

Global Collapse

Chapter 3: Chapter 3: The Joy of Letting Go of Yourself_1

Without lingering with the unscrupulous merchant for too long, Gu Mian pushed directly through the teleportation portal and stepped inside.

What met him was sheer darkness. As soon as he entered, his feet seemed to step into nothingness, and he began to free-fall, which gave him quite a jolt. After what felt like more than ten seconds of weightlessness, Gu Mian suddenly felt a sharp pain in his backside; it seemed he had landed. Simultaneously, a light flickered on above his head. He immediately scanned his surroundings.

He was in a dilapidated corridor. The specific state of the corridor aside, what was noteworthy was that several people were standing around him, looking astonished at him sitting on the ground.

The panel popped up at this moment, ready to introduce the instance content.

[Instance: Vengeful Spirits High School]

[Content: An accident many years ago led to the death of the entire class. Since then, 29 resentful spirits have lingered, haunting the premises until the school was abandoned years later. Even now, passers-by can still hear their piercing wails.]

[Number of Players: 6]

[Main Quest: Play the role of the new teacher for the 29 deceased spirits while uncovering the truth of the accident from many years ago.]

[Friendly Tip: Please hide your identity as a living person.]

[Difficulty: ★★★☆]

[Instance Rewards: 10 Game Coins, 1 Free Attribute Point, 1 Lottery Draw]

"This... this means we have to be teachers for ghosts? And we can't let them find out?" A familiar voice spoke beside Gu Mian just as he finished reading the mission.

He had already stood up. Turning his head toward the sound, he saw the Fatty who had almost bumped into him earlier.

What a coincidence, Gu Mian thought.

The people surrounding Gu Mian were all players. He counted them. Including himself, there were six in total—the exact number of players for this instance.

Notably, among these players, besides Fatty, there was another familiar face—Chu Changge.

He and Gu Mian had quite a long history. The two had met at the Starting Point Orphanage and could be considered brothers in adversity.

However, before attending kindergarten, Gu Mian wouldn't have described his relationship with Chu Changge as that of "brothers in adversity." Previously, he had always considered them childhood sweethearts, with himself as the boy and Chu Changge, he'd assumed, as the girl—

Until one afternoon nap in kindergarten, when he lifted his "green plum's" skirt and witnessed a traumatic sight.

Chu Changge was, in fact, a die-hard straight man, a law school student whose cluelessness was particularly evident when interacting with women.

Once, a female classmate who had admired him for a long time confessed to him, asking tactfully, "What does 520 mean?"

Gu Mian was right there and watched helplessly as he responded—

"The '5' stands for five implementations: implementing economic structural adjustment, implementing precision poverty alleviation, implementing social security, implementing environmental governance, and implementing anti-corruption efforts."

"The '2' stands for two imperatives: we need economic development, and even more so, we need blue skies and clear waters."

"The '0' represents zero tolerance for illegal activities."

Since then, no female student ever discussed such "interpretations" with him again.

He paid no mind to confessions, and even less to other matters. Ever since childhood, Chu Changge had always maintained a composure that wouldn't falter even if Mount Tai were to collapse before him. Gu Mian figured that if the sky were falling, he himself would at least blurt out a "Damn it!" but Chu Changge? Not necessarily.

For instance, right now, he just wore a cold expression. His gaze lingered on Gu Mian for only a moment longer, showing no sign of recognizing his brother in adversity.

The other players, however, were a different story; they were panicking, almost jumping out of their skins.

"Teaching ghosts? How thrilling!" This came from a young man in his twenties. He was about 1.8 meters tall and very muscular. He didn't look scared at all; in fact, his face showed excitement. However, his slightly trembling calves betrayed him.

Gu Mian opened his player information, and the first thing that caught his eye was the impressive username.

"Xun Li, National Life or Death?" *This guy had a daredevil attitude*, Gu Mian thought.

Chu Changge's and Fatty's nicknames were much more normal. One used his real name, and the other was "Fat Kid Surnamed Wang."

So, Fatty's surname is Wang... Gu Mian pondered for a moment.

There were two other players.

One was a middle-aged, slightly overweight woman who looked like a housewife. She was already shivering. Her nickname was "Zhao Hongqing's Mom."

The other was a high school girl with a panda hair clip in her bangs. The clip looked like a cheap knock-off, the panda head seeming ready to fall off at any moment. Her face was already pale; her nickname was "Zixin Bingling."

Including Gu Mian, that made exactly six people.

Gu Mian took another look at the surroundings.

This was a corridor inside a school building. Classrooms, marked with signs that suggested they were all for first-year junior high students, lined one side. The other side of the corridor had windows overlooking a large sports field. This had to be the first floor.

It looked like a middle school from many years ago. The decor was neither particularly good nor bad, but the desks were quite shabby, their legs covered in moss. Clearly, the school had been abandoned for a long time.

It was supposedly morning in the instance. The narrow corridor was still dim, lit only by a single hanging lamp, under which the six players were huddled. A musty smell permeated the air—slightly acidic and somewhat acrid.

Wind howled as it poured in through the corridor windows. The cold draft swept past the players, rattling the decaying classroom doors. The twenty-nine spirits had not yet made their appearance.

The atmosphere was exceptionally eerie.

Fatty shivered from the cold. Gu Mian looked at the others in the dim light.

Luckily, no one had chosen a pixelated censor bar or a grass skirt for their avatar, he thought. Otherwise, they'd probably be freezing and trying to huddle together for warmth right now.

Amidst the eerie atmosphere, Chu Changge was the first to speak. "So, we're supposed to act as new teachers for these students, and we must not let them discover we're alive." He lowered his voice as he said this, as if afraid the spirits might overhear.

'Xun Li, National Life or Death?' asked nervously, "Then what if we are discovered?"

Chu Changge replied, "The 'hide your identity as a living person' part is in the Friendly Tip, not the Main Quest. So, even if a ghost discovers we're alive, it won't count as main quest failure, and we won't be kicked out of the instance. But if a ghost finds out you're alive, and you can't be kicked out of the instance... well, you can imagine the consequences."

Gu Mian glanced at the window, which was fitted with security bars. "Imagine the 'joy' of being hunted by ghosts?"

Fatty, who had been quietly inching closer to Gu Mian, froze. His face clearly screamed, 'Being hunted by ghosts is NOT fun!'

"C-can I leave?" Zhao Hongqing's Mom asked, her body trembling so violently that her voice quivered.

That was a normal person's reaction. However, this instance didn't offer much preferential treatment to normal people.

Gu Mian offered a sincere suggestion, "Why not try suicide?"

Of course, he didn't expect his "sincere" advice to be taken. Hearing this, Zhao Hongqing's Mom swallowed hard and didn't dare mention leaving the instance again.

Chu Changge continued, "Since we're the new teachers, we first need to figure out what subjects we're supposed to teach."

"Do we make up the subjects ourselves, or has the instance already assigned them?" Xun Li asked, frowning.

"We might find the answers we need in the office," Chu Changge replied.

Fortunately, it was morning, and classes hadn't started yet, so it didn't take much effort for the six of them to find the office.

The office was on the first floor. Its door had a long pane of glass set into it, and the handle was missing. One push, and they were inside.

Seven desks were neatly arranged inside, with players' names posted on them.

Gu Mian immediately spotted his own name—

"Gu Mian. A civics textbook is on the desk."

Right next to his desk was Chu Changge's, designated for the biology teacher. *It feels like our subjects were switched*, Gu Mian thought.

Fatty's desk was almost by the door. Gu Mian glanced over—a Physical Education textbook.

By now, everyone had figured out what subject they were supposed to teach. Gu Mian was assigned Civics, Chu Changge Biology, and Fatty Physical Education. Zhao Hongqing's Mom received Mathematics, Xun Li was given History, and Zixin Bingling had English.

Quite the mismatch with anyone's actual strengths, Gu Mian mused.

There were seven desks in total, meaning one was spare. It was tucked into the far corner by the window, with a chair in front of it. On the chair sat a very quaint embroidered cushion. Gu Mian leaned over to get a closer look at this desk.

On it, he saw a class schedule, a small digital clock, and another teacher's name.

"Chinese Language Teacher, Zhang Ping?"