

Collapse 78

Chapter 78: Slaughter Game (Part 7)_1

In the end, Fatty couldn't accept Gu Mian's suggestion to run behind the trike.

He resigned himself to sitting on it, and Gu Mian immediately hit the accelerator, driving north along the road.

The dilapidated trike barely made it to the vicinity of the coal mine base. Just as Gu Mian spotted the coal mine base in the distance, the tricycle let out a final whimper and died.

Gu Mian jumped down, chair leg in hand, and looked at Fatty. "It's all your fault for being so heavy."

Fatty also nimbly rolled off. "I'm just puffy... puffy..."

A massive coal mine base sat before them.

Gu Mian saw a fairly tall mountain nearby. He seemed to recall learning in geography that coal resources were usually found near mountain ranges; it appeared these principles also applied within instances.

Several large structures stood before the tall mountain. A row of iron railings semi-encircled these buildings, along with a small portion of the mountain itself.

A massive iron gate faced the two of them, with what looked like several large characters hanging on it.

It was too dark for them to make out the characters on the gate from their current position.

"Let's go over there and take a closer look," Gu Mian said, striding forward.

Fatty quickly took out his flashlight and followed. The road here was uneven and riddled with potholes; in the dead of night, one careless misstep could send them tumbling into a ditch.

Guided by the flashlight's beam, the two of them reached the large iron gate without much trouble a few minutes later.

Gu Mian looked up and saw the characters hanging on the gate: "Kuangcheng Coal Mine Base."

Not far beyond the iron gate stood a large building. Now that Gu Mian was closer, he could see it more clearly.

That looked like an employee dormitory, a place for the coal miners to live.

Fatty stood before the gate, remarking with a sigh, "Such a huge dormitory building... It could house so many workers..."

"It claims to be the largest coal mine base in the world, but it looks rather shabby to me. Can this really be the world's largest?" Gu Mian pushed the iron gate.

Fatty shone his flashlight inside, saying, "Doctor, be careful. We're live streaming."

He pointed to the follow-up device above his head as he spoke.

Gu Mian promptly shut his mouth.

The gate wasn't locked; it swung open with a push, so they didn't need to climb the walls or break it down.

Fatty gazed at the large buildings before them.

Three of the buildings in sight were clearly employee dormitories, as each room had a balcony. On some balconies, underwear still hung from clotheslines—God knows for how many years—and birds had even built nests in them.

Another, slightly shorter building looked like a canteen. It seemed these coal miners used to live right here at the coal mine base.

This place was nothing like the tourist brochures described. On the contrary, it was extremely dirty and dilapidated.

Likely due to its proximity to the mountain, the ground was littered with dead branches and fallen leaves. Weeds had overgrown the dirt paths.

Gu Mian noticed that the grass beside the dormitory building had grown almost as high as the windows.

"How many years has this place been abandoned... COUGH, COUGH." Fatty coughed a couple of times, covering his nose.

The paths here were all dirt, and combined with accumulated coal dust, the air was thick with particulates. A deep breath made one's throat itch.

Fatty swept his flashlight around, as if afraid a monster might suddenly charge at them. "By the way, Doctor, we need to be careful. I used to work in a mine, and places like this... usually have a high death toll..."

Gu Mian glanced at him. "Is there anything you haven't done?"

Repairman, truck driver, miner... It all sounded like back-breaking labor.

"I was tricked by an old fellow. Actually, I originally wanted to follow in my father's footsteps and become a teacher. But before I could even graduate, my poor old dad kicked the bucket and ascended to heaven. But I'm getting sidetracked. Let me tell you about the mines..."

Gu Mian walked forward in silence.

He had no intention of searching for clues in the dormitory buildings.

There were simply too many dormitory buildings; searching them room by room would take days.

Unless he could magically pull some vital clue from a bird's nest built in the crotch of underwear drying on a balcony.

While Fatty walked with Gu Mian, he continued his story, "Mine disasters happen quite often. When I worked at the coal mine for only a few months, I witnessed a pretty major disaster.

"I'd only been there a few days, interning under that old fellow who'd tricked me into the job. Later, that master miner went down into the pit once and never came back up.

"Apparently, while they were digging, the mine collapsed, burying more than a hundred people alive. The rescue team worked themselves to the bone and managed to pull out seven or eight who were barely breathing. The rest, when they were finally dug out, already had blue faces.

"Back then, our mine set up rows upon rows of mourning sheds. You couldn't see the end of them—just an expanse of white that hurt your eyes to look at.

"The deceased were all covered with white cloths. When their wives arrived, they couldn't even tell which one was their husband. They just knelt on the ground and wailed, their cries heart-wrenching.

"Some of the children were too young to understand what had happened. They kept trying to lift the white cloth curtains, saying they wanted to find their papa.

"There was a village near the coal mine, and most of the workers were from there. The mourners from that village went from one grieving household to the next, crying until their voices gave out.

"Those men knew they could die at any moment, so they'd bought insurance policies early on. They figured that if they died one day, at least their wives and children could take their death benefits and afford a hot meal."

Fatty sighed at this point in his story. "They must have died filled with resentment, buried alive, waiting for a rescue that never came. If it were me, I'd have gone mad too."

As he spoke, Fatty looked ahead. "Doctor, if the 'conflict' you mentioned really happened at this coal mine base, I'm guessing it was related to some kind of mining disaster."

By now, the two had reached a mine entrance.

The mine entrance wasn't a vertical shaft but more like a large city gate cut into the side of the mountain. The opening was enormous.

Gu Mian shone the flashlight inside for a quick look. The mine entrance sloped downwards. Something resembling a train track extended out from the opening, but Gu Mian had no idea what it was.

He looked at the dark cavern before him, then at the flashlight in Fatty's hand.

Fatty's scalp tingled. "Doctor... you're not thinking of going in there for a look, are you?"

Gu Mian turned to him. "Your little brain is surprisingly sharp, isn't it?"