

Watch Out! Danger Ahead

Chapter 26

There were a total of six participants in the trial. Three of them appeared in the hospital, including Song Qingxiao.

Tick, tock, tick, tock.

The disturbing noise of the ticking clock continued. The sound of the elevator arriving rang out. The doors opened, and the lightbulb in Song Qingxiao's brain seemed to light up. She felt as though she was about to figure out another clue. She was about to ponder on it carefully when someone patted her heavily on the shoulder.

"Hey!"

She felt a sharp jolt of pain on her shoulder. After she had been ambushed by number six, Song Qingxiao was once again caught unaware from behind. She twirled on her toes and moved aside. She crouched next to the side of the equipment console and leaned her upper body backward as she turned around to face the person who had tapped her on the shoulder.

The person who had tapped her on the shoulder was a nurse. She was not one of the six participants, and she looked about 30 years old. She wore soft-soled shoes. She did not make a sound when she walked, so Song Qingxiao had no idea when she came over.

Song Qingxiao reacted outlandishly when she shrank away earlier. She felt a little embarrassed. Her hand was still raised, and when she saw Song Qingxiao's reaction, she sighed. "Are you new?"

After she asked that, she mumbled to herself, "It seems like there have been so many new people recently."

What the nurse said caught Song Qingxiao's attention. She narrowed her eyes as soon as she heard that. As the countdown continued, she paid attention to the name tag on the new nurse's chest. Her name was written on it.

‘Tu Xiaoyun’.

Song Qingxiao knew that her exaggerated response to being tapped had incurred the displeasure of Tu Xiaoyun. She looked a little embarrassed. Since Song Qingxiao had just arrived and she had still not figured out the mission of the trial, she hoped that she could be on good terms with her ‘colleagues’. That was so she would be able to probe more information to give her an advantage in completing the task.

She needed the favor of the people around her. As soon as she noticed Tu Xiaoyun frowning as she spoke, Song Qingxiao’s mind was already busy thinking about the best way to fix it. She raised her left hand to stroke her shoulder. She looked as though she was trying to endure a great deal of pain as she turned to look at Nurse Zhang.

“What happened?”

As soon as Nurse Zhang saw Song Qingxiao’s reaction, she quickly asked about her with concern.

“I think my shoulder is injured from being kicked earlier.”

As soon as Song Qingxiao said that, Tu Xiaoyun looked at her with a puzzled expression. Nurse Zhang explained, “We admitted a new patient today who suddenly attacked Qingxiao and injured her neck.”

While she spoke, Nurse Zhang got Song Qingxiao’s permission and peeled away her collar to look at her shoulder that had been kicked. Song Qingxiao was 1.68 meters tall. However, the nurses working in the psychiatric hospital were not short either. As soon as Nurse Zhang peeled her collar back, she exclaimed in shock after she took a look.

“Oh! There’s a hematoma.”

Number six had not gone easy on her. As she pulled tightly against the lanyard on Song Qingxiao’s neck with both hands, she kicked her feet against Song Qingxiao’s shoulders. Hence, she had two red and swollen marks on her shoulders.

Once Tu Xiaoyun realized what had happened, she looked a little guilty. She took some cotton with some iodine on it and walked up to help Song Qingxiao disinfect her wound. She said, “That’s true. Our hospital may have another

newcomer. Doctor Zhou is preparing to meet them now. If that person stays on, we'll have a new doctor."

The skin on her neck was torn after she had been strangled by the lanyard string. It stung when the iodine was applied. However, it was not as shocking to Song Qingxiao as the news she heard from Tu Xiaoyun.

She recalled that Tu Xiaoyun previously said 'It seems like there have been so many new people recently'. Tu Xiaoyun did not specifically mention if all of the 'new people' were medical staff or patients. It was highly likely that it was a mix of both. For example, there was herself, as well as number five and number six that she saw earlier.

Since a new doctor was about to enter the hospital, she could not help but wonder who the new 'doctor' would be. If everyone in the trial had entered the same scene, three of them have already appeared. Hence, the participants left were the bespectacled guy, the large chap with the gun, and the red whip lady who had yet to appear.

The doctor mentioned by Tu Xiaoyun must be one of the three. There were a total of five floors in the hospital building. According to what Nurse Zhang told her earlier, there were a total of 27 patients. She wondered if the other two participants of the trial would be among the patients.

Her mind was full of questions, along with the sound of the ticking clock. Tu Xiaoyun was still speaking when a chilling boom could be heard. The sound was clear and not dull. It sounded like it came from a distance away. However, because of the hospital's unique location, the sound echoed in the air.

Song Qingxiao was not the only one who looked like she had suffered a shock. Even Nurse Zhang and the others who were in the midst of a conversation were startled. Tu Xiaoyun's hand that held the cotton swab shook and the cotton swab poked Song Qingxiao's injured neck, causing her to let out a gasp.

"What happened?"

Wang Xiaoli was a little surprised. Song Qingxiao, on the other hand, felt her eye twitch non-stop. She felt as though something was wrong! The soundproofing of the hospital was excellent. She had experienced it herself firsthand.

They were all in the same building. There were 27 patients on one side, and the medical staff offices and dormitories were situated on the other side. When she first entered the trial scene and was interviewed by 'Liu Yixun', she did not hear anything from the patient zone at all.

It was only when she had followed Nurse Zhang over and passed through several metal gates did she begin to hear the cries and sobs of the patients. The explosion earlier sounded like it came from the offices on the other side of the building. What kind of sound could travel that far?

Not to mention, that noise did not sound like an object falling to the ground or the sound of something breaking. It really sounded like a gunshot. Song Qingxiao instantly thought of the large chap with the gun! She licked her dry and chapped lips.

Tu Xiaoyun said that a new person had arrived. At the moment, the gunman, the bespectacled guy, and the red whip lady had not appeared. The new doctor could be one of them. However, it seemed like the large chap with the gun was the most likely one.

Her neck that was strangled by number six started to hurt even more. The rate of Song Qingxiao's breathing began to increase. After the sound of the gunshot rang out, she keenly sensed the presence of death. It was a powerful intuition that came from two close calls with death.

Song Qingxiao quickly took a look at the prompt in her consciousness. As she expected, the instructions that used to say 'Protect the people. Obliterate failure. Upon completion of task: 1000 credits' had changed after the sound of the gunshot.

'Protect the people. Obliterate failure. Upon completion of task: 950 credits'.

The reward had changed!

When Song Qingxiao looked up, her eyes were filled with surprise and a little elation. Even though the earlier gunshot meant that it was likely that someone had died in the hospital, it was as she had expected. Once a death occurred, it would signal the official start of the trial.

Her eyes were half-closed as her gaze swept across Tu Xiaoyun and the others. Through the glass windows of the patient room, she could see number

five lift his head. It was clear that he had been startled by the earlier gunshot. His face was filled with an unmistakable look of terror.

As soon as he noticed Song Qingxiao's gaze, number five cradled his head in his arms and slowly lowered his head. His body began to tremble. The others had not recovered their senses after the gunshot when the shrill sound of a woman screaming could be heard in the distance.

"Ahhhhhh!"

The cry was loud, clear, and shrill. It sounded terrifying, especially in a quiet environment like the hospital. It seemed like all the patients had been affected by the shrill cry. As though they sensed a disruption, the patients that Nurse Zhang had ushered back into their rooms had started to rebel. The patient in the same room as number five got down from the bed and sluggishly walked towards the door.

"Go and have a look. Find out what has happened."

Nurse Zhang seemed a little anxious. Before Song Qingxiao could react, she had been dragged along with Tu Xiaoyun and Wang Xiaoli to reassure and calm the patients down along with a couple of other nurses.

The gunshot seemed to come from the doctor's office. Nurse Zhang rushed to get the keys and opened the three heavy metal gates. In that situation, she did not forget to explain to Song Qingxiao apologetically, "I'm so sorry, Qingxiao. Since you've just started today, I should have shown you around so that you can familiarize yourself with the place."

She explained in a rush while she looked a little disconcerted, "I don't know what is going on today..."

"It's okay. We should hurry to see what is going on and whether we can help. I have time to familiarize myself with the hospital at another time."

As Song Qingxiao said that, the ticking sound continued, and the numbers in her vision changed to 119: 06: 27. It was as if the numbers mocked her for saying that she 'still had time'. Song Qingxiao blinked her eyes and endured the pain in her throat as she gulped. She suppressed the fear in her heart and did her best to ignore the numbers.

At that point, she wanted to test the theory in her heart. She wanted to see if that gunshot had anything to do with the large chap who was one of the six participants in the trial. She also wanted to see who had encountered trouble and figure out how she had lost 50 credits for no reason.

As soon as the both of them left the patient area, they heard a commotion outside. The sound seemed to come from downstairs. Nurse Zhang ran to the elevator and pressed the button. The elevator arrived quickly and Song Qingxiao followed her in.

The elevator lights were fluorescent white, and it made the enclosed space appear incomparably gloomy. They did not speak. Song Qingxiao could hear Nurse Zhang's faint and quick breaths. It revealed that she was extremely anxious.

She turned her head to look at Nurse Zhang and show that she had lowered her head. As the light shone down on her, her eyes were cast in a shadow under her pale white forehead. Song Qingxiao could only vaguely see her tightly pursed lips.

The elevator went down one floor and the doors opened with a ring. However, Nurse Zhang did not move until Song Qingxiao spoke up.

"Xiaoyu..."

Only then did Nurse Zhang look as though she had been woken up from her sleep. She ran out of the lift in a hurry. The entire doctor's office area seemed to have been startled by the sound of the gunshot. There were plenty of people gathered outside one of the doctor's offices.

When Nurse Zhang and Song Qingxiao arrived, many noises were coming from inside the office. Song Qingxiao looked at the person sitting on the chair. It was a man whose body was slumped against the chair, and his head was tilted abnormally towards the door. His arms hung limply beside his body. He was dead.

There was an obvious gunshot wound on his forehead. The powerful force of the bullet had caused bruises to appear on the skin around the wound. The bruises looked like earthworms crawling all over his head.

His eyes were wide open. Blood slowly seeped out from the wound on his forehead and trailed down across his brow, nose, and eyes. Finally, it

collected in a pool under his cheek and trickled down to form a blooming red patch on his white doctor's coat.

Perhaps it was because he did not expect to be attacked so suddenly, the doctor's face still maintained his smile. The curve of his lips made the scene look especially sinister. His appearance reminded Song Qingxiao of all the photos of the trial participants who had died in the previous trial when their card had flipped over.

The doctor's coat had a name tag pinned on it which displayed the name 'Zhou Yu'.

The office was filled with a pungent smell of gunpowder mixed with blood. Nurse Zhang was frightened out of her mind when she saw the scene. Song Qingxiao returned her gaze and looked towards the floor of the office. The large chap was pinned down by two nurses and two men that looked like bodyguards. He was completely unable to move. His face was bright red as he struggled with all his might, looking like a pitiful ant.

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Another nurse stood on the side with one hand over her mouth and the other holding a gun. She trembled non-stop. The shrill scream from earlier must have been made by her. Song Qingxiao took a look at her name tag.

'Zhu Xiaoke'.

The large chap was pinned to the ground. Even though he struggled mightily, the two bodyguards and the nurse over him did not let go. His legs kicked wildly in all directions. However, even his face had been held to one side by someone. The veins in his temples bulged, and his face was bright red.

Song Qingxiao looked at the nurse who held the gun and gently gulped down a mouthful of spit.

"Let me go!" The large chap growled as he struggled.

Nurse Zhang stared at the scene, and her body swayed slightly before she asked, "What happened?"

As Nurse Zhang spoke, she rushed towards Doctor Zhou with Song Qingxiao following closely behind her. The nurse holding the gun trembled when she heard Nurse Zhang speak. She looked like she was in shock. She turned to face Nurse Zhang as tears began to stream out of her eyes.

“Sis Xiaoyu.”

She held the gun as she took two steps forwards. She looked down at the gun and acted as though she held a hot potato. Her expression seemed to show that she wanted to toss the gun but was also reluctant to do so. A light flashed across Song Qingxiao’s eyes. She used the excuse of consoling her and attempted to reach out her hand with the plan to reach for the gun.

Nurse Zhang did not notice her actions as she rushed to check on Doctor Zhou. The wall behind Doctor Zhou was covered in blood splatters from when the bullet went through his skull.

From the instructions in her consciousness, Song Qingxiao knew that there was no way to save him. However, she did not speak out to alert Nurse Zhang and allowed her attention to be drawn away from her.

She placed her hand lightly onto the shoulder of Zhu Xiaoke, who cried loudly. As her hand slid down slowly, she felt how tense Zhu Xiaoke’s body was. She had clearly experienced an enormous fright.

Song Qingxiao’s hand came to a halt on the back of Zhu Xiaoke’s palm. Her fingertips touched the edge of the gun. The body of the gun was still warm. It was the burning feeling of having killed someone with a bullet.

At that moment, Nurse Zhang checked on Doctor Zhou’s condition while the frightened nurse trembled. The bodyguards and nurses on the ground were focused on restraining the large chap, so no one noticed the glee that flashed across Song Qingxiao’s eyes.

Her heart started to beat rapidly. It felt like it was about to leap out of her chest and into her throat. It was a rare opportunity. If she managed to obtain the large chap’s gun, she would have an extra layer of protection in the trial.

“What happened?”

She spoke once again with a low, gentle tone. She was worried that she might frighten the nurse who held the gun if her voice wavered. Her blood pumped

rapidly through her entire body because of how nervous she was. If her senses were magnified, the ticking sound in her mind would definitely drown out the sound of her own voice.

In the end, she managed to successfully place her hand on the nurse's hand. The young nurse did not resist. She seemed to welcome that Song Qingxiao had grabbed hold of the gun. Song Qingxiao's breathing seemed to become disordered momentarily, followed quickly by pursing her lips tightly. She gradually applied a small amount of force, and the nurse loosened her grip on the gun.

As that heavy pistol was in her palm, Song Qingxiao could not believe that it had all worked out so smoothly. She could not hide the joy in her eyes. She grabbed the gun tightly and put her finger on the trigger, not daring to make any sudden gestures that may attract the attention of the people in the room and alert them to her actions.

Since Zhu Xiaoke had let go of the gun, she buried her face into her hands and spoke with some difficulty.

"Doctor Li had left recently, so the hospital is preparing to hire a couple of doctors to fill the position. Doctor Zhou was interviewing the new person..."

Song Qingxiao controlled the elation in her heart and focused all her attention on the nurse. She was worried that she might miss a word.

"I don't know why a clash happened. The new person took his gun out, and that's when trouble happened."

"Have you reported this to the police?" Song Qingxiao asked with a straight face as soon as she heard that. She slowly moved the gun into her pocket.

The emotionally shaken nurse shook her head helplessly. The hopeless tone in her voice gave everyone a bad feeling. "I couldn't make the phone call. An hour ago, we got some news that there's been an accident below the mountain where they were servicing the road. The only road leading down the mountain has been cut off. The signal tower has also toppled. It'll take five days before service will resume."

That meant that during the five days, the psychiatric hospital would be a fully-closed trial space. The situation suited Song Qingxiao's original prediction. What the nurse said only served to confirm it.

Even though a death had occurred soon after she entered the scene, she had managed to glean some helpful information from it. Within the trial space of the psychiatric hospital, her task was to protect the people. It referred to the people within the hospital.

From Doctor Zhou's unexpected death resulting in 50 credits being deducted from her total reward, she could tell that the doctors were definitely included among the 'people' that she needed to protect.

She had not managed to stuff the gun into her pocket before the sound of rushing footsteps could be heard from outside. Song Qingxiao's alert senses detected a pair of eyes upon her. She lifted her head instinctively and noticed Liu Yixun and two other people that looked like doctors standing at the door.

The skinny, bespectacled guy was among the three, wearing a white coat. As soon as he noticed Song Qingxiao's gaze, he raised his spectacles, and the light reflecting off his glasses hid the expression in his eyes.

Everyone who entered the office would be first drawn to the sight of Doctor Zhou Yu's dead body. The bespectacled guy was the only one who noticed Song Qingxiao as soon as he entered. Even though his gaze moved away from her quickly to look at what the others stared at, Song Qingxiao could not forget the hair-raising feeling down her back in that instance. There was a sense of evil intention hidden in his gaze.

With the addition of the bespectacled guy in the trial, five of the participants had appeared. The red whip lady was the only one left who had not arrived.

When the bespectacled guy rushed over with Liu Yixun and the other doctor, his lips curved slightly, and a mocking look flashed across his eyes as soon as he saw the large chap pinned to the ground, completely unable to move.

Nurse Zhang quickly moved out of the way, and the two doctors hurried over to check on him. They shook their heads regretfully and announced, "He's lost all his vital signs."

It was not news to Song Qingxiao. However, as soon as Liu Yixun announced Doctor Zhou's death, several nurses still let out pitiful gasps. At that moment, Song Qingxiao noticed the bespectacled guy shook his head along with everyone else.

His face revealed an expression of deep sorrow. Song Qingxiao stood beside him and could tell from his profile that the eyes behind his glasses were narrowed. His eyes were cold and indifferent, looking as though he was not surprised by the news.

Song Qingxiao was willing to bet through her woman's intuition that the bespectacled guy had guessed from the prompt in his consciousness that Doctor Zhou was dead before he entered the room.

"Let go!"

The large chap on the ground was still struggling violently against his captors. Maybe he knew that his life was at stake, which was why his struggling became more agitated. The faces of the two bodyguards and the nurse were all flushed. They did their best, but they could hardly contain him.

"Let go of me!"

The large chap struggled with all his might, and his clothes were all twisted out of shape from his effort. His powerful legs kicked around wildly. If he was anywhere else instead of the psychiatric hospital filled with nurses, bodyguards, and doctors who were used to dealing with patients who experienced violent psychiatric attacks, he would have already escaped.

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The newly arrived doctor frowned and gave his instructions in an orderly manner.

"Bring over some restraints and bind him up. We should get this place settled since the road leading down the mountain has been sealed off, and we can't make phone calls. Let's move Doctor Zhou's body downstairs for the moment and lock up this person before we discuss what to do next."

"Let go of me!"

The vessels in the side of the large chap's neck bulged as he scratched the ground wildly with his hands. As soon as the doctor spoke, the nurses quickly moved into action.

They took out some needles and medication from a small fridge in the corner of Doctor Zhou's office. As soon as the needle went in, the large chap's struggles began to weaken, and the nurses and bodyguards restraining him were finally able to breathe at ease.

When the large chap lost his ability to fight back, the bespectacled guy's eyes narrowed, and he clenched his fists together. He gently pushed up his spectacles and glanced over at Song Qingxiao. When he noticed her looking back at him, the bespectacled guy quickly turned away.

Since an incident like that occurred in the hospital, the atmosphere changed. Doctor Zhou's body was moved from the chair. The large chap was tied up by the bodyguards, and they were going to move him to a level one security unit on the ward. It was clear that the hospital staff would treat him like a critically ill patient for the next few days.

After he was placed in the level one security unit, the large chap would be bound and drugged. He would also be kept under constant surveillance 24 hours a day. He had barely entered the scene, yet he was already completely out of the game.

"What on earth is going on?"

The bespectacled guy who had silently observed everything finally opened his mouth to speak. Song Qingxiao noticed that as he spoke, his gaze stayed on her before moving to the pocket of her nurse's uniform. The same pocket where she kept the large chap's pistol after she took it from Zhu Xiaoke.

Song Qingxiao had slipped it into her pocket when no one watched and had not let go of it since. As the bespectacled man spoke, her hand began to erupt in copious amounts of sweat, nearly causing her to lose hold over the gun.

Song Qingxiao knew for sure that the bespectacled guy's question was clearly directed at her. An instinct to kill developed in her heart, but she lowered her head and did not speak.

Zhu Xiaoke spoke up and explained the story of the large chap with the gun once more.

"The hospital has been short-staffed recently since Doctor Li left and Doctor Guo is on leave. The hospital has recruited a few doctors, and this person was being interviewed in preparation to start the job today."

Zhu Xiaoke seemed to be much calmer than before, possibly because the large chap was under control, and some time had passed since the incident with Doctor Guo.

“I don’t know why but this person was carrying a gun. I was standing outside when I heard him yell, and a gunshot could be heard. When I entered, Doctor Zhou was already...”

Song Qingxiao felt a chill down her back when she heard those words. She remembered what it was like when she entered the scene and turned to look at Liu Yixun. He looked exactly like the person that she killed in the last trial.

If it was not for the fact that Song Qingxiao had mentally prepared herself for the trial as soon as she entered the scene, it was likely that she would have struggled to maintain her composure as soon as she faced him. The psychological trauma of seeing the person who was close to ending her life but whom she killed with her own hands was indescribable.

Since things developed that way, Song Qingxiao could guess what had happened as soon as the large chap with the gun appeared in the trial scene from Zhu Xiaoke’s words.

After they entered the test space, as soon as everyone received the instructions, number four could not stop herself and immediately tried to bully cowardly number five to find out more about the task instructions he received.

No one expected that after number five had been frightened by the red whip lady, he had run off into the midst of the thick fog before she had time to swing her whip. Soon after that, everyone was forced to start the task.

During the task, Song Qingxiao was almost certain that the large chap heard the ticking sound and saw the countdown as soon as the trial officially started, just like she did. Those two changes were enough to make a person uneasy. Soon after that, the choice to enter the task scene appeared, and they had to make a decision in a short time frame.

By then, anyone would be scared witless. However, the people who managed to survive the first trial would be far more vigilant than ordinary people. The large chap must have been clear that he was highly likely to face danger as soon as he entered the task scene. However, he had no other choice. His nerves must have been extremely frayed by that point.

The pressure on him would have increased gradually along with the appearance of the ticking clock sound, the numbers flashing in a countdown, not to mention the looming choices before his eyes. Once the scene changed, his vigilant nature and guard must have gone up to a certain level that even a tiny trigger would have caused him to overreact.

Song Qingxiao could understand the nature of the trigger when she recalled how she felt when she saw Liu Yixun. Even a mentally resilient person would suffer a mental breakdown if they experienced multiple shocks one after another only to be faced with a person they had killed previously.

When Song Qingxiao first entered the task scene and saw the doctor, she could not stop her body from shaking and instinctively reached for the dagger strapped to her arm. The large chap must have reacted similarly to her. The appearance of Zhou Yu must have been the final straw for the last chap, so he responded speedily and killed Doctor Zhou.

As soon as she thought about it, Song Qingxiao could not help but feel fear. She could see the fate of the large chap. His identity had changed from a doctor to a patient in an instance. From being the one in control to the one being controlled. His advantage in this trial had vanished entirely.

It proved that the choice that he made when he entered the scene was not the right one. Everyone would react differently on the spot based on their mental resilience leading to different results.

If Song Qingxiao attacked the doctor as soon as she saw him like the large chap because she was so worked up from all the successive stressors, even if she succeeded in killing the doctor once more, it was likely that she would end up like the large chap. After being restrained, the large chap's identity had swapped from being a medical staff into a patient. He would eventually die in the trial.

Even though the trial had clear instructions and a generous reward, it was far more dangerous than the previous trial!

Song Qingxiao gritted her teeth tightly and struggled as she lifted her head to look at the bespectacled guy in the doctor's uniform. It turned out that he was looking at her too. Their eyes met, and they were each warier of the other.

The large chap was out of the running since he did not pass the psychological test when he entered the task. However, if each participant who picked a

medical staff role had to go through the same test, it meant that the bespectacled guy had managed to remain calm to successfully become a houseman in the hospital. She could imagine that he was full of restraint, scheming, and had strong mental fortitude.

At the same time, Song Qingxiao and the bespectacled guy did not look eye-catching in the space. In the eyes of the bespectacled guy, Song Qingxiao must have looked quite ordinary when she was held at gunpoint compared to the two women, number four and number six, who entered after her. Since she had been successfully inducted into her role, naturally, the bespectacled guy would not underestimate her.

Song Qingxiao sighed silently. Things were going to be problematic

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Zhu Xiaoke stammered the whole way, but she managed to finish telling the entire story. Everyone's attention turned to the weapon as the bespectacled guy had hoped.

"Where's the gun?"

The doctor who came in with Liu Yixun asked that question. The bespectacled man unknowingly hung his head. Song Qingxiao gripped the gun as her heart pounded rapidly. At that moment, having the gun meant that she had an extra layer of protection. It was important beyond words. However, she knew that it would be tough for her to keep it.

"After the bodyguards entered and subdued the newcomer. I... I took the gun..."

Zhu Xiaoke looked a little flustered after she was questioned. She quickly looked around the room in a state of utter panic. She could not remember who the gun ended up with.

None of the people who entered the office had left. The large chap had been subdued, but he had not been moved to the patient area. A look flashed across the bespectacled guy's face, and he was about to speak when Song Qingxiao cut in and rushed to say, "It's with me."

She raised her arm. The gun lay in her palm. As soon as the bespectacled man saw the gun, a hint of glee seemed to flash across his eyes. Once he heard Song Qingxiao's words, a gloomy look appeared on his face.

If he managed to speak first, he would have suggested carrying out a body search, and Song Qingxiao would have been forced into a passive position. She would not be able to hide the gun, and once the others discovered it on her, everyone would immediately be suspicious of her.

However, she had taken the initiative to surrender the gun so naturally, no one would suspect her of anything. The bespectacled guy's plan had fallen through, but he quickly recovered, and his composure returned.

Song Qingxiao continued to say, "Miss Zhu was in such a state of terror before, so she handed the gun over to me temporarily."

Her explanation would give the others no cause to suspect her. Everyone had already expected it from the way Zhu Xiaoke reacted earlier. The two doctors nodded in response.

Since they had 'found' the weapon, a doctor suggested, "Xiaoke, you should lock the gun away. When the road leading down the mountain has been repaired in five days, we can hand it over to the police when we lodge our report."

As soon as the doctor finished speaking, Liu Yixun took out his handphone and looked at it. That action made Song Qingxiao recall his appearance as number four in the first trial as he held his phone and discovered that there was no signal. It made her clench her damp palms tightly.

Since an incident like that had transpired in the hospital, the atmosphere became more gloomy. The large chap was transported by the bodyguards in the direction of the patient area. Doctor Zhou's corpse had been lifted and placed inside a body bag.

The office was still covered in bloodstains. Sunlight streamed through the windows to light up the room. Tiny dust particles floating around could be seen with the naked eye under the sunlight. Everyone seemed to be holding their breath as they worked carefully. It made the atmosphere silent and eerie.

The zipper of the body bag was done up by a nurse in a prolonged manner. The zipper made an unpleasant sound as it was moved. Song Qingxiao was

still upset that the ace up her sleeve had been taken away. On the bright side, she may not have gotten the gun, but similarly, the bespectacled guy did not gain any advantages.

Besides that, she still had plenty of opportunities. As long as she paid attention to who hid the gun after that, she may still be able to come up with another idea to obtain the gun within the time frame of the mission.

The sound of more footsteps could be heard. Before the person had arrived, the voice of a woman rang out.

“Has something happened to Doctor Zhou?”

As the words were uttered, a woman dressed in a doctor’s coat rushed into the office. She had not seen that doctor before, but she was followed closely by the red whip lady who was also dressed up as a doctor. Number four, who had been missing all the while, had finally appeared. As soon as Song Qingxiao saw her, she let out a sigh of relief.

Since all six trial participants were in the hospital, their numbers were complete.

Number four had also discovered that Song Qingxiao and the bespectacled guy dressed up as a doctor were in the office. Their eyes met, but they all quickly turned away in tacit understanding, all pretending to not know each other.

The doctor who had just arrived was in the patient area the whole time. She rushed over when she heard about what had happened. Number four was one of the new doctors, so she was shadowing that doctor on the job.

Once the matters had been settled, the bespectacled guy left with Doctor Hu, who had rushed over in the end. Liu Yixun also left with two nurses to deal with Doctor Zhou’s corpse. Song Qingxiao and Nurse Zhang were responsible for cleaning up the office. It was late by the time they left. The sun hung low in the west sky. It was time for dinner, and loud voices could be heard from the cafeteria.

Since someone had died in the hospital, everyone was in a solemn mood. Nurse Zhang and the others were somber because Doctor Zhou died. Song Qingxiao was silent because time was running out. The numbers in her vision

had become 114: 53: 21. The time left in the mission was four days and nineteen hours.

Since she was new, she did not need to work the night shift that night. Once she had finished her dinner, she went with Nurse Zhang to patrol the patient area before returning to the dormitory.

Song Qingxiao lay on her bed after she was done washing up. Her tense emotions had not relaxed one bit. Nurse Zhang had turned off the lights. The hospital in the night time gave off an indescribable ghastly feeling. She constantly felt as though there was danger lurking in every corner, but perhaps that was because she was within the trial space.

During the day, she could not hear any sounds coming from the patient area. However, the silence in the night time seemed to amplify those sounds. She could hear someone singing at the top of their lungs. She shut her eyes. The ticking sound in her mind continued like a shadow that was always by her side.

When she opened her eyes, she could still clearly see the numbers flashing despite the darkness.

109: 47: 35.

“Qingxiao, are you asleep?”

Nurse Zhang moved to look down from the top bunk. In the darkness, her face looked ghastly pale. Her long hair that was usually kept under her nurse’s cap during the day hung down on both sides of her face, swaying with her movements.

The moonlight that streamed in through the windows seemed to elongate the shadow of her hair. The shadow of her hair reflected on the walls looked like a cluster of tentacles about to capture Song Qingxiao.

“No, I’m not.”

Song Qingxiao realized how dry her throat was after she opened her mouth to speak. Nurse Zhang assumed that the oddness of her voice was due to the injury she sustained earlier in the day. Hence, she did not take it to heart and even reassured her.

“Are you still thinking about the incident that happened this morning?” She paused momentarily, “Don’t worry too much about it. Get some sleep. After five days, everything will be settled.”

“Okay.”

The passing of five days would not be able to solve Song Qingxiao’s problems. The instructions in her mind stayed the same as it was in the afternoon.

‘Protect the people. Obliterate failure. Upon completion of task: 950 credits.’

The time displayed on the countdown was 109: 45: 55.

Nurse Zhang lay down and fell into a deep sleep after she consoled Song Qingxiao. As she slept, she did not make a sound. The silence of the room and the sound of singing outside made for an interesting contrast. The ticking sound of the grandfather clock in her mind seemed to become more sonorous, making it harder for her to ignore it.

The mission of the trial was set in a psychiatric hospital. There were a total of six participants, and they could pick between being a medical staff or a patient. She remembered that Nurse Zhang described the hospital to her during her introduction yesterday.

There were 27 patients at the hospital, six doctors, and twelve nurses, including Song Qingxiao. Number five and number six were included among the 27 patients. At the moment, she was the only participant who was a nurse.

According to Zhu Xiaoke in the office of the dead Doctor Zhou, Doctor Lee had left the hospital, and Doctor Guo was on leave. That meant that there were two vacancies among the six doctor positions. However, the arrival of the bespectacled guy and the red whip lady had filled these two vacancies. The large chap with the gun killed Doctor Zhou, so he lost his right to choose and automatically became a patient.

In other words, there was another vacancy among the doctors because of Doctor Zhou’s death. Song Qingxiao had also lost 50 credits because of it. In comparison, the patient numbers had increased by one compared to the number that Nurse Zhang had mentioned previously, which was 27 in total.

She vaguely felt as though she had grasped a vital clue but still lacked a crucial point to link everything together. The instructions in her consciousness did not change. She once again paid attention to the instruction 'Upon completion of task: 950 credits' and felt as though something did not quite add up.

What was strange about it?

In the darkness of the night, she shut her eyes and went deep into thought. The faint singing seemed to drift over leisurely from afar. The numbers in her vision continued to drop.

109: 41: 27...

109: 41: 26...

109: 41: 25...

109: 37: 31...

Song Qingxiao sat up with a jolt! Her movements were so exaggerated that the bed let out an ear-piercing screech. She was completely drenched in cold sweat. She had suddenly thought about a serious problem that she had completely missed the whole time.

After Doctor Zhou died, the reward had decreased by 50 credits. She thought that the death triggered the change in the task instructions. The time in her vision continued to go down. The period of five days seemed to be a rope that was strangling her mind, constantly reminding her about the importance of the time period.

However, it nearly caused her to forget that even though she would get 1000 credits if she completed the task, 50 credits would be deducted from the total each time a person died. In that case, what would happen if all the credits were deducted?

If the people she had to protect were the medical staff, and if each of the 18 medical staff, including the doctors and nurses, contributed 50 credits, 1000 credits would be sufficient. However, if things followed the pattern of the previous trial where the participants were required to kill one another, Song Qingxiao had the faint feeling that things would not be that simple.

If the people referred to in the task included all the doctors, nurses, and patients, that would mean that the total number of people was extremely large. The total number of all these people was as many as 45 people. If more than half the people died, her credits would be completely wiped out from all the deductions. It would not take the entire five-day period of the task before she died!

In that type of situation, what could cause so many people to die within five days?

She thought about that important question that she had earlier today when she was in the patient area. She forgot all about it because she was so startled after being tapped on the shoulder by Tu Xiaoyun.

When she entered the trial scene, she was given two choices, either to become a medical staff or a patient. Hence, was it possible that there were two options regarding the task in the trial?

Since there were participants tasked with protecting the people, surely there were participants tasked to kill the people?

Chapter 30

The singing was so noisy that it was enough to drive one crazy. Song Qingxiao shut her eyes. She knew from the start that the task would be extremely complicated because the instructions were so clear, and the reward offered was generous.

If her guess was not a mistake, all the participants had to choose between becoming a medical staff or a patient when they first entered the scene. Hence, it was highly likely that there would be two opposing teams for the task.

The first team was tasked with killing, and the second team had to protect. The loser would face death. That scenario was exactly the same as the previous trial. The trial had split them into two camps, and they were allowed to kill each other.

Doctor Zhou's death had caused her to lose 50 credits. Song Qingxiao reached out to catch a lock of her hair. Her eyes looked a little glum. If her

prediction was correct, it meant that there was a team of participants whose task was to kill the people. However, if she managed to uncover one of them and kill them, would her reward increase by 50 credits as well?

As soon as the idea popped into her head, her heart felt like it had been shocked. It began to beat rapidly. She bit the corner of her lip and felt like she had figured out a huge portion of the task.

If she could uncover the participants who were tasked with 'killing' and completely eliminate the threat, she might not need the full five days to finish the task and leave the scene of the test space.

The task to 'protect the people' did not mean that she had to sit and await death. On the other hand, it might be a covert way of telling her to take the initiative. The trial rules allowed them to hunt and kill one another.

In the beginning, she had deeply misunderstood the instructions. After all, the mission to 'protect the people' seemed too vague. As soon as she saw the word 'protect', she immediately thought that the task would not require the straightforward and brutal killing of the other participants in like the previous trial. However, the trial was still a game of elimination. It was more vicious and more intense compared to the first trial.

Among the six trial participants apart from herself, the large chap with the gun was already out of the running. Out of the four that were left, number five and number six had chosen to be patients. Number four and the bespectacled guy chose to be doctors.

She had no idea who was tasked as protectors or who had received the instructions to be killers. If she could not figure it out, the only other option was to eliminate each of them in turn.

In the darkness of the night, the numbers in her vision continued counting down along with the ticking sound.

109: 17: 26.

Nurse Zhang was fast asleep in the top bunk. She did not rouse from her sleep despite the loud noise that Song Qingxiao made earlier when she got up from bed.

Her entire body felt cold. Song Qingxiao touched the dagger before she slowly regained her composure. She laid back in bed gradually, but her emotions were still highly strung. She was worried that something terrible would happen that night, and she had no desire to sleep. Hence, she kept her eyes open until she could see the sky outside begin to brighten through the thin curtains.

Nothing scary had happened the entire night. Song Qingxiao had just drifted off into sleep when she was awoken by Nurse Zhang.

“Qingxiao.”

Nurse Zhang had not reached out to push her when Song Qingxiao had already opened her eyes. She sat up in bed.

Nurse Zhang had already washed up and gotten dressed smartly. “It looked like you were sleeping soundly. Today, you’ll head to work with me. Our work shift starts from 8am to 3pm. After that, it’ll start again from 8pm tonight until 8am tomorrow morning.”

As soon as Song Qingxiao heard her words, she immediately became alert. She bent down to put on her shoes, and it was already 7am by the time she finished washing up. Nurse Zhang looked a little worriedly at her bloodshot eyes as they ate breakfast.

“Did you not sleep well because of what happened with Doctor Zhou yesterday? You look really tired.”

Song Qingxiao shook her head then looked around to assess the cafeteria. Since it was a space prepared for the medical staff to have their meals, it was separated from the patient area with transparent glass. She could see nurses outside organizing the meals for the patients in their hospital gowns in an orderly manner.

The inner cafeteria had two long tables and two windows where food was collected. Nurse Zhang and Song Qingxiao were quite early, so there was no one there when they arrived. They both grabbed their food then sat down at the table. Other people soon arrived after them.

It looked like Nurse Zhang was pretty popular. All the other nurses came to join them. Song Qingxiao divided her attention between chatting to Nurse Zhang and observing the people who came in.

At the door, a man and a woman dressed up like doctors walked in. It was the doctor who the red whip lady had shadowed yesterday along with Doctor Hu. The red whip lady and the bespectacled guy were nowhere to be found.

When Nurse Zhang spoke, Song Qingxiao had her head turned to glance at those two people. She came back to her senses and responded, "I'm alright."

Nurse Zhang reassured Song Qingxiao after she heard her response. "It's okay. After we finish our shift in the afternoon, we can head back to the dorms for a short nap. That might help you feel a little better."

Song Qingxiao nodded her head and noticed Zhu Xiaoke looked devoid of energy beside her. "Xiaoke, did you have a bad night's sleep as well?"

Zhu Xiaoke poked at the food on her plate with a fork. Her complexion was deathly pale, and she looked more exhausted than Song Qingxiao. It was clear that seeing Doctor Zhou die before her eyes had a huge impact on her, causing her to not sleep well last night.

When Song Qingxiao called her name, Zhu Xiaoke raised her head absentmindedly and responded after a long pause.

"Yes."

She seemed to recall yesterday's incident and her complexion paled even more. "I've worked with Doctor Zhou for a long time. It's such a pity."

As soon as she said that, she hung her head once more. She looked like she was about to burst into tears. Song Qingxiao was stunned. She put down the fork in her hand and reached out to pat her shoulder comfortingly. She spoke up, "To be honest, that's really odd. Why would the newcomer yesterday have a gun? Where did he get that gun from?"

As that question was posed, several of the nurses began to engage in the discussion.

"That's true. Why would he open fire out of the blue?"

"Where did that gun come from?"

The topic of conversation had moved to focus on the gun just as Song Qingxiao had hoped. She stopped for a moment and allowed the others to

discuss in low voices for a while before asking another question in a hushed tone.

“What happened to the gun in the end? Is it kept in a safe place?”

She still had the intention of taking possession of that gun. After the incident yesterday, the gun was passed to Zhu Xiaoke for safekeeping and locked up. The hospital was such a large place that to know the gun’s whereabouts, she needed to get the information from Zhu Xiaoke herself.

However, since she was new, Song Qingxiao was not on familiar terms with Zhu Xiaoke. She could only take the opportunity to chat with her and sneak the question into the flow of the conversation.

It turned out that Zhu Xiaoke did not suspect Song Qingxiao at all and answered as soon as she asked.

“Yes, the gun is kept in a safe place. Doctor Liu said that the gun had to be locked up because it was considered evidence. Old Huang is watching over it, and he has the keys as well. Once the mobile signal and roads have been fixed, we can lodge a police report and deliver the gun to them.”

Once Song Qingxiao heard that, she felt mixed emotions of both joy and worry. She was glad because she knew where the gun was. However, she was worried because she did not know how to get the keys from Liu Yixun and obtain the gun without being noticed.

Someone noticed the time and saw that it was pretty late. The nurses rushed to finish their meal. Song Qingxiao followed Nurse Zhang into the patient area and officially started her job.

It was her first day on the job, so she had taken the time to look at the day’s schedule before work started. The doctor on-call for the night shift yesterday was Liu Yixun. The doctor working during the day was Doctor Hu, the man that Song Qingxiao saw earlier in the cafeteria. In the column behind his name, the name of the doctor shadowing him was displayed.

‘Gu Yue’.

Song Qingxiao guessed that based on how the bespectacled guy followed Doctor Hu, he was likely the person who was interning under Doctor Hu.

Hence, it was also highly likely that he was interviewed by Doctor Hu when he entered the hospital.

In other words, if things were according to Song Qingxiao's calculations, Doctor Hu was very likely a participant of the previous trial who was killed by the bespectacled guy.

The doctor working on the night shift was the female doctor, Doctor Ou. It was a lovely coincidence since the red whip lady was interning with her. It meant that they would meet at night.

A full day had passed since the mission started. The number on the timer was 99: 56: 31. There were four days left to complete the trial. The following days would likely be filled with enormous dangers and threats!