

Global Collapse

Chapter 14: Chapter 14: Vote!_1

Fortunately, Gu Mian had an ancestral radio, supposedly left with him at the orphanage's doorstep.

When Gu Mian's presence supposedly bankrupted the orphanage, the stern-faced old director solemnly handed him this radio.

It was no different from an ordinary radio, except it lacked a brand name.

Gu Mian had tossed it into a storage room where it gathered dust for years, only to be unearthed today to squeeze out its remaining value.

"Dr. Gu, is this thing reliable?" Fatty asked, eyeing the unearthed radio with suspicion.

Gu Mian blew the dust off the radio. "Don't worry. In zombie movies, don't televisions always lose their signal while radios keep working?"

As he spoke, he switched on the radio and began turning the knob to tune it.

Fatty watched intently as Gu Mian turned the dial.

Sure enough, after a few twists of the dial, a female voice, crackling with static, suddenly emerged.

"FZZZZ... No.1 Guardian has lost the target for twenty years. Is No.2 Guardian still guarding? Please respond if you receive this... FZZZZ..."

What strange content. A sci-fi bedtime story broadcast by the radio station?

Fatty craned his neck in amazement.

Even Chu Changge, sitting on the sofa, was drawn in by the voice, a flicker of inexplicable emotion crossing his usually stoic face.

However, Gu Mian's hand slipped, and he accidentally turned the knob too far.

When he tried to tune back, there was only the hissing of static.

Gu Mian said sheepishly, "Don't worry, I'll try again. I'll find a station."

He started adjusting the dial again.

This time, he tuned into a more normal-sounding station, likely a news channel or something similar. Gu Mian didn't know much about radio stations, so he couldn't be sure.

This news station also had a lot of static, but the content was barely audible.

"Please, citizens, remain calm... FZZZ... Try not to go out for the time being. If you see any suspicious individuals, hide immediately..."

It seemed the authorities were doing their best to maintain order. However, as humans would evolve through the game, terrifying entities might appear in the future.

One could only pray that no one in the world was keen on stirring up trouble; otherwise, maintaining order could prove quite difficult.

Night had fallen, enveloping the apartment in darkness.

Fatty's stomach rumbled with hunger. He announced he was going to the kitchen to whip up a feast. Gu Mian hadn't known that Fatty, the maintenance guy, was also a skilled chef.

At this point, Chu Changge, still in the living room, finally got to the point.
"What are your plans?"

"This is the apocalypse. Countless people will rise using this as a springboard. They can enter instances without any scruples, but you can't."

Because Gu Mian might die if he entered one.

Chu Changge looked at him. "So, are you planning to continue living as before, or risk your life entering instances?"

The world is likely to undergo a major upheaval. Continuing to live as before isn't very realistic.

But entering instances is extremely dangerous.

"There's no question," Gu Mian replied bluntly. "I'll enter instances. It's not like I'd be any safer if I didn't."

"Never mind a world potentially descending into chaos; even in an era with a strong rule of law, I'd face dangers ordinary people couldn't comprehend."

"I can't be so bold as to say this game was started just for me, but you've seen it – this game is different for me."

"I can't live my whole life in fear. Perhaps through this game, I can uncover the secrets about myself, like where I came from."

Chu Changge stared at Gu Mian, then chuckled. "You really are different from us. At least I don't question where I came from."

Gu Mian rarely saw him laugh. The last time was when a twenty-eight-car pile-up had resulted in Chu Changge breaking his leg.

The television was still on, intermittent images occasionally flickering through the static.

A few words could be faintly heard: "National... CCHHH... negotiating..."

Just then, Fatty emerged carrying several dishes. "There wasn't much left in the fridge, so I just made these."

Gu Mian glanced at them.

Spicy stir-fried baby bok choy, hot-and-sour shredded potatoes, and a pot of pork rib soup.

They were done quite well, at least much better than Gu Mian could manage.

Because Gu Mian was extremely prone to accidents while cooking, they rarely kept many vegetables in the fridge, mostly relying on instant noodles to get by.

Gu Mian had seen those potatoes a few days ago; they had sprouted at least a dozen buds. The conscientious Fatty had gouged them all out.

The chandelier above the dining table cast a warm glow.

If it weren't three grown men sitting underneath it, the atmosphere might have been even cozier.

"So, Doctor..." Fatty asked, holding his rice bowl, "if I go to the supermarket to buy groceries tomorrow, will they still take cash?"

Probably not!

It wouldn't be long before Game Coins became the global currency.

Although Gu Mian knew this, he didn't say it out loud.

He picked up a piece of baby bok choy. "Refusing to accept Renminbi is illegal. They wouldn't dare refuse to sell, would they? We'd have them shot."

Fatty looked a bit apprehensive. "Well, I'll give it a try tomorrow."

Gu Mian took a sip of soup and set down his bowl. "I'll go with you."

It wasn't for any other reason than Fatty's cooking being too delicious; he wanted to enjoy it a few more times.

After dinner, Gu Mian assigned Fatty to the west-facing room.

The room had a single bed and a computer. Gu Mian usually used it for storage and rarely slept there.

Chu Changge, however, decided to make a pallet on the floor in Gu Mian's room. Despite Gu Mian's firm insistence that he take the sofa, Chu Changge still spread out bedding on the floor.

Outside, it was pitch black. Looking out the window, only a few lights were on in the usually densely lit residential area.

They were probably too scared to turn on their lights, afraid of attracting someone's attention.

The young people who used to walk their dogs and the elderly folks who played chess in the streets were all gone. It was utterly silent outside.

Occasionally, a dog would bark in the distance, quickly followed by its owner's hushing.

This was the quietest night Gu Mian had ever experienced.

He drew the curtains, lay on his bed, and summoned the panel.

He saw that his attribute section had changed. Of course, the long string of question marks remained the same, but two other data points had altered.

[Game Coins: 10]

[Number of Instances Cleared: 1]

He then looked at the other pages.

Like a typical game interface, the central section was the event tab. However, the event tab was still grayed out and remained enigmatic.

Above it, a line of text read: "The first global large-scale event is coming soon. Please stay tuned!"

Every game is bound to have large-scale game events.

But this game was too unique; there was no telling what kind of event it would be.

"Could it be a global ghost tide?" Gu Mian muttered to himself, looking at an area beside the event tab.

Next to the event tab was a small announcement board, easily missed if one wasn't looking closely.

He discovered that the announcement board had, at some point, been updated with an announcement.

[Attention all players: The instance 'Cursed High School' has suffered unknown damage and is undergoing emergency maintenance. During the maintenance period, this instance will not be available. We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience caused.]

[Affected players will receive compensation. Please collect it from your message center.]

Affected players...

Does that mean those who were kicked out of the game midway?

Wouldn't that be just me?

As Gu Mian thought this, he clicked open his message center. Sure enough, a compensation package was waiting there.