded in agreement, then looked enthusiastically at the driver he was holding. "Take us to your place for a visit."

The driver almost blacked out, his mind filled with visions of his bleak future. Our station chief is so stingy; he always said insurance was too expensive and never bought death insurance for the station. If the station is gone, I'll be displaced and wandering, with no light in my future at all.

Just then, a brilliant idea struck him.

"Actually, our bus station doesn't have much to offer. If you're talking about the place with the most people and richest resources, that would definitely be the local branch of the Sunshine Insurance Company! There must be tons of people there buying insurance right now. You'd definitely want to go there. Even if you go to the bus station, you'll end up going to the insurance company eventually. Let's not waste time; I'll take you straight to the Sunshine Insurance Company."

Sunshine Insurance Company?

Gu Mian remembered that name. He'd heard an instance ticket seller on the phone with this company, wanting to buy insurance.

Presumably, all those contracts, like ghost protection and instance accidental death insurance, were signed with this company.

Chapter 738 - Startled Awake from a Near-Death Experience_1

Gu Mian immediately decided to check out this insurance company, hoping to find some high-level NPCs.

"Are there any high-ranking personnel in the insurance company?" He had already decided to go, but he felt it was better to inquire about the situation there first.

The driver hesitated, then shook his head. "Our station head is so stingy he didn't even buy us insurance. I have no idea what the insurance company even looks like..."

As he spoke, a look of grievance crossed his face.

Gu Mian saw his expression change from restrained fear to barely suppressed sorrow.

"Bosses from other instances, hearing you're here, are all organizing their employees to get insurance at Sunshine Insurance Company. Only our station head is a cheapskate! Even at a time like this, he won't buy insurance for us. Instead, to make money, he sends us out driving buses to take people from other instances to the insurance company!"

The driver, getting emotional, blurted out, "And as a result, we had the rotten luck to run into..."

Halfway through his sentence, he remembered Gu Mian was right beside him. He snapped his mouth shut and surreptitiously glanced at Gu Mian's expression. Seeing that Gu Mian didn't look like he was about to grab his guitar case, he finally relaxed.

"Let's go to Sunshine Insurance Company quickly. I'll take you guys there! It's not far; we'll reach there in no time!" The driver, afraid that any further delay would lead to more trouble, eagerly invited Gu Mian and the others to "visit" the insurance company.

His bus had broken down from the earlier rear-ending, so Gu Mian and his group had no choice but to walk.

"Did your station dispatch many buses to pick people up from the instances?" Gu Mian asked the driver while walking ahead with him.

The driver was initially hesitant, wondering if it was a good idea to reveal so much information to Gu Mian. But then he thought, I'm already leading them to take down the insurance company, so being coy now would just be pretentious.

"Yes. All the instances in this area went into a frenzy when they heard you'd arrived... Ahem, I mean, they all eagerly wanted to buy insurance. They called the station head to charter buses to take their staff to the insurance company. We dispatched over a dozen buses to pick them up."

So, he would see people from over a dozen buses at the insurance company soon? Just thinking about it made Gu Mian feel happy.

Walking on, the four of them soon saw Paradise not far ahead.

From a good distance away, Gu Mian spotted roller coaster tracks and a tall Ferris Wheel. However, all the rides inside were currently shut down.

"Is that also an instance?" Gu Mian asked the driver leading the way.

The driver faltered, then nodded. "Yes, the park manager also called us, saying to charter a bus to take the employees there for insurance. These officials, honestly! They're usually too cheap to buy insurance, but then they panic when it's crunch time. Going to buy insurance now, they'll definitely have to wait in a long queue..."

As he spoke, they had already reached the entrance of Paradise.

The Paradise gates were closed, and a sign hung on the ticket booth window: "Closed Today."

Inside Paradise, only silent, stationary rides could be seen, and not a soul was around. Wait, there was one person.

A tall, thin man in a suit was struggling out, dragging a rather battered suitcase.

As he reached the main gate, he tripped on a warped floorboard, stumbled forward a few steps, and his suitcase fell to the ground.

After regaining his balance, he immediately spun around and hurled a few curses at the offending floorboard, then turned back to retrieve his fallen suitcase.

He carefully brushed the dust off his suitcase and then, wincing slightly, used his sleeve to try and rub off a fresh scratch. When he saw it wouldn't come off, he sighed, straightened up, picked up the suitcase, and prepared to continue on his way.

However, just as he straightened up, he saw several people standing at the entrance of Paradise.

When he clearly saw the face of the person leading the group, his suitcase once again fell to the ground with a THUD.

"You... you... you... you... you... you... you..." Coach Che stared at the person before him, sputtering out a string of "you's," too agitated to form a complete sentence.

Gu Mian was somewhat puzzled.

He and Coach Che really were fated to meet. Ever since Coach Che's instance was gone, it seemed Gu Mian ran into him almost everywhere he went.

As he thought this, he offered Coach Che a smile. "Long time no see, Coach Che. Been working here lately?"

The driver standing with Gu Mian instinctively recoiled upon seeing Coach Che, as if he were the plague itself. He'd long heard of Coach Che's notorious reputation: wherever Coach Che appeared, Gu Mian was sure to follow. Seeing it now, it was indeed true.

Coach Che didn't cry, but his expression was worse than if he were.

He seemed to want to speak, his facial muscles twitching, but he failed.

It took him a good while to compose himself. He silently picked up the suitcase lying beside him, not even bothering to brush off the dust clinging to it. "I'm not working here anymore," he said. "The park manager heard you were matched nearby and immediately took everyone to buy insurance. He left me behind to pack my things and clear out."

His battered suitcase had acquired another dent from the fall just now. It looked as if it had been salvaged from a garbage dump.

The driver, watching from the side, secretly clicked his tongue in sympathy. This Coach Che once directly managed a special instance, a position coveted by everyone. To think he's fallen to such a state today... truly pitiful.

At this moment, Coach Che noticed the driver beside Gu Mian and recognized he wasn't a player.

Coach Che hesitated before asking Gu Mian, "You... captured an NPC?"

Hearing himself mentioned, the driver managed a strained smile.

"His bus broke down on the way, and then he ran into me. He was so enthusiastic about inviting us to visit Sunshine Insurance Company for some fun," Gu Mian stated righteously.

The driver's smile nearly froze on his face. Great. Not only am I a traitor, but now it's being broadcasted everywhere. I'll never be able to show my face again.

"Sunshine Insurance Company?" Coach Che's eyes widened. "You're going to Sunshine Insurance Company?"

Everyone from the nearby instances is rushing to the insurance company now that they've heard Gu Mian is here. If he goes there, isn't he going to wipe them all out in one go? Besides, if the insurance company here is gone, none of the instances in this area will get any compensation if something goes wrong in the future!

At this thought, Coach Che grew agitated. He wanted to stop Gu Mian, but then he remembered how all his previous, exhausting efforts to stop him had been utterly useless, only leading to his current sorry state where everyone wanted him gone.

With this realization, he completely gave up and plopped down on the steps at the Paradise entrance. "Go on then," he said dejectedly. "I didn't buy insurance anyway, so I'm not expecting that company to compensate me for anything."

Gu Mian hauled Coach Che, who was sitting on the steps, to his feet and enthusiastically dragged him towards the insurance company. "You used to work in a special instance," Gu Mian said. "Your position wasn't low, so you must know a lot of people. When we get to Sunshine Insurance Company, you have to point out the high-level NPCs there for me."

Hearing this, Coach Che's heart plummeted. This is terrible! He flailed a couple of times, trying to escape, but Gu Mian had a death grip on him, dragging him forward like a dead pig.

Chapter 739 - Chronicles of a Struggling Car_1

Thus, the trio and the two NPCs continued their journey.

The bus driver, while leading the way, secretly observed Coach Che, whom Gu Mian was still tightly clutching.

The two did indeed share some clandestine connection, or else why would they be so intimate upon meeting, with Gu Mian seemingly reluctant to let go of Coach Che? the bus driver thought. This realization filled him with contempt for Coach Che, whom he now considered a traitor. But then it struck him that he, too, was currently guiding Gu Mian. This made him feel quite dejected; he'd never imagined he would sink to Coach Che's level.

Gu Mian was oblivious to the driver's rich inner monologue, preoccupied with how he might make his move at Sunshine Insurance Company upon their arrival.

If only it were possible to capture an NPC in his phone and take it out with him, Gu Mian mused. That way, he could catch a high-level NPC, and whenever he entered an instance and didn't understand something, he could ask the NPC in his phone. Capturing Coach Che would be pretty good. Unfortunately, the phone he used for dating didn't seem to have an NPC-capturing function.

Coach Che, unaware of Gu Mian's sinister thoughts, was dragged along, lamenting his miserable fate. However, the thought that Sunshine Insurance Company was about to be finished stirred an inexplicable sense of anticipation within him. If everyone lost their jobs and wandered around aimlessly, then they'd finally understand how I feel right now, he couldn't help but think.

Meanwhile, it wasn't just Gu Mian, Chu Changge, and Keke heading to Sunshine Insurance Company; Wind Blows Butt Cool and Moonfall Crow Cries were also on their way.

After they left the entrance of Paradise, neither of their love interests had made a sound. Moonfall Crow Cries tentatively sent a few more messages to Feng Cheng, the one she'd been chatting with, but there was no reply.

"Those buses that passed us earlier seemed strange," Wind Blows Butt Cool said as they walked. "You saw them too, right? One of them went and picked up all the employees from Paradise."

"I thought it was odd too, but I can't quite put my finger on why," Moonfall Crow Cries mused. "And Zhao Tiankuo, whom we saw earlier near the entrance to Paradise, he seemed strange too. We all

thought the love interests in this instance were ghosts, but after seeing Zhao Tiankuo in person, I don't think he's like one."

Wind Blows Butt Cool nodded. "I agree. He doesn't seem like a ghost, more like someone being chased by one. It's a pity we can't contact the other three players in this instance. Otherwise, we could share this clue about Zhao Tiankuo with them and analyze it together."

Moonfall Crow Cries looked at the vehicles coming and going on the main road before them. "Are we really going to that Sunshine Insurance Company Zhao Tiankuo mentioned?" she wondered. "I hope nothing unexpected happens if we go."

Not long ago, they had spotted a large sign in a roadside greenbelt with a map of the vicinity. Parts of the sign were rusted, but it was still legible. They saw that Sunshine Insurance Company wasn't far from Paradise, just over a ten-minute walk to the west. So, the two decided to go check it out.

"Zhao Tiankuo hurriedly asked where that insurance company was and then rushed off. He definitely went there," said Wind Blows Butt Cool. "I think this could be a lead. You see, we haven't gotten any clues from chatting with our love interests so far. Maybe following Zhao Tiankuo will get us some useful information."

Moonfall Crow Cries nodded. She had plenty of instance experience and knew that one had to actively search for clues in an instance to have a chance of survival.

With no other leads at the moment, their best bet was to head for the insurance company.

"When we get there, let's not go in rashly," Moonfall Crow Cries speculated. "Although Zhao Tiankuo's behavior doesn't seem very ghost-like, anything can happen. We'll observe the situation outside the insurance company first before deciding whether to go in. By the way, do you think Zhao Tiankuo went to the insurance company to find his love interest? His love interest is that player called Doctor."

Wind Blows Butt Cool thought she had a point. "It's certainly possible he's looking for his love interest. Could it be that Doctor told Zhao Tiankuo his location, and that's why Zhao Tiankuo rushed to the insurance company?"

"If that's true, we should be able to run into Doctor at Sunshine Insurance Company," Moonfall Crow Cries said, quickening her pace. "We might even see Doctor and Zhao Tiankuo meet. If Zhao Tiankuo is a ghost, he'd kill Doctor on the spot, right?"

"Maybe Doctor already found a clue proving his love interest isn't a ghost, so he felt safe meeting Zhao Tiankuo," Wind Blows Butt Cool said, also speeding up. "Everything we're saying now is just speculation. We still need to get there and see the actual situation. Let's go, quickly."

The two hurried westward and soon saw a large building ahead with a "Sunshine Insurance Company" sign.

The building was two stories tall and didn't cover a large area. The main entrance had transparent glass doors, allowing a view of the inside from outside.

Several buses, similar to the ones they had seen earlier on the road, were parked outside the glass doors.

Just then, a bus pulled up at the entrance, its occupants hurriedly disembarking. Some even jumped from the doorway and dashed straight into the insurance company without pausing, looking extremely urgent, as if they wouldn't get another chance if they didn't secure insurance right then.

"Why are those buses here too? It looks like they're bringing people here," Wind Blows Butt Cool said, momentarily stunned as he looked at the buses by the entrance.

Moonfall Crow Cries was equally puzzled.

The two didn't dare approach recklessly. They found a secluded spot and secretly observed the inside through the glass doors. The main hall was packed with people; the lines at the service windows nearly stretched out the main entrance.

Wind Blows Butt Cool was dumbfounded. "What's going on? Why are there so many people at this insurance company?"

He had originally planned to look for Zhao Tiankuo inside, but now the place was so densely packed with people that it was impossible to make out any faces.

The crowded people were extremely noisy, constantly buzzing about something. Every now and then, angry curses could be heard from someone whose foot had been stepped on.

Inside, staff members struggled to move through the throng, shouting, "Form a line!" and "Everyone line up, one at a time!"

Their voices were so shrill that even Wind Blows Butt Cool and Moonfall Crow Cries, positioned outside, could hear them.

There were too many people inside. The two exchanged dismayed glances, momentarily unsure of what to do.

"Should we wait here for Zhao Tiankuo to come out?" Wind Blows Butt Cool suggested.

But Moonfall Crow Cries, beside him, suddenly tugged his sleeve. "I think I see him! Right by the main door."

Wind Blows Butt Cool immediately followed her gaze and, sure enough, spotted Zhao Tiankuo's figure.

To say 'figure' wasn't entirely accurate. His body was submerged in the tide of people; only his head was visible, moving with the surging crowd. He was squeezed so hard his face was contorted, and he was shouting something with his mouth wide open.

But there were simply too many people in the hall; his voice was drowned out by the surrounding clamor.

Suddenly, he was bumped by someone and THUDD against the insurance company's glass door. The two outside saw his face get squashed flat against the glass.

But Zhao Tiankuo, paying no mind to his face, immediately turned and started squeezing his way towards the counter, yelling loudly as he pushed.

This time, the pair outside finally managed to hear what he was yelling—

"I'm the most dangerous one here! The Living Hell King is dating me! Insure me first!"

Chapter 740 - Gu Bong Bong pulls down Coach Che_1

The two of them outside heard the agonizing shout from inside quite clearly. But while they recognized every word, the full sentence made no sense to them.

"What did he just yell?" Wind Blows Butt Cool asked. He doubted his own hearing. He looked in confusion at Moonfall Crow Cries beside him.

"It sounded like... 'I am the most dangerous one! That Living Hell King is dating me! Insure me first!'" Moonfall Crow Cries repeated what he'd heard, mimicking the tone perfectly.

"It sounds like he's dating someone incredibly dangerous." Wind Blows Butt Cool mulled over Zhao Tiankuo's words. Suddenly, an idea struck him. "Do you think he could be two-timing us, his player love interests, while also dating other dangerous entities?"

"You're right. We previously felt that Zhao Tiankuo's every action didn't resemble a ghost's. But if our romantic interest isn't a ghost, then where does the danger in this instance come from? Now that you mention it, I sort of get it."

Moonfall Crow Cries felt as if he had found the way to survive this instance. He then said, "Our online love interests, besides dating us, are very likely also dating terrifying ghosts! They're entangled with these ghosts, and if we get too close to our love interests, the ghosts might get jealous and kill us!"

Humans dating ghosts defied normal logic, but this was a horror instance; anything could happen. It was also possible that these ghosts were unrequitedly attached to the players' love interests, and these love interests knew they were being haunted. They preferred to believe "Living Hell King" referred to an unknown ghost in the instance, rather than a player dating Zhao Tiankuo.

The more Wind Blows Butt Cool thought about it, the more he agreed with Moonfall Crow Cries. "This instance is truly malicious!" he exclaimed. "Not knowing the situation, we'd definitely try to chat with our love interests, build rapport, and get more clues from them. In reality, we'd be walking right into a trap set by the instance. The more actively we seek out our love interests, the angrier the ghost entangled with them will become. When that anger reaches a certain point, it will come to kill us."

"But I have a question," Moonfall Crow Cries said, watching Zhao Tiankuo desperately trying to squeeze his way to the window in the hall. "Didn't you find his explanation just now strange? He's dating a dangerous entity, so he ran here to buy insurance. That's such a bizarre reason, yet no one around seems to find it abnormal."

"This insurance company isn't normal either; everything about it is eerie," Wind Blows Butt Cool said. "So, should we still wait here for Zhao Tiankuo to come out? If there really is a ghost haunting him, wouldn't approaching him be asking for trouble?"

"I think it's better not to keep following him. If the ghost haunting him discovers us, I fear our chances are slim." Moonfall Crow Cries slowly shook his head. He believed leaving now was the best course of action.

Wind Blows Butt Cool hesitated for a few seconds before making a decision. "Alright," he said. "Let's leave here for now. We'll find a safe place and then discuss what to do next..."

As the two were talking, the sound of an approaching vehicle came from a distance. They looked up in the direction of the sound and saw a large bus slowly approaching, apparently also headed for the Sunshine Insurance Company.

"How odd," Wind Blows Butt Cool muttered, puzzled. "So many people coming to buy insurance. I've never seen anything like it."

Even from a distance, they could see the bus was packed to the brim; it was definitely overloaded. The people at the very front were practically pressed against the windshield. Through the glass, they could also see people inside talking with worried expressions.

"We should be at Sunshine Insurance Company soon, right? I think I see the company building."

"We're almost there, almost there! I see it too. Sigh, things haven't been peaceful lately. I heard earlier that the nearby Ronghua Amusement Park took in someone surnamed Che. I think he's that unlucky fellow. Back then, I had a bad feeling. I hoped that unlucky fellow wouldn't attract that Gu person here by coming. I didn't expect my worries to come true so quickly. Today, when the notice came down saying he'd arrived in our area, it felt like a dream."

"I don't think that Coach Che is any unlucky fellow; he's an outright traitor! You know, I didn't originally work here. I used to be a big director in charge of an instance, working diligently every day to maintain it. Everything was normal. Then one day, that Coach Che suddenly brought Gu Mian into my instance, and they went on a rampage! He even grabbed me and threatened to cut me with a saw!"

"Huh? So Coach Che really is a traitor? I thought that was just a rumor everyone was spreading."

"He couldn't be more of a traitor! When Gu Mian was about to saw me, Coach Che just stood by watching. Not only did he not help, he looked relieved! All the actors in my instance were beaten by them to the point of hospitalization. Luckily, I kicked him out early, so the equipment and other things weren't badly damaged. The actors are still recovering, and the instance can't reopen for a while. I was planning to come to this area to do some temp work, earn money for new equipment, and I can't believe I ran into him here again..."

"That Coach Che is really no good!"

Being too far away, Wind Blows Butt Cool and Moonfall Crow Cries couldn't hear what the people inside the bus were discussing. They could only see that the two people pressed against the windshield at the front seemed to be chatting very enthusiastically. One of them, a young man, even slapped his thigh hard as he spoke, as if passionately lamenting something.

"Let's go." Wind Blows Butt Cool averted his gaze, intending to slip away quietly.

However, just as he shifted his gaze, he saw five strange people walking towards them. The one at the front was obsequious and seemed reluctant, yet forced a smile, occasionally glancing back at those behind him with an overly cheerful expression. Directly behind him was a young man in a white coat, apparently a medical worker. Bizarrely, this white-coated man also carried a guitar case on his back, as if ready to perform at any moment. A tall, thin man in a suit was being pulled along by the hand by the man in the white coat; the suited man was expressionless, looking as if all hope was lost. Behind the white-coated man and the suited man followed two more: a youth with glasses and an aloof expression,

and a young woman who cautiously observed her surroundings, frequently darting behind the white-coated man, appearing very timid. None of these five looked normal.

Suddenly, Moonfall Crow Cries, who was beside him, spoke up, "That man in the white coat... could he be the player 'Doctor'?"

As Moonfall Crow Cries spoke, the five individuals drew a bit closer, now within range to open player panels. Wind Blows Butt Cool tried opening the player panel of the man in the white coat. Sure enough, the bright green words "Doctor" appeared above his head.

"He's Zhao Tiankuo's love interest! Zhao Tiankuo came here, and now he's here too. They must have arranged to come together. No, we have to stop him! If he meets Zhao Tiankuo, the ghost tormenting Zhao Tiankuo will probably kill him!" Wind Blows Butt Cool decided to go over and save this player in the white coat.

Just as he was about to show himself and stop Gu Mian, he suddenly heard the piercing SCREECH of brakes. He reflexively looked towards the source of the sound.

He saw the bus that had been heading their way suddenly slam on its brakes. Through the windshield, he could see the passengers' horrified expressions.

The driver, mouth agape, was frantically wrenching the steering wheel. Passengers behind him were anxiously pounding on his seat, seemingly urging him on. Their lip movements suggested they were shouting, "Run!"

Then, the bus executed an incredible drift, spinning around in the blink of an eye so that its rear faced them instead of its front. The crowded passengers tumbled due to inertia. Wind Blows Butt Cool thought he even heard cries of pain from inside. The exhaust pipe under the bus belched out a thick cloud of smoke, and then the vehicle accelerated to maximum speed and fled without a backward glance.