

Collapse 761

Chapter 761 Coo Coo is Here_1

[Congratulations on triggering the special instance 'Corpse Clearer']

[Participants: 8]

[Description: This is a building filled with corpses in various states of death. When three or more corpses of the same type are aligned horizontally or vertically (diagonal lines not included), the aligned corpses will be cleared. The eight players will be randomly assigned to different floors. The instance will issue multiple tasks at random intervals during the game. With each completed task, all players will collectively receive clues about the locations of some corpses.]

[Instance Mission: Eliminate all corpses in the building within the specified time limit. If corpses are not eliminated within the time limit, they will transform into Evil Ghosts and roam for ten minutes (Evil Ghosts cannot pass through walls). The instance will end once the Evil Ghosts depart.]

[Note: All special items are forbidden in this instance.]

[Players' floors have been assigned. Instance entry imminent.]

Huh? Fatty was dumbfounded. We were just discussing heading into Paradise World to rescue Lu Yi. Who would've thought we'd be pulled into a special instance the next moment? By the time we get out of this instance, Lu Yi's body will have gone cold, won't it?

Our only option now is to finish this instance quickly. Maybe the Doctor will show up and just blast this instance apart?

Fatty recalled a special bus instance from last Lunar New Year; Gu Mian had demolished it by crashing a Spirit Car into it before they could even enter.

What was that instance called again? Something like the Bus Route 444 Instance, I think.

But this Match 3 instance sounds terrifying from the description alone... This instance is filled with corpses...

Fatty mulled this over for a while, still surrounded by darkness. He was a bit confused. Why haven't we entered yet?

Just as he wondered, a new prompt appeared on his game panel.

[Players are being reassigned floors. Please wait.]

Fatty was bewildered. Didn't they just say the assignments were done? Why are they reassigning us now?

This reassignment was quick. Not long after the new message appeared, the darkness around him receded like a tide.

His vision brightened instantly, and Fatty could see clearly what lay ahead—

A face with bulging eyes and a bluish-purple complexion suddenly appeared in his line of sight.

Unprepared, Fatty screamed and recoiled, then he felt himself bump into someone.

Fatty quickly turned and saw Keke, who looked somewhat dismayed, standing next to an equally unhappy 007.

Fatty was surprised to see 007. I didn't expect her to be pulled in too.

Meanwhile, Gu Mian faced a similar situation.

Gu Mian found himself staring at a massive, swollen face bobbing up and down in front of him. The face was as bloated as a large watermelon.

Gu Mian took a few steps back, distancing himself from this 'watermelon.'

Stepping further back, he could finally take in the situation. A huge, transparent water tank stood before him, and inside, a swollen corpse floated up and down.

This must be one of the corpses mentioned in the instance description.

Our mission is to eliminate these corpses using a Match Three mechanic.

The corpse before him appeared to have drowned. Gu Mian speculated that "same type of corpses" in the description referred to the cause of death. I'll need to find two more drowned corpses and align all three in a straight line to clear them.

The description stated, "When three or more of the same type of corpses are lined up in a row or column, the corpses in the line will be cleared."

Line up the corpses... Does that mean I have to pull them out and arrange them head-to-head and foot-to-foot to clear them?

As Gu Mian pondered, he scanned his surroundings. He was in a room. On the wall to his left, the number "601" was printed in red, each digit as large as an A4 sheet of paper. This must be the room number, 601.

On the wall opposite the numbers, a huge screen displayed a grid.

The grid was eight by eight.

Each cell in the grid corresponded to a room number. The bottom-most row, from left to right, showed 101, 102, 103, all the way to 108 on the far right.

The second row from the bottom, also from left to right, had 201, 202, 203, all the way to 208 on the far right, and so on.

Gu Mian's room, 601, was in the cell at the sixth row from the bottom and the first column from the left.

This layout is similar to a hotel's room numbering.

Recalling the instance name "Corpse Clearer," Gu Mian guessed this large grid might be the framework for the "Match Three" game. Each cell represents a room, and the corpses in the rooms are the 'blocks' to be cleared. This whole building is a giant Match Three game.

However, the grid on the screen currently showed no 'blocks.'

At the top of the screen was a countdown timer. It initially displayed 5:00:00 but now showed 4:57:31. This must be the time limit. The last set of digits represented seconds, and they ticked down from 31 to 30 as he watched.

We have to clear all the corpses in the building within five hours.

Gu Mian continued to survey the room and spotted a door on the wall behind the water tank.

He took a few steps towards it and peeked outside. Instead of a corridor, he saw another room, which also contained a giant water tank with a bloated corpse floating inside. The number "602" was on this room's wall, and opposite it, another grid screen was mounted. It seems every room has one of these screens.

In the floor of his current room, there was a square opening, apparently leading to the floor below.

Gu Mian walked over to the opening in the floor. Below it, there was a ladder leading down.

He didn't rush down. Instead, he squatted and peered through the opening to observe the floor below.

It was another room. In its center stood a long table laden with food, and beside it sat a man.

Just as I thought, he's dead. A corpse.

His lower body was seated on a chair, while his upper body was slumped over a plate. From Gu Mian's angle, he could see the man's cheeks were bulging, likely stuffed with food. One hand still tightly gripped a pig's knuckle bearing several teeth marks. Looks like he ate himself to death.

The room below was 501. Like his own, it had a grid screen on the wall opposite the room number.

Gu Mian carefully observed the room below through the opening. He noted that there was no similar opening in the floor of room 501. So, I can't get to 401 from 501.

He stood up and glanced at the ceiling of his current room. There was no opening there either. So I can't go up from here. It seems I can only move between these two floors. And this building has no corridors, just interconnected rooms.

Usually, when a special instance appears, it pulls in all players from a small area. So, Chu Changge and Fatty should be in here too, along with Keke, who just explained Xiao Qiao's whereabouts to us.

Gu Mian glanced back at the large screen on the wall. The 8x8 grid must represent this building, with each cell being a room. In that case, this building has eight floors, and I can only access the fifth and sixth. I wonder if anyone else was assigned to my floor.

Gu Mian decided to search the fifth and sixth floors first, to see if he could find anyone and to get a better understanding of these levels.

A total of eight players had been pulled into this instance. I wonder which floors the others were assigned to.

Chapter 762 Coo Coo is Leaving_1

"We must be on the eighth floor," 007 said, looking at the grid screen on the wall in front of him. "This room has an opening to the floor below, but I carefully observed the room downstairs; there's no way to the floor below *that*."

"So we can only move around on the eighth floor and the seventh floor below us, right?" Keke, who was squatting on the ground examining a corpse, looked up. "It seems only the three of us are on this floor. Gu Mian and the others must be on other floors. According to the grid on the screen, this building should have eight floors. If we can only move between the seventh and eighth floors, then the others might also be restricted to two floors."

The corpse at Keke's feet was purplish. Its bulging eyeballs were bloodshot, and its long tongue lolled out of its mouth. Several hemp ropes were wound tightly around its neck—the person had been strangled.

Fatty, looking at the horrifying corpse on the floor, retreated a few steps. "The Doctor and Brother Chu aren't on the same floor as us. I wonder if they're together... Speaking of which, I saw that eight people entered this instance. Besides the three of us, the Doctor, and Brother Chu, who are the other three?"

Xiao Qiao and Liu Ruyan weren't home when the special instance appeared, so they're not in this instance.

007 was silent for a few seconds before speaking. "It's the three who were locked in the storeroom on the first floor. I was in the storeroom when the special instance appeared. Since I got in, they presumably did as well."

Fatty suddenly understood. "Ah, right! I almost forgot about those three. That makes exactly eight people."

I wonder if those three are on the same floor as the Doctor and Brother Chu.

Fatty tried to open [Group Chat for Ten] to contact Gu Mian, but it wouldn't open.

This instance had disabled all special items, including Xiao Qiao's [Group Chat for Ten].

"We can't contact the Doctor, and we have no idea which floor he's on," Fatty said, looking frustrated.

007 looked down at the corpse on the floor. "The instance is called 'Corpse Match Three.' The mission is to connect corpses of the same type for elimination. In room 802 next door, there's a corpse submerged in a water tank—it drowned. I think when the instance mentioned 'corpses of the same type,' it's referring to the method of death."

Keke added, "Just like in a match-three game, if we can drag three or more corpses that died the same way into adjacent rooms, they will be eliminated. Let's first figure out the types of corpses on the seventh and eighth floors."

Keke said, glancing at the countdown on the nearby screen, "We only have five hours. Time is tight; we can't waste any."

Hearing this, Fatty quickly pulled out pen and paper from his pocket. "I'll make a diagram and record everything."

The three of them immediately began to hurry through the rooms. Fatty also drew a grid on his paper, identical to the one on the large screen, and started recording the types of corpses in the squares for the seventh and eighth floors.

About twenty minutes later, they had figured out all the corpses on these two floors.

The countdown clock now read 4:35:29—four hours and thirty-five minutes remaining.

The trio—007, Keke, and Fatty—were gathered in room 701, looking at the diagram Fatty held.

"On our two floors, there are a total of three strangled, three burned black, three headless, three who died from overeating, three drowned, and one dismembered," Fatty said, holding the paper and analyzing the findings.

"This one dismembered corpse on our floors can't be eliminated by itself; we have to cooperate with the people on the floors below," 007 said, his finger stopping on room 708 on the paper. "This is where that dismembered corpse is. If the people on the floors below place a dismembered corpse in rooms 508 and 608 respectively, then the corpse in our room 708 will match the type of the corpses in the two rooms below, forming a vertical line to be eliminated together."

"But the people on the floors below don't know the situation on our floors, nor do they know we have a spare dismembered corpse up here," Keke frowned.

"Right," Fatty pursed his lips. "We have to let the people on the floors below know what we need."

"So we have to complete the tasks the instance releases at irregular intervals," 007 said, looking at the grid screen on the opposite wall. "Right now, these grids are empty. I suspect that every time we complete a task, the location of one or more corpses will be revealed in the grid."

Fatty looked very troubled. "Then we'll have to make all the corpses on these two floors appear on the screen so the people on the floors below will know we have an extra dismembered corpse here."

"It seems people on different floors need to help each other. Corpses that one set of floors can't eliminate will require help from adjacent floors to eliminate. So, it's best to complete tasks to unlock all corpse locations on the grid," Keke let out a long breath. "Only by seeing the whole picture can we make the most correct decisions."

"It's quite a coincidence on our floors," Fatty scratched his head. "Apart from that dismembered one, the corpses on our two floors are all in sets of three. Can't we eliminate all the other sets of three corpses, leaving only the dismembered one to be eliminated with the lower floors?"

"No, we can't," Keke said, looking at the chart Fatty drew. "Our extra dismembered corpse on the seventh and eighth floors needs to be combined with those on the lower floors to make a set of three for elimination. So, the fifth and sixth floors below will most likely also have leftover corpses. Perhaps they must be combined with a certain type of corpse from our floors to be eliminated."

"If we immediately eliminate all the corpses we can, then the people on the lower floors will be out of luck. Their leftover corpses that need to be linked with ours won't be able to be eliminated."

At this moment, 007's expression suddenly turned grim. "I've thought of a problem. What if someone's floors have corpse types that are all in groups of three or more, allowing for complete elimination? And what if, upon discovering this, they immediately eliminate all corpses on their floors?"

"Then, the surplus corpses on adjacent floors won't be able to be linked with the corpses on that person's floors for elimination, because that person's floors will already be empty."

Fatty's eyes widened. "Just like our dismembered corpse! It needs to be linked with those on the fifth and sixth floors to make a set of three for elimination. But if the corpses on the floors below have already been completely eliminated, then we'll be helpless with this dismembered corpse. We can only watch helplessly as it turns into a ghost!"

This is too wicked!

This instance is too cruel!

In this situation, as long as they eliminate all the corpses on their own floors, they'll be safe and sound. The introduction stated that the Evil Ghosts these corpses turn into cannot pass through walls. Ghosts from other floors cannot reach their floor.

If a normal person discovered that all the corpses on their floors could be completely eliminated, their first reaction would probably be to clear their floors and wait for the countdown to end. This would cut off the escape route for players on adjacent floors.

「At this time, Gu Mian, who was on the fifth and sixth floors, had finished searching both floors.」

He was pleasantly surprised to find that his luck was exceptionally good this time. The fifth and sixth floors, where he was, had three strangled, three burned, three who died from overeating, three drowned, and four dismembered corpses.

The sixteen corpses on these two floors could be perfectly self-sufficient and completely eliminated. Once all the corpses were eliminated, he could just lie down on the spot and sleep until the instance ended.

But Gu Mian didn't immediately move the corpses. Instead, he stared at the 8x8 grid screen on the wall.

He was the only one on the fifth and sixth floors, so the others must have been assigned to different floors.

He didn't believe the corpses on the other floors could also be perfectly self-sufficient and completely eliminated. If everyone's situation was like this, this instance would hardly need to exist. They might as well just hand over the clearance rewards directly.

Chapter 763 Physical Persuasion_1

Others likely need help from adjacent floors to completely clear the corpses on their own floor. If they only focus on removing the corpses on their floor, they might end up with surplus corpses from neighboring floors.

Gu Mian traced his fingers on the grid on the screen as he considered this.

He was on the fifth and sixth floors, with four floors beneath him and two above. The others must have the same limitations, only able to move between two adjacent floors.

He mentally divided the building, as shown on the grid, into four parts from bottom to top.

The first and second floors formed one part, with one group of people.

The third and fourth floors were another part, with a second group.

The fifth and sixth floors, where he was, constituted the third part.

The top-most seventh and eighth floors held the final group.

Eight people had entered this instance in total. Gu Mian guessed that besides himself, Fatty, Chu Change, and Keke, 007 had likely joined, along with the three men locked in the first-floor storeroom. That made exactly eight people.

Special items couldn't be used in this instance, so Gu Mian was unable to communicate with the others via group chat.

He had no idea which floors the others were on.

Gu Mian himself wasn't in a hurry to clear the corpses. Even if the corpses on his floors turned into ghosts, they would most likely just end up in a staring contest with him. Surely a dozen or so ghosts couldn't gang up and beat him, could they?

He'd entered the instance so abruptly this time that he hadn't brought his chainsaw.

Fortunately, the instance left all the murder weapons in the rooms, allowing players to clearly see how each death had occurred.

For example, the room with the drowned corpse contained a large water tank where it floated. The room where the Binge-eating Ghost died had a long table laden with food. The corpse that was strangled still had a few loops of rope around its neck. Next to the burnt corpse was a bucket of gasoline and a lighter.

The dismembered corpse's room was rather gory; arms and legs were scattered about, and a bloody axe leaned against a corner.

Gu Mian took the large axe from one of the rooms, figuring that if the corpses here turned into ghosts after five hours and tried to gang up on him, the axe in his hand could at least serve as a deterrent.

The countdown showed only four hours and twenty-nine minutes remaining, but Gu Mian still hadn't seen any sign of a task.

I need to complete tasks to find out the locations of corpses on other floors. Only by knowing which floors have surplus corpses can I help the others. Gu Mian frowned, looking at the screen which only displayed room numbers on its grid.

The instance is supposed to issue tasks periodically, but half an hour has passed and I haven't seen a shadow of one. Do I have to trigger it myself?

Thinking this, Gu Mian looked at the corpse on the floor with a swollen belly, as if it had swallowed a washbasin. This was a corpse that had died from overeating.

It had originally died comfortably, sitting in a chair by the dining table, until Gu Mian set his sights on the seat beneath its buttocks.

After searching two floors, Gu Mian wanted to find a place to sit and rest. He came to this room, violently pushed the pitiful Binge-eating Ghost off its chair, and plopped down himself.

Perhaps these corpses issue the tasks? Maybe I need to interact with them to trigger one? Gu Mian pondered.

With this in mind, he approached the round-bellied Binge-eating Ghost on the floor, contemplating how to interact with it.

This corpse was still clutching food when it died; it clearly wanted to eat even in death. If I stuff all the food from the table into its mouth, it will surely be moved enough to give me a task.

As he thought this, Gu Mian turned to look at a large watermelon on the table.

Just as he rolled up his sleeves, preparing to get to work, the large screen on the adjacent wall suddenly flashed a few times. Then, a line of text appeared on it—

[The lady in Room 608 seems distressed lately. Apparently, she lost her silver necklace with a strawberry pendant. She hopes you can help her find it. As a reward, she's willing to reveal the locations of two corpses in the building.]

Gu Mian paused the hand that was about to commit a misdeed, stood up, and looked at the text that had suddenly appeared on the display.

So this is one of the tasks the instance issues periodically?

Helping a ghost find her necklace... this task seems quite mundane.

Gu Mian remembered the charred black corpse in Room 608. It was burned so badly that its gender was indeterminable. Unexpectedly, even in such a state, it was still concerned about its necklace.

Completing this task will unlock the locations of two corpses. Gu Mian glanced at the large screen again, then looked away.

The instance only released the first task after half an hour. If tasks are released at this rate, they won't be able to unlock all the corpse locations in the building within the five-hour limit.

Mulling this over, Gu Mian headed toward Room 608 and soon arrived.

The scorched corpse lay right in the middle of the room's floor. Not far from it were a half-empty bucket of gasoline and a lighter.

Gu Mian squatted down to examine the body on the floor. This must be the lady who issued the task.

He observed the corpse at his feet for a moment, then reached out to lift it and check the ground beneath—perhaps the necklace was simply trapped under her.

After confirming the necklace wasn't pinned beneath her, Gu Mian searched the corpse from top to bottom, wondering if she might have hidden it on herself.

The corpse was charred; it crumbled at the slightest touch. There was nowhere on it to hide anything. Gu Mian found nothing.

Next, he searched the entirety of Room 608, even checking the gasoline bucket, but still found no trace of the silver necklace.

Since it's not here, it might be in another corpse's room.

Perhaps it was stolen by another corpse.

The ghosts in this instance really have low moral standards. Stealing a necklace from someone burned to such a state is truly unethical.

Gu Mian immediately went to the other rooms, intending to find the thieving corpse.

He searched from room to room and quickly located the necklace.

It was around the neck of the corpse in Room 605. Unfortunately, the occupant of Room 605 had drowned; their body was submerged at the bottom of a huge water tank.

Gu Mian peered through the tank at the necklace around the corpse's neck. It indeed had a strawberry pendant. It seems the corpse in the tank stole the necklace and put it on.

The corpse had sunk to the bottom. To get the necklace from its neck, he would have to jump into the tank.

Jumping in probably wouldn't lead to anything good. The corpse inside might suddenly reach out and scratch me. I'd be at a disadvantage in the tank.

So, Gu Mian emulated Sima Guang: he picked up the axe and smashed it against the transparent glass tank with all his might.

Gu Mian used his full strength. A crisp sound of shattering glass instantly filled the room. The glass tank was smashed in one go; shards splattered onto the floor and were then washed away by the gushing water.

Soon, the water level dropped to the bottom.

Gu Mian smashed the axe around the broken opening a few more times to widen it, then reached in to drag out the bloated, waterlogged corpse.

Chapter 764 - The Evil God Hit the Amnion, the Skin Was all Unfurled_1

As the water level dropped, the bloated corpse inside sank to the bottom of the water tank.

Gu Mian carefully reached past the sharp, broken edges of the tank to pull out the body.

Perhaps due to being soaked for so long, the body was exceptionally heavy. Gu Mian estimated it to be as heavy as two Fatties.

Because of the body's immense size, it got stuck halfway out. Gu Mian had to forcefully enlarge the opening.

It took him quite a bit of effort to finally drag the body out.

Gu Mian sat down beside the enormous corpse on the ground. Just dragging it out of the tank had been hard enough; he could hardly imagine how he was going to get it into the room where it belonged.

Unfortunately, special items weren't permitted in this instance; otherwise, he would have definitely used his walkie-talkie to call his mom for help moving the body.

They had entered this instance so suddenly, and he hadn't even brought his brother's disc, so Gu Mian had no choice but to do it himself.

The corpse's neck was swollen to the size of a small ball, stretching the poor strawberry necklace taut. It looked as if it could snap at any moment.

Gu Mian immediately reached out to rescue the endangered necklace, lest it actually break under the strain.

Removing the necklace was surprisingly uncomplicated. Gu Mian had worried the corpse would put up some resistance, like in the clichéd scenes from horror stories where "the body jumps three feet in the air and punches the living daylights out of someone." Instead, the body just lay there obediently on the ground, not making any trouble.

"That was easy," Gu Mian muttered, holding the necklace while examining the body on the ground.

Because the entire body was swollen, it was difficult to discern its original appearance. All Gu Mian could tell was that it was male, with one nose and two eyes.

At that moment, however, Gu Mian had a strange feeling that the face was familiar.

He was taken aback by the thought. How could he find a corpse even fatter than two Fatties familiar?

But the more he looked, the more familiar it seemed. He felt like he had seen this face somewhere before.

Gu Mian crouched down and stared intensely at the swollen, watermelon-sized head, running through the faces of people he knew in his mind. It didn't take long before a face matched the one in front of him.

"Xu Xingcheng?" Gu Mian wasn't entirely certain.

The head was so incredibly bloated, its skin stretched taut, making it difficult to recognize. Gu Mian crouched down, cradling the head to examine it more closely. The more he looked, the more it resembled Xu Xingcheng.

Gu Mian knew Xu Xingcheng and the Evil God were the same person, who, out of sheer boredom, had created numerous avatars to wander the instances. Gu Mian had previously encountered him in several instances.

But in those previous instances, he had at least been alive. It was unexpected to see his avatar as a bloated corpse in this one.

The Evil God was a key figure in Paradise World; perhaps he even had a few entrance tickets to Paradise World. If so, they might be able to enter Paradise World and commence the rescue mission for Lu Yi.

But looking at the current situation...

Gu Mian silently observed the bloated Evil God before him. He seemed as dead as could be, his eyelids so swollen they bulged high.

"Xu Xingcheng? Xu Xingcheng?" Gu Mian tried calling his name a few times, attempting to rouse the seemingly dead avatar of the Evil God.

Although his profession was a Doctor, his skills weren't yet strong enough to bring someone back from the dead just by calling their name. Gu Mian hoped the game developers would strengthen his abilities in the future. If he couldn't revive someone by calling their name, then being able to make someone drop dead by calling their name would also be acceptable.

He called out to him a couple more times but still received no response.

It seemed he was truly, thoroughly dead.

The appearance of the Evil God's avatar in this instance was unlikely to be a coincidence. Gu Mian recalled that player floors had been suddenly reassigned right before the instance began. Could this have been the Evil God's doing?

The Evil God had intervened to get himself and his corpse assigned to the same floor.

But with the corpse unable to speak or move, what use was having it on the same floor as Gu Mian? Was it so Gu Mian could see how 'beautiful' his avatar looked after bloating?

As he pondered, Gu Mian began to pat down the corpse, running his hands over its body. There had to be a reason for the Evil God's actions. He'd check for any items on the body first.

Maybe he'd find some clues.

But after searching from head to toe, there wasn't a damn thing on the corpse.

Gu Mian silently withdrew his hand and stared at the swollen avatar. Right, after the five hours are up, any corpse not eliminated will become an Evil Ghost and wander for ten minutes.

As long as this corpse isn't eliminated by the time limit, their beloved Evil God can reanimate.

He wondered if he could communicate normally with the upgraded 'Evil Ghost Evil God' version later.

Gu Mian glanced again at the bloated Evil God on the floor, then, holding the necklace, turned and walked towards room 608.

Time was pressing. Teammates on the upper and lower floors were still relying on him to help eliminate corpses. He'd put the Evil God aside for now and complete the task first.

Soon, Gu Mian arrived back at room 608. The charred corpse lay in the middle of the floor.

Gu Mian quickly approached it, crouched down, and dangled the necklace in front of the charred face. "Miss Jiao, I've found your necklace."

Gu Mian had no idea what this corpse's name was. He simply called it "Miss Jiao" because it was charred to a crisp; he felt this surname suited its identity.

The Miss Jiao on the floor showed no reaction.

Gu Mian then reached out to put the necklace on it himself, murmuring as he did so, "Look, I'm putting the necklace on you. This means I've completed the task, right? I hope you won't be ungrateful..."

As he was speaking, the large screen beside the corpse suddenly flickered a few times, and several lines of text appeared—

"The player from floors 5-6 has helped the young lady in room 608 find her strawberry necklace. The young lady in room 608 is very touched and has marked two corpse locations for everyone in the building. (This information is visible to all)"

At this moment, Fatty and the other two on the seventh and eighth floors were in their room discussing the instance when Keke noticed the text that had appeared on the large screen. She quickly said to the others, "Quick, look!"

"A player from floors 5-6 has completed a task, and the instance has identified two corpse locations for us..." 007 had barely finished reading the text on the screen when the words gradually faded, and the display reverted to the previous grid.

But this time, the grid looked a little different.

The 8×8 grid, which had previously been blank except for room numbers, now had images in two of its cells.

One was room 706. Inside it, a very cartoonish, pitch-black little figure lay motionless on the ground.

"This represents a burned corpse," 007 said, looking at the cartoon figure in the cell for 706.

Fatty immediately pulled out the paper where he had recorded the corpse locations. "The unlocked room 706 is on our floor. Let me see if what's shown here is correct..."

He quickly found the small square representing room 706 on his paper; it indeed indicated a charred corpse.

"That's right, the corpse in that room was burned to death," Fatty said, looking up at the two people in front of him.

Keke was looking at the second unlocked cell in the grid. It was the third room from the left on the fourth floor, room 403.

In this square, a cartoon figure with a huge belly appeared, similar to the corpses on their floor that had burst from overeating.

007 also looked at this cell. "It seems the corpse in room 403 died from overeating."

After examining the two cells, 007 looked up at the timer. The countdown showed only four hours and twenty-two minutes remaining.

"The instance lasts for five hours. Almost an hour has passed, and we've only unlocked two cells." 007 looked worried. "I'm afraid we won't be able to unlock the locations of all the corpses in the building before the countdown ends."

If they hadn't unlocked enough corpse locations by then, they wouldn't know what the lower floors needed, and the lower floors wouldn't know what they needed.

"It's taken almost an hour to unlock just two cells. At this rate, we might only unlock about ten or so in five hours. But there are sixty-four rooms in this building..." Keke speculated. "I guess as time goes on, the frequency of tasks will increase, and each task will unlock more cells."

"Miss Keke is right," Fatty agreed. "These instances all follow the same pattern. When you first enter, they seem quite tame, but they get more intense and thrilling the further you go."

Keke, standing nearby, was momentarily speechless. If she hadn't misheard, was he just using "tame" to describe a horror instance?

Chapter 765 - Miss Jiao's Reckless Talk_1

"Sigh, when I entered the instance before, I was always with the Doctor and we were barely ever separated... Now that they've suddenly taken me away from him, I feel completely adrift," Fatty said, looking a little hesitant. "I wonder if Brother Chu is on the same floor as the Doctor."

"Aside from the three of us, the remaining people are probably split into three groups: one on the first and second floors, one on the third and fourth floors, and one on the fifth and sixth floors. No matter how the remaining five people are divided, one person will end up alone," Keke said, examining the chart that showed the locations of two corpses.

She felt that the person who ended up alone was probably Gu Mian. After all, if he were assigned to the same floor, the difficulty of the instance would greatly decrease, and they could just coast through it.

The instance certainly didn't want the other players to have an easy time. The likelihood of Gu Mian being alone was extremely high.

"Just now, the players on the fifth and sixth floors completed their task. That means the players on the floor below us completed their task," 007 said, pausing for a moment as if in thought. "It seems the people below us are quite efficient. Could it be Gu Mian?"

"That's not necessarily true. From what I saw, the task seemed rather simple," Fatty said, recalling the text he had seen on the screen earlier. "It was about helping a girl find a necklace. It didn't look very dangerous."

However, it was indeed difficult to gauge the level of danger just by looking at the task description. Who knew? Maybe that necklace could eat people.

Just as Fatty was letting his imagination wander, the large screen beside them suddenly changed.

All three of them noticed and turned their heads to look at the screen.

A new task appeared on the screen—

[Some time ago, the gentleman corpse in Room 708 developed a secret crush on a lady. However, she disliked him for his plain appearance. In a fit of rage, he tore off his own face and threw it away...]

Reading this, Fatty shivered involuntarily. What kind of terrifying and bloody love story is this?

He touched the goosebumps on his arm and continued reading.

[Due to the absence of his face, the gentleman in Room 708 is experiencing great inconvenience in his daily life. He deeply regrets his actions and has commissioned you to help him find his missing face.]

[If you successfully help Mr. 708 find his face, he will unlock the locations of two more corpses in the building for all players.]

The corpse in Room 708 was the extra dismembered one on their floor.

"When we passed Room 708 earlier, did that corpse have a face?" Keke asked, trying to recall, though she wasn't sure.

"The corpse in that room was too fragmented. Back then, I saw its head facing the wall in the corner. I didn't have the guts to go near it or try to move it. It probably lost its face while it was facing the wall." Fatty figured it might have been too embarrassed about losing its face, which was why it kept its head turned to the wall, hidden from their sight.

"Since the task has been issued, let's head to Room 708 first and see if we can find any clues," Keke suggested.

The other two nodded, and the three of them headed towards Room 708 together.

While walking, Fatty said, "By the way, the two tasks we know about so far both involve helping corpses find things. Will the other tasks in the future be like this as well?"

Meanwhile, Gu Mian was browsing the second task he had received.

He had barely finished the first task when the instance hurriedly issued him a second one. They were probably afraid he would get bored and start wrecking the place.

The second task he received was "Jigsaw Puzzle."

Well, it could be considered a jigsaw puzzle... I guess.

[The gentleman corpse in Room 603 heard that a new guest has arrived on this floor. He is quite excited and has issued you a challenge. Just moments ago, he hid the various parts of his own body. Please find all the parts and piece him back together completely.]

[If you win the challenge, Mr. 603 will unlock the locations of three more corpses in the building for all the players.]

Gu Mian had previously thought that a single task unlocking only two corpse locations was rather stingy. He hadn't expected this one to unlock three. Perhaps as time went on, each task would unlock an increasing number of locations.

As he pondered, he continued to read. There was another line below.

[If the challenge isn't completed within ten minutes, you will receive a punishment from Mr. 603. After that, Mr. 603 will issue a punishment every ten minutes until the challenge is completed.]

There's a punishment, too?

When I was helping that lady on the ground find her necklace earlier, there was no mention of a penalty for failure. This corpse in Room 603 really isn't considerate at all!

He remembered the corpse in Room 603 being quite fragmented, with its arms and legs strewn all over the place. Its body was in many pieces.

On the floor Gu Mian was on, the other corpses were in groups of three. Only this dismembered one consisted of four parts. He guessed that the floors above or below might be short of this type of corpse and needed one from his floor to make a set of three.

I should go to Room 603 first and see if there are any pieces of the corpse left in there.

With this thought, Gu Mian headed towards Room 603.

Before leaving, he casually pulled the strawberry necklace from the neck of the corpse at his feet. Female ghosts love this kind of necklace; Xiao Hong should be pleased if I give it to her.

When Gu Mian yanked off the necklace, the charred corpse on the ground seemed to twitch slightly. It probably wanted to jump up and furiously denounce Gu Mian for his shamelessness. However, likely concerned for her own safety, Miss Jiao didn't voice any wild accusations and could only silently express her resentment towards him.

Gu Mian soon arrived at Room 603, where the task had been issued. The axe he carried was from this very room. The corpse here probably felt its axe had been taken and, determined to get revenge on me, didn't leave a single fragment behind. The room is completely clean.

Every ten minutes, this corpse will issue a punishment. I wonder what kind of punishment it will be.

Gu Mian had noted that when he received the task, the countdown showed four hours and twenty-one minutes remaining. That means if I don't complete the challenge by the time it's down to four hours and eleven minutes, I'll receive the first punishment.

There's no telling how many pieces the corpse dismembered itself into. It's highly likely I won't be able to find them all by myself within ten minutes. The punishment already seems to be beckoning me.

Come to think of it...

Gu Mian suddenly felt a strange sense of familiarity with the current situation. It felt as if he'd encountered something like this somewhere before.

At this thought, Gu Mian stopped in his tracks to think seriously. A few seconds later, he suddenly understood why the situation felt somewhat familiar.

"The programmer's manual!" Gu Mian thought, reaching into his pocket and pulling out a small booklet. This was the work manual he had snatched from an NPC in the previous instance.

That NPC had claimed to be a programmer for a small game and had even shown him this booklet to prove his identity. At the time, Gu Mian had casually glanced through it and seen it was full of bug fix records.

He had pocketed the booklet back then, thinking of using it as a notepad.

He flipped open the booklet. The first two lines on the first page read: "Fixed the bug where player clothing would be eliminated during gameplay." "Fixed the bug where multiple corpses in the same room would get stuck and become unable to move."

He had skimmed this page before. Now, he flipped to the next page to see what he hadn't paid close attention to.

"Fixed the bug where players utilized special items like 'Speak of X, X Appears' and 'The Little Pony That Only Hops on Sun-Character Grids' or similar displacement-type special items to directly glitch out of the building."

"Fixed the bug where players utilized special items like 'Gu Mian's Cell Phone Chat History' and 'The Irresistible Restroom Reader for Ghosts and Monsters' or similar spirit-attracting special items to glitch corpses out of the building."

"Due to the excessive number of loopholes caused by special items, after obtaining approval, we borrowed the 'High-Power Special Item Shielding Instrument' from the neighboring 'Ghost Painting Analysis and Art Exam Instance'. Henceforth, all special items are prohibited in this instance."

Wait a minute, what on earth is 'Gu Mian's Cell Phone Chat History'?!

Chapter 766 - Beng Beng's Healthy White Teeth, Gives You Brilliant White Teeth! _1

Can phone chat logs be special items too? Gu Mian wondered. Who the hell designed this? And it attracts ghosts, no less! Does everyone want to see if there are any skeletons in his closet, or what?

Gu Mian noted down this special item and continued reading.

He quickly found a bug report about the corpse puzzle.

[Fixed the bug where the Dismembered Ghost pulls out the wrong organs from the player as punishment every ten minutes in the corpse puzzle task]

Under this line of text, there was a hastily written note that seemed like a programmer's complaint.

'This Dismembered Ghost is old and senile. It keeps tearing organs off players that it *already has attached to itself*. After tearing one off, it realizes it can't use it because it already has that part, so it just throws away the organ it ripped from the player. It makes our task's penalty seem completely random. I strongly suggest we fire this Dismembered Ghost and get a smarter one.'

There's a lot to unpack in this complaint...

After reading these lines, Gu Mian had a general idea.

The punishment for the corpse puzzle probably involved the Dismembered Ghost tearing an organ off a player every ten minutes to attach to itself. Ideally, it should tear off organs players hadn't found for it yet, but this ghost was rather dim-witted and kept picking the wrong ones.

It must have torn organs off quite a few unlucky players by now.

Speaking of which, four minutes had already passed. Gu Mian glanced at the time displayed on the large screen nearby.

He had to get a move on, or the terrifying Dismembered Ghost might come for him soon.

With this in mind, Gu Mian began moving through room after room.

He soon found the first piece of the Dismembered Ghost's puzzle in the Evil God's room.

After identifying Xu Xingcheng's corpse, Gu Mian, ever so considerate, straightened it on the floor to make it look less gruesome.

When Gu Mian arrived, he noticed a bulge under Xu Xingcheng's corpse, as if something was hidden beneath it.

Gu Mian bent down, moved the body aside, and indeed found another body with a head underneath. Judging by the head, it was the missing Dismembered Ghost from Room 603.

He remembered this corpse from when he passed Room 603 earlier; it looked quite old, with withered skin and white hair. No wonder the programmers' manual said it wasn't smart—probably senile already, he thought.

The part Gu Mian had found was just a bare torso topped with a head, devoid of limbs. He held the Dismembered Ghost's head in his hands. Its eyes were tightly shut, and it looked very peaceful.

Looking at the bare torso with the head attached, Gu Mian figured he still needed to find its limbs.

At least he'd found the biggest piece. He immediately took this piece back to Room 603 and went to find the next one.

The layout of these two floors wasn't complicated, offering few places to hide things.

Gu Mian soon found the Dismembered Ghost's left arm in an oil drum in the Burning Death Ghost's room. After returning the arm to Room 603, less than four minutes remained until the first punishment. He still had three body parts to find.

Most rooms didn't have any good hiding spots. If any place was likely to conceal something, it would be the Binge-eating Ghost's room.

There was a long table in the room piled high with delicious food. An arm or a leg hidden there would be hard to find without a careful search.

But that wasn't the best hiding spot. There was another place in the room where something hidden would be even harder to find.

Inside Room 504, Gu Mian crouched by the table, poking the Binge-eating Ghost's protruding gut. "Hiding it in here would make it almost impossible to find," he mused aloud, "though, isn't that a bit twisted?"

The Binge-eating Ghost, which had been sitting quietly with its upper body sprawled across the dining table, seemed to shudder almost imperceptibly when Gu Mian said this.

He stroked his chin thoughtfully, "They're all ghosts. They probably don't have moral compasses. From their perspective, one ghost hiding inside another's stomach probably seems perfectly normal..."

After Gu Mian finished speaking, the corpse in front of him trembled more noticeably, even causing the nearby table to wobble slightly.

This slight tremor intensified when Gu Mian picked up his axe, and the table began to shake as if in an earthquake.

Gu Mian gestured towards the Binge-eating Ghost's stomach with the axe, as if deciding where to make the first cut.

At that moment, the Binge-eating Ghost suddenly slumped weakly in its chair. Its upper body slid smoothly off the table and onto the floor. As it landed, it 'accidentally' kicked out, sending the nearby dining table flying.

The long table landed upside down, and stuck to its underside was a leg—the very body part Gu Mian was looking for.

Gu Mian stared at the overturned table, its own legs pointing skyward, and the dismembered leg stuck to its underside. He was speechless.

Was the force of that 'weak' slide really that great? Or was this the first time he'd seen someone 'accidentally' flip a table while falling? The Binge-eating Ghost's strength was terrifying.

With the table overturned, the bloated corpse on the floor sneakily turned its head to look. Only when it saw the leg revealed under the tabletop did it close its eyes again, resuming its act of being dead.

Since the body part hidden in this room was found, Gu Mian decided not to go after the Binge-eating Ghost, which lay on the floor still wearing a blissful smile. Less than two minutes remained until the first punishment; he had to hurry.

Gu Mian stepped forward, pulled the leg off the underside of the table, and examined it. It was a right leg.

Now he just needed to find the left leg and the right arm.

Carrying a leg around was inconvenient, so Gu Mian decided to take it back to Room 603 and attach it first.

Gu Mian soon returned to Room 603. The Dismembered Ghost's torso, with its head and left arm, lay forlornly on the floor.

Gu Mian squatted beside it, leg in hand, and attached it to the lower left side of the torso.

After doing this, Gu Mian looked up at the large screen. The countdown had, at some point, reached four hours and eleven minutes. The first ten-minute interval was up.

The punishment should be here, he thought.

Gu Mian looked down at the head on the floor. According to the programmer's log, the punishment was the Dismembered Ghost suddenly jumping up, tearing off a player's limb, and attaching it to itself.

Of course, the "sudden jumping" part was Gu Mian's own embellishment, an action he felt suited the horrifying and thrilling atmosphere.

Just as Gu Mian squatted before the corpse, wondering how it would deliver the punishment, he felt something touch his thigh.

He glanced back. It was the left arm he had retrieved.

The corpse's eyesight was truly terrible. The hand fumbled around on his right leg for a good while, seemingly unsure if this was the limb it should tear off.

After fumbling over Gu Mian's leg for some time, the hand finally decided what to tear off. It spread its withered fingers, gripped Gu Mian's right ankle, and yanked hard.

It didn't budge.

It yanked hard again.

Still, nothing.

The head on the torso couldn't resist cracking open an eye to peek at what was happening. The moment it did, it saw a large axe pinning its left arm to the floor, immobilizing it.

In the past, players had feared the punishment and tried to resist, but all resistance was futile, the ghost recalled.

So, it opened its gaping, bloody maw, straightened its bare torso, and lunged towards the thigh of the person squatting beside it, determined to carry out the punishment.

Which leg was it supposed to tear off? It had forgotten. Oh well, any leg would do.

But as it lunged, its gaping maw wide, its old, dim eyes finally focused on the person's face—a nightmarish visage, one frequently cursed and shared in its colleagues' group chats.

The righteous judgment screeched to a halt.

The head, mouth still agape, froze mid-lunge, unsure whether to advance or retreat. Its wrinkled face was a mask of utter embarrassment.

Finally, the old ghost steeled itself, gritted its teeth, and decided to throw in the towel.

CLICK. It snapped its blood-filled mouth shut, squeezed its old, dim eyes closed, and with a THUD, flopped onto the ground, playing dead. A fake, benevolent smile spread across its face, as if it had merely wanted to show Gu Mian how dazzlingly white its teeth were.

Chapter 767 - Kong Wu uses his strength to bring down Gu Beng Beng, knocking out three Candy Crush programmers with one punch_1

"We've combed through the seventh and eighth floors and still haven't found the missing face." At this point, Fatty was panting heavily as he climbed the ladder from Room 701 to 801. After receiving their task, they had immediately started searching for the missing face on the two floors, but their efforts were fruitless.

The trio thought they might have overlooked something and began to search again, more carefully this time.

However, after the second round of searching, they still failed to find even a trace of the face.

"We've searched thoroughly this time," Fatty said, panting as he spoke to Keke above him while climbing the ladder to the eighth floor. "We've even searched the bodies in every room, stopping just short of stripping them. While searching them, I was terrified they might suddenly jump up and bite me!"

Keke extended her hand, struggling to pull the thoroughly exhausted Fatty up. "We really did search thoroughly this time. We left no potential hiding places unchecked... but where on earth could the face be hidden?"

Having climbed up, Fatty patted his clothes. "If you ask me, could it have been bricked into a wall? We've searched every room, and I can't imagine where else anything could be hidden on these two floors."

"Let's look again," 007 called from below. Seeing Fatty climb up, she also started ascending the ladder. "If we don't complete this task, the instance probably won't give us a second one. So far, only two corpse locations are unlocked in the building. The number of unlocked bodies is far from enough."

Fatty, positioned by the opening, easily pulled 007 up—much more easily than when Keke had pulled him.

"This time, let's search more thoroughly in Room 708, where the task was assigned. The instance might be exploiting our psychological blind spots by hiding the face right in this room—the face might even be on the Dismembered Ghost." 007 glanced at the time.

Four hours and nine minutes remained. Nearly twenty minutes had passed since they received the task to find the face, yet they were still empty-handed.

Fatty, seeing the countdown showing just over four hours left, grew anxious. "Let's go to Room 708 first. We should thoroughly search the body there, especially any place something could be hidden, and see if we find anything."

The trio wasted no time and immediately began descending the ladder again; the Dismembered Ghost's room was on the floor below.

Fatty grumbled as he laboriously climbed down, "HMPH. I knew I shouldn't have climbed back up earlier..."

There were no hallways in this building. Once they climbed down, they had to navigate through a series of rooms toward Room 708, inevitably encountering corpses in various gruesome states.

The more Fatty observed the grotesque corpses, the more frightened he became, and he found himself missing Gu Mian immensely.

If only Doctor were here, Fatty muttered. I wonder which floor he's on now.

Just as the three of them reached Room 705, the large screen in the room suddenly changed, displaying several lines of text.

Fatty's first thought was that perhaps the instance had issued them another task. But as he read the text, he realized that wasn't the case.

The players on the lower floors had completed another task.

[The hospitable corpse gentleman in Room 608 issued a challenge to the players on the fifth and sixth floors. The challenge was successfully completed. Mr. 608 was thoroughly impressed by an ingenious, supremely intelligent, and physically formidable player on that floor. He will now unlock three corpse locations for all players in the building.]

Fatty silently mulled over the adjectives used to describe the player on the lower floor.

"'Ingenious, supremely intelligent, and physically formidable'..." Keke, standing beside him, couldn't help but read the words aloud, her expression one of sheer fascination.

In just a short while, the players on the fifth and sixth floors had completed two tasks. Moreover, the task completion message was filled with such a string of flattering adjectives for the player below.

"Such colorful adjectives, and such a fast completion rate... Could the player on the lower floor be Doctor?" Fatty couldn't help but speculate as he looked at the string of idioms.

"It's possible." 007 spoke up after a few seconds of silence. "Only Gu Mian would be described by the instance as 'physically formidable.'"

As they spoke, the text on the screen gradually faded, and the previous table reappeared.

Three more cartoon figures had appeared on the grid this time:

The charred figure from Room 201.

The swollen, damp figure from Room 803.

The headless figure from Room 106.

Fatty said, "Miss Keke's prediction was right. The players downstairs completed the task and immediately unlocked three corpse locations. It really seems the further we progress, the more squares each task unlocks..."

While he was speaking, the large screen flashed again, and more lines of text appeared.

[Players on the third and fourth floors have successfully completed the memory challenge issued by the corpse gentleman in Room 303. Mr. 303 will now unlock four corpse locations for all players in the building.]

The players on the third and fourth floors had also completed a challenge? And this time, they unlocked four corpse locations! However, this task completion summary lacked the flamboyant adjectives from before.

Fatty watched as these two lines of text gradually disappeared, replaced by the table. Four more corpse locations were now revealed:

The overstuffed figure in Room 707, the headless figure in Room 305, the drowned figure in Room 307, and the burned figure in Room 508.

Of the sixty-four rooms, nine were now unlocked.

"I wonder who the player on the third and fourth floors is," Keke said, looking at the four newly revealed corpses on the grid. "They completed a memory challenge..."

"Could it be Brother Chu?" Fatty guessed, based purely on the nature of the task. "I always got the feeling Brother Chu would be the type to receive such a task; after all, he seems quite intelligent."

But it wasn't necessarily him, Fatty thought. He knew the three men who had been tied up in the first-floor storeroom had also entered this instance. Their leader, a middle-aged man with frameless glasses, seemed just as cunning and crafty as Brother Chu and also like the type who would receive such a task.

He wondered if the player on the third and fourth floors was the cunning Brother Chu or the crafty Renle Mountain.

Come to think of it, he seemed to have an odd stereotype about people who wore glasses.

"The newly unlocked corpse location on our floor is right next to Room 708, where the Dismembered Ghost is," 007 observed, looking at the large-bellied figure unlocked in square 707. "We almost unlocked the Dismembered Ghost itself."

"If the Dismembered Ghost's location were unlocked, our options would expand considerably," Fatty began to voice a dubious idea. "We could drag that corpse around to signal the people below. If they see us constantly carrying the Dismembered Ghost, they might figure out that we need this type of corpse."

The instance unlocked corpse locations for them, and if a corpse moved, the table would reflect it.

"That's one idea, but it's hard to say if the people downstairs would understand our intentions..." Keke was skeptical of Fatty's dubious plan. She suspected that after entering so many instances with Gu Mian, Fatty's mental state was starting to resemble Gu Mian's, becoming increasingly reckless and unconventional. Besides, the Dismembered Ghost's location on their floor hadn't been unlocked yet, so they couldn't use this method now anyway.

Just then, the three of them noticed a sudden change in the corpse locations shown on the grid.

Chapter 768 - The First Concentrated Discussion on Where Exactly the Cunning Chu Changge is - Part 1

The charred figurine in Room 201 moved.

It appeared that players on the second floor were dragging the charred corpse from that room.

The charred figurine was first dragged into Room 202.

The corpse in Room 202 hadn't been unlocked yet; they didn't know what type it was. So, when the charred figurine entered this room, a slash suddenly appeared behind it, followed by a question mark.

"When multiple corpses are in the same room, the undisplayed ones are represented by a question mark," 007 stated, watching the fluctuating chart.

The charred figurine didn't stay in Room 202 for long and was then dragged into Room 203. The square representing Room 203 then showed the charred figurine followed by a slash and a question mark, just like Room 202 moments before.

However, the slash and question mark for Room 203 disappeared shortly after.

"The players on the second floor must have moved the original corpse out of Room 203. Now only a charred corpse remains in that room," 007 continued to observe the second floor. After that, the players on the second floor made no further moves.

They all understood the second-floor players' intentions.

The Burning Death Ghost in Room 403 had already been unlocked. The players on the second floor had moved their floor's Burning Death Ghost into the same column as Room 403. This meant there was an additional Burning Death Ghost-type corpse on the first and second floors, requiring the players on the third and fourth floors to help eliminate it.

"Now the Burning Death Ghosts in Rooms 203 and 403 are in the same column, with an unknown corpse type in Room 303 sandwiched between them. If the players from the third and fourth floors move another Burning Death Ghost to Room 303, these three can be eliminated together," Keke said, looking at the chart.

007 added, "It's also possible there's more than one Burning Death Ghost on the first and second floors; there might be two. If there is another Burning Death Ghost, the first and second-floor players should have placed it in Room 103."

This would form a double with Room 203 above.

In that case, the players on the third and fourth floors would only need to move the Burning Death Ghost from Room 403 to Room 303 to complete a triple elimination. It was just unknown how many Burning Death Ghosts they had on the third and fourth floors.

If the third and fourth floors only had one, and the first and second floors also only had one, then the players on the first and second floors could essentially be declared dead, because the Burning Death Ghost on their floors couldn't be eliminated at all.

Under normal circumstances, the instance wouldn't present such a certain-death scenario. The extra Burning Death Ghost on the first and second floors should be eliminable with assistance from the upper floors.

The three of them stared at the chart on the screen for a long time but noticed that the players on the third and fourth floors made no move. The Burning Death Ghost in Room 203 remained uneliminated.

"The people on the third and fourth floors aren't helping the players below..." Keke stared at the screen thoughtfully for a moment, then looked at 007. "Do you know much about the three people Gu Mian locked in the first-floor basement?"

Keke had learned some time ago that Gu Mian had brought back three people from outside, who seemed to be connected to 007, which was why she asked.

"Miss Keke, are you suspecting that those people were assigned to the third and fourth floors?" Fatty stared anxiously at the screen. It did seem entirely possible. The people on the third and fourth floors showed no intention of helping the players below.

007 also stared at the large screen in the room. "I don't know the other two, but I know Renle Mountain. He's opportunistic, deceitful, and very smart at analyzing situations. When he's at a disadvantage, he'll feign helplessness and desperation. But once the tables turn, he'll immediately show his true colors."

"Don't you think the way the third and fourth floors are acting looks like they're about to turn on someone?" Fatty craned his neck.

After being tied up by the Doctor and locked in the first-floor storage room for so long, they were now in this instance, occupying the advantageous third and fourth floors. Wasn't this a complete reversal of their situation?

Fatty was very worried. If the fifth and sixth floors were occupied by the Doctor and his group, and the third and fourth by Renle Mountain and his associates, wouldn't that leave Brother Chu on the first and second floors?

Although Brother Chu is smart, intelligence alone isn't enough in this instance; you also need help from teammates on adjacent floors. If teammates don't cooperate, you can only wait for death.

007 saw Fatty's concern and said, "We can't confirm Chu Changge is on the first or second floor yet. The three of us are on the same floor. If those three from the storage room are also on the same floor, then the remaining Chu Changge and Gu Mian would each be on a separate floor. I don't think that's likely."

"You think those three might have been separated?" Keke asked.

"Yes," 007 nodded. "Even if Renle Mountain is on the third and fourth floors, the first and second floors might not have Chu Changge. It could be the other two people who were locked up with him. No one knows who is on each floor right now. If Renle Mountain tries to sabotage someone, he might end up sabotaging his own people."

"We should focus on completing tasks to unlock more corpse locations in the building. Perhaps the situation will change then." 007 also felt somewhat uneasy, hoping Chu Changge wasn't on the first or second floor. Their position on a peripheral floor was very disadvantageous in this instance. Fortunately, the player on the floor below them was likely Gu Mian. Gu Mian could satisfy all the needs of adjacent floors, but the first and second floors wouldn't benefit from Gu Mian's presence.

Fatty nodded anxiously. "For now, we can only do more tasks to unlock corpse locations. Hopefully, we can unlock all the corpse locations on the first and second floors. Then we'll try our best to help the people on the first and second floors figure something out..."

These were just words Fatty used to console himself. They were separated from the first and second floors by four levels and couldn't use special items, so they couldn't offer any real help.

The trio solemnly entered Room 708. The dismembered body parts they had pieced together earlier were scattered on the floor, its faceless, bloody head facing them. 007 had suggested earlier that they assemble the dismembered corpse first to avoid confusion when moving it.

Besides the corpse and the axe used to dismember it, there was nothing else in the room. A glance around revealed only walls.

They could only search the corpse and the axe for clues.

While worrying about the safety of the people on the first and second floors, Fatty fumbled with the axe beside the corpse. He had checked it before but, fearing he might have missed something, he examined it again more carefully.

He even tapped the axe handle to see if it was hollow. What if the face was hidden inside?

Unfortunately, it was solid; nothing could be hidden inside.

Finding no clues on the axe, Fatty reached out to feel the body parts on the ground. As he did, he began to rummage through the clothes on the corpse.

"When I used to cheat on exams, I'd hide my notes in my crotch. I suspect this corpse might have hidden its face in its own crotch," Fatty said, his hands searching everywhere for the face.

007 watched Fatty search. If the face really were hidden in the crotch, it would be stuck to the buttocks, wouldn't it? The thought of having to tear it off...

Speaking of tearing, 007 remembered her first meeting with Gu Mian.

Of course, she had fainted at the time and didn't know what had happened. She only learned after waking up that Gu Mian had told her she fainted from excessive blood loss because the skin on her arm had been forcibly torn off. It was Gu Mian who had stopped the bleeding and carried her away. After the horror game descended upon the world, she had few memories worth cherishing, so whenever she recalled her arm being torn, it felt as if it had happened only yesterday.

After searching the entire corpse from head to toe, Fatty still found nothing. "This is really baffling! We've searched almost every nook and cranny on these two floors, and we've patted down the corpse all over. How can we still not find the missing face?"

At this moment, 007's expression suddenly changed. "No! There's one place we've consistently overlooked!"

Fatty looked at 007 in confusion. "What place?"

007 touched her arm. "Our own bodies."

Chapter 769 - 'It Shouldn't be on Me'_1

At that, Fatty shivered, hopping about on the spot as if a cockroach had crawled on him. Only after ascertaining that there were no strange faces within sight did he stop.

Then he groped around in his pocket with a grotesque grimace on his face, letting out a breath of relief upon feeling the emptiness within. "It shouldn't be on me."

Meanwhile, Keke and 007 rapidly searched their own bodies but found nothing.

007 frowned. If the face wasn't hidden in their clothes or pockets, the situation could be worse.

"Take off your clothes," 007 said decisively, beginning to strip off her jacket.

Fatty hastily covered his eyes and turned away. "What are you doing?"

Keke, standing beside him, understood, her expression turning grave. "Could the ghost face have grown on us?"

007 nodded. She had already lifted her shirt to confirm there was no ghost face on her front. She then turned her back towards Keke. "Do you see anything on my back?"

"Nothing." Keke swiftly bared her own back for 007 to examine; there was nothing on it either.

At that moment, Fatty, his back still to them, suddenly shouted, "Oh no! I think I feel something on my back!"

The two turned towards Fatty. He had his back to them, one hand covering his eyes, the other strenuously reaching around to fumble at his back.

Indeed, there seemed to be a bump in the center of his back. It wouldn't have been noticeable unless observed closely due to his clothing.

Because of Fatty's build and short arms, he couldn't quite reach the bump on his back.

007 and Keke immediately rushed over, held him down, and lifted his shirt to reveal his back. Upon seeing it, both gulped.

A face-like piece of skin was attached to Fatty's back, significantly larger than a normal face.

"What's on my back?" Fatty asked nervously. "It's not really there, is it?"

He attempted to twist his neck to see for himself.

007 pushed Fatty's head back to keep him still and continued examining the face on his back. "Something's off. This face isn't just stuck to your back. It appears to be growing out of it."

Keke felt the same. She carefully reached out, trying to find an edge to peel the face-like skin from Fatty's back, but found no seam. It seemed to be fused with his skin.

"AH?" Hearing 007's words, Fatty asked in a timid voice, "It can't be... you're not going to gouge it out of my back, are you?"

Fatty couldn't help but remember the time in the Fairy Tale City instance, when his skin had fused with wolf fur, and Miss Xiao Qiao had swiftly ripped it off him, flesh and all.

He could still recall the excruciating pain from that time.

Am I set to experience skin removal again today? At least it's only one face. It's a much smaller area than the wolf fur that previously fused with me, so the pain should be lesser... Fatty was constantly reassuring himself.

At that point, 007's voice came from behind him. "We need to hurry and gouge this face off. Have you noticed? It's grown larger than a normal human's face and seems to be getting bigger with time."

She was directing this at Keke by her side.

Keke also nodded solemnly. "I've noticed, too. Though it's slow, it's definitely growing."

Fatty, having listened to their conversation, became a little flustered. "How big has the face on my back gotten? It's not as big as a washbasin now, is it?"

"Pretty much," 007 said, looking at the ghost face on Fatty's back, which was now the size of a washbasin. "It's fortunate we noticed early. The face hasn't yet spread to cover your entire body. If we had discovered it later, your whole body might've been engulfed by this ghost face."

At that point, Fatty's life would be in danger, and he might even turn into a mindless monster.

"Then... then hurry and gouge it out! I can bear it!" Fatty understood the severity of the situation. He immediately lay prone on the ground, exposing his back, seemingly ready for anything, though his quavering voice revealed his lack of conviction.

"But I don't know how to stop the bleeding if we tear off such a large patch of skin." 007 didn't move, glancing at the countdown timer. There are still over four hours before we can leave the instance. If we can't stop the bleeding in that time, Fatty will likely bleed out.

"Moreover, we can't use special items in this instance. Even if we have life-saving items, we can't use them." Keke looked at the ghost face on Fatty's back, which was slowly burgeoning. We can't delay any longer.

Keke was already clutching a sharp dagger, ready to gouge out the face at any moment. She always kept this in her inventory. While it couldn't harm ghosts, it could be used against humans harboring malicious intentions within the instance.

"I have a way to stop the bleeding," 007 suddenly said, standing up.

Keke glanced up in surprise. "What way?"

007 answered, "Since we can't use special items, we'll have to make do with what we have here. Watch Fatty for me; I'll be right back."

She then headed briskly towards the adjacent room.

She didn't keep Keke and Fatty waiting long. In less than a minute, she returned, carrying a bucket.

Fatty raised his head and stared. "Gasoline?"

007 nodded. "The gasoline from room 706."

Seeing the gasoline in her hands, Keke immediately understood. "You want to use fire to cauterize the wound?"

"Yes." 007 put down the gasoline bucket and picked up the jacket she had taken off earlier from the ground. "We coat the blade with gasoline, heat it until it's red-hot, and then use it to peel off the face."

This way, they could directly cauterize the wound, which should stop the bleeding, more or less.

However, this would be extremely painful. But right now, saving his life was paramount.

007 quickly soaked the jacket in gasoline and lit it. The flames shot up high instantly. She then picked up an axe from the room and placed its bladed head into the fire.

"The area of your wound is too large. A small dagger might not cauterize it quickly enough, but the flat side of the axe head is much larger," 007 explained to Fatty, who was staring at her wide-eyed.

Fatty, already terrified by the idea of fiery cauterization, grew even more frightened at the prospect of being seared with an axe. I wish I could just faint right now!

Soon, the dagger was red-hot, and the axe in the fire began to SIZZLE.

"Let's start," 007 said to Keke, who was holding the red-hot dagger.

Fatty's hands and feet had been tied by this point to prevent him from jumping up and trying to escape when the pain hit as the face was being cut from his back.

Fatty, now bound, had teary eyes. "The Doctor isn't here either. If I pass out from the pain, there'll be no one to give me CPR... AHHH!"

Keke, seizing the moment while Fatty was distracted, made her move with the red-hot dagger.

Piercing screams of AHHH! echoed throughout the room.

Perhaps to prevent players on adjacent floors from alerting each other through sound, the building's soundproofing was excellent. Gu Mian, on the sixth floor, hadn't heard Fatty's agonizing screams at all. At that moment, he was undertaking his third task.

Chapter 770 - Such Terror! Such Terror!_1

After finding the right leg and stitching it onto the Dismembered Ghost, Gu Mian quickly found the remaining two parts of the ghost. Before the next ten minutes rolled around, he had assembled the corpse in room 603.

Worth mentioning, after finishing, Gu Mian realized he had switched the left and right legs. He wanted to reattach them correctly, but before he could start, the big screen next to him showed the words 'task completed'.

A few seconds later, the third and fourth floors also completed a task, unlocking four corpse locations at once. In total, nine corpse locations were now unlocked in the building.

The task completed on the third and fourth floors was a memory challenge, which suited Chu Change's style perfectly. Of course, 007 and Keke also had excellent memories, and that Renle Mountain was also very clever.

However, Gu Mian felt that relying on tasks to discern who was on the third and fourth floors wasn't reliable. For example, he just received a task that seemed tailored for Fatty.

"[Rumor has it that new guests have arrived on the fifth and sixth floors. The gentleman in room 504 has prepared a sumptuous feast in your honor. However, the competitive Mr. 504 also challenges you to an eating contest. You and your opponent will receive equal amounts of food. Whoever finishes eating first will win. If you fail the challenge, the hospitable Mr. 504 will prepare new food and continue to challenge you until you win]"

So, the gist is, if I can't win, I'll have to keep eating until I burst, huh.

Room 504, truly hospitable. Speaking of which, the Binge-eating Ghost I saw enthusiastically kicking the table earlier seemed to be from room 504.

Gu Mian continued to read.

"[After successfully winning the challenge, Mr. 504 will unlock four corpse locations for all players in the building]"

Quite generous, unlocking four corpse locations for completing the task.

The countdown timer had just reached four hours. Gu Mian estimated that by the time the timer ended, they could unlock most of the corpse locations in the building. However, the others couldn't just keep doing tasks; they also needed to set aside time to move and eliminate the corpses, which would likely take at least half an hour.

At that moment, the big screen suddenly displayed that a task on the seventh and eighth floors had also been completed.

"[After much hardship, the players on the seventh and eighth floors finally helped Mr. 708 find his lost item. Mr. 708 was deeply moved and has unlocked two corpse locations for all players in the building]"

Only two? Gu Mian stared at the large screen in front of him. The number of corpse locations unlocked by completing tasks had been increasing over time, yet the seventh and eighth floors had only unlocked two corpse locations for their task.

Gu Mian guessed that the players on the top two floors had probably received their task shortly after the instance began, but only managed to complete it now.

They seem a bit slow. Could Fatty be up there?

The chart now showed two more unlocked corpse locations: one in room 507 with the Burning Death Ghost, and the other in room 104 with the Headless Ghost.

Observing the headless cartoon figures appearing on the chart, Gu Mian noted that there didn't seem to be any headless corpses on his floor. He wondered if the players on adjacent floors would need this type of corpse.

Soon, Gu Mian found himself in room 504.

The table that had previously been kicked over by the Binge-eating Ghost was restored to its original state, but the food that had been on it was gone, replaced by two new platters of food.

Describing them as "basins" was no exaggeration.

On the long table were two basin-sized platters, each piled high with roast goose, braised pig's head, and whole lamb legs. These were all hefty dishes; even Fatty would take some time to finish them.

One of these food basins was placed in front of the Binge-eating Ghost, and the other was set opposite. The instance had thoughtfully provided an extra chair for Gu Mian to sit on while dining.

Gu Mian reached the table in two strides, pulled out the chair, and sat down.

Perhaps in an attempt to create a warm atmosphere, several romantic red candles were lit between the two platters, imitating the candlelit dinners of young lovers.

However, because the ghost sitting opposite him was so unbearably ugly, Gu Mian couldn't feel any of the candlelit dinner's romance.

Apparently, the Binge-eating Ghost also failed to appreciate the romantic setting. Instead of lying on the table as before, it was now sitting normally facing Gu Mian. After all, this was an eating challenge; it couldn't very well keep playing dead.

The bright red candlelight illuminated its face. The ghost was already hideous, with a large head, big ears, and a deathly pale face. When Gu Mian plopped down opposite it, its ugly face sagged even further, almost to the tabletop, looking as if it were being forced to entertain a customer—not at all like a hospitable host.

Now, he had to compete with the Binge-eating Ghost to see who could eat faster.

Looking at the ghost's plump body, Gu Mian felt he probably couldn't out-eat his opponent. So he decided to strike first while the ghost was unprepared, reaching out to snatch the goose leg in front of him and stuffing it into his mouth.

He immediately choked.

Gu Mian coughed a few times before spitting the leg out. Indeed, every field has its experts; eating contests were really Fatty's domain.

At that moment, the Binge-eating Ghost's expression suddenly turned somewhat gleeful, a far cry from its previous forced, servile appearance. Seeing Gu Mian choking seemed to bring it great joy. Perhaps wanting to prove itself, the Binge-eating Ghost grabbed the entire roast goose, tore open its massive, bloody maw, and stuffed it in. Then, it looked at Gu Mian with a touch of smugness, as if to say, I can do it, but you can't!

Gu Mian paled in shock. This ghost devouring a whole roast goose in one gulp is terrifyingly proficient! It leaves me no chance of winning.

Since I can't deal with the food, I'll have to deal with my opponent.

Gu Mian glanced at the axe leaning against the table.

If I just hack my opponent to death, it won't be able to eat faster than me!

Gu Mian silently reached for the axe beside the table.

The Binge-eating Ghost opposite, which had been looking smug, immediately sensed something was wrong. Its joyful expression froze on its face. Under the crimson candlelight, its face looked even uglier than before.

Then, it abruptly stuck its hand into its mouth and dug around forcefully.

Gu Mian, who was stealthily reaching for the axe, heard a "PLOP" from across the table, as if something had fallen onto it.

He looked up to see that the roast goose—which the Binge-eating Ghost had previously stuffed into its mouth whole—now lay perfectly unharmed on the table. The ghost itself was delicately patting its chest, feigning an appearance of having eaten too much and being unable to swallow.

Next, with its fingers poised delicately, it tore off a tiny piece of crispy skin from the roast goose and began to eat it with small, demure bites.

Seeing this, Gu Mian quietly withdrew his hand from the axe. "It seems this ghost's abilities are just so-so," he remarked.

Having said that, he picked up the roast lamb leg on his plate and began to eat.

However, no normal person could finish an entire large lamb leg in one sitting, not to mention the roast goose, braised pig's head, and other things on the platter.

Thus, Gu Mian took only two bites, then, while the Binge-eating Ghost wasn't looking, stealthily tossed it under the table. Then he stared intently at his opponent to see if it had noticed.

The Binge-eating Ghost's hand, fingers still delicately poised, stiffened for a few seconds. It steeled itself and glanced at Gu Mian, but saw Gu Mian glaring at it with wide, intimidating eyes. It hastily averted its gaze and, as if nothing were amiss, continued to nibble its goose skin.

Gu Mian nodded in satisfaction. Looks like I wasn't caught.

Then, he repeated the process, tossing the roast goose, braised pig's head, and everything else under the table. Within a few minutes, he had cleared his platter. The sight would have made the Binge-eating Ghost weep.