

Global Collapse

Chapter 11: Chapter 11: Life Ah_1

Under the moonlight, the dilapidated teaching building resembled a sprawling beast, poised to devour anyone who dared enter.

Gu Mian and Zhang Ping stood before the entrance of the teaching building; its glass door was locked. Faint screams could be heard from within, already growing weak.

Zhang Ping stood anxiously before the locked glass door. Gu Mian found himself curious about her apparent lack of teleportation ability, but now wasn't the time to discuss it. He was searching for a suitable rock.

Zhang Ping watched him, her voice tinged with despair. "It's useless..."

Unexpectedly, no sooner had the words left her mouth than Gu Mian, having found a rock, hurled it at the glass door. The fragile glass cracked on impact. He struck it several more times, smashing a hole large enough for a person to pass through.

Zhang Ping stood there, somewhat dazed.

Gu Mian tossed the rock aside. "I've pried open a school's iron gate before, so I figured I could break this door too."

These doors probably aren't meant to stop players, he thought. After all, the instance probably didn't anticipate players smashing doors down in the middle of the night.

Screams echoed from the teaching building again, and Zhang Ping immediately rushed inside, clearly frightened. Gu Mian followed close behind.

She ran so quickly that Gu Mian couldn't keep up and soon lost sight of her.

In the dim corridor, he took out the piece of paper he had found in Zixin Bingling's death dormitory.

"They're going to kill me!"

"They want to put a talisman on me, trap me in a gloomy box next to a disgusting rat hole, stare and laugh at me every day, and keep me here to torture me forever!"

The horrific screams continued. Gu Mian had already reached the third floor. In the third-floor corridor lay a box containing a dead rabbit. It looked like it had been stepped on; its head was crushed flat.

Zhang Ping seemed to have found Lin Yanan, who was upstairs. From upstairs came the laughter of children, a sound like it was being forced through their nostrils, echoing through the terrifying school campus.

"I'm sorry... Teacher is sorry..." Her faint voice drifted down from above Gu Mian.

One could imagine Zhang Ping, hugging Lin Yanan and sobbing, while the other twenty-eight resentful spirits attacked them.

But Gu Mian didn't rush up.

He had to find Lin Yanan's body first. Removing the talisman voluntarily might have a different outcome than if it simply wore off after ten years.

So where was Lin Yanan's body?

He stood at the entrance to the classroom of Sophomore Class Four, recalling everything about this instance.

"Someone said Lin Yanan looked like a rabbit."

"The rabbit under the box in the corridor."

"They will lock me in a gloomy box, next to a disgusting rat hole, laugh at me every day."

Next to a rat burrow, under a box, stared at daily by twenty-eight resentful spirits.

So this place must be...

The sounds of beatings and abuse from upstairs grew more intense.

He pushed open the door, entered the dark classroom, walked to the lectern at the front, and kicked the teacher's desk over. Several fat rats, startled, scurried out, only to dart back into the darkness beneath the lectern.

Gu Mian looked down at the hollow lectern, which was about ten centimeters high. He then bent over, gripped its edge, and lifted it sharply.

An overwhelming stench of decay assaulted his nostrils.

A twisted, humanoid figure lay quietly beneath the lectern, its body in an advanced state of decomposition. Rats scurried from its rotting eye sockets. It was utterly disgusting.

A talisman was pasted on her head, almost identical to the one in the photo.

The corpse clutched something in its hand. Gu Mian took it and found it was the lower half of a page detailing the Ghost Soul Raising Charm.

"Fiendish Ghost Nurturing Soul Spell."

"The greater the resentment at the time of death, the stronger the Evil Ghost will become. Affixing this talisman to the corpse can suppress the Evil Ghost's powers and also prevent the ghost from straying a certain distance from the corpse."

"Remember! This talisman will still function to confine after ten years, but it will no longer possess the power to suppress the Evil Ghost. After ten years, the Evil Ghost will become even more terrifying."

"If this talisman is voluntarily removed, the Evil Ghost will erupt uncontrollably, and the talisman will no longer have any restraining power over it."

Laughter echoed ceaselessly from upstairs; the students seemed to revel in tormenting others.

Just as the children's laughter upstairs reached its peak, Gu Mian ripped the talisman from the humanoid figure's head with a tearing sound.

In that instant, it was as if thunder cracked across the sky.

The laughter upstairs stopped abruptly, as if a duck's neck had been stomped on. The laughter instantly turned into screams, so loud they made Gu Mian's ears ache.

Wave after wave of screams came from upstairs; judging by the sounds, their deaths were horrific.

By the time Gu Mian arrived at the scene, flames had already started to spread. The Evil Ghost, suppressed for ten years, unleashed enough pent-up rage in the moment of its release to incinerate the place it had hated for so many years.

Flames erupted anew in the warehouse at the far end of the sixth floor, as if it were that night years ago when everyone had burned to death.

A girl with a doll-like face, large eyes, and very pale skin stood in the middle of the warehouse, Zhang Ping kneeling beside her. She sobbed, pressing the doll-faced girl to her chest. "I'm sorry, Teacher is late..."

They were surrounded by fire. In the warehouse, the corridors, the classrooms—the Evil Ghost's fury engulfed everything.

"Teacher," Lin Yanan, her rabbit-like face impassive, stared at Zhang Ping with wide eyes. "Was it you who told them I informed on you? Was it you who said you didn't believe me, that you only trusted them? Was it you who said it wouldn't matter if a lying child like me died?"

Zhang Ping was stunned for a moment, then tears streamed down her face. In the moonlight, she gently touched the girl's cheek.

"Silly child, how could you believe others so easily?"

"You heard what they said, so you wanted revenge on Teacher, to burn me along with them, didn't you?"

"Teacher didn't do that. In Teacher's heart, you were always the best, most obedient child. I stayed here for so many years just so I could leave with my most obedient child."

In the dim light, the doll-faced girl's eyes seemed to flicker.

Lin Yanan didn't trouble Gu Mian, who stood nearby; the talisman in his hand explained everything.

But the inferno did not abate, continuing to ravage the entire building as if to burn it to nothing but ash.

"Leave when you've burned enough," Gu Mian said, giving the two a deep look before tossing the talisman in his hand into the fire. The moment the talisman met the flames, it ignited fiercely, turning to cinders in an instant.

This instance ultimately failed to mutate. Lin Yanan's rampage was too devastating; the entire school was set ablaze, like the inside of a crematorium.

As the fire blazed, Gu Mian lay on the athletic field, gazing at the stars.

He didn't know what would become of Lin Yanan and her teacher, but that wasn't his concern.

It hadn't been five hours yet.

More accurately, not even an hour had passed, yet everything in the instance was gone. All twenty-eight resentful spirits were annihilated, the school was nearly cinders, and all players, except those who had already escaped, were eliminated.

What was left to play with?

Only Gu Mian remained, alone.

He looked up at the sky, a headache forming. *Do I really have to stay in this empty instance for another four-plus hours?*

But then, a panel suddenly popped up, changing everything.

[Warning! Warning! Red-level warning!]

[The Resentful Spirit High School Instance is undergoing catastrophic collapse! Instance characters are almost entirely lost! The instance map has suffered Epic-level destruction!]

[Data analysis failed!]

[Instance structure abnormal!]

[All players within this instance will be forcibly ejected in ten seconds. Please prepare!]

[10, 9, 8...]

"What the hell?" Staring at the panel, Gu Mian exclaimed in disbelief.