THRILLER PARADISE

BOOK 01

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Thriller Paradise

(惊悚乐园)

by

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Synopsis

This is a game that surpasses dimensions.

It is also a competition for the search of truth.

Unknown seals, a game of chance with ghosts and gods...

The digital struggle, the redemption of humans...

In the virtual world that links with reality——It consciously decided us. It consciously chose us. It consciously decided our consciousness.

And now, throw away your fear.

Throw away your selfish thoughts, questions, and resistance... Free your mind.

Welcome to: Thriller Paradise.

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Chapter 1: Don't Pretend to Be Friends

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[Thank you for using our product. Scanning... please wait.]

[Scanning completed. ID SH13***313, certified.]

[Name: Feng Bujue.]

[Device: Standard single-player cabin, Model NL2055. No abnormal external hardware detected. Heart and lungs function normally. Nerves connection is ready. Please select connection mode.]

[Non-sleep mode selected.]

[Adjusting...]

[Adjusted. Please confirm to start the game right away or return to the previous menu.]

[Program started. Your game will start in ten seconds.]

After the countdown, Feng Bujue immediately entered the game. He stood at a place that seemed like an elevator booth, but no buttons were to be seen. There was a thirty-two inch touchscreen on the right wall, and opposite to the doors was a full-length wall

mirror attached on the wall, where players could see their entire bodies.

Feng Bujue eyed his image in the mirror. He was a high-pixel 3D computer graphics character now, wearing a black long-sleeve T-shirt and trousers, nothing fancy. The face of this character was almost identical to his real appearance. The height was less than 6 feet; bird-nest messy hair covered the soft, feminine contours of his face.

With the aid of the Fourth Generation Optical Computing Technique, the players' nervous system would be connected to the game directly, which allowed them to realistically experience everything with their five senses. However, the graphics of the game were still in 3D. It still didn't have a feel of reality.

"Welcome to the login space. The following games are all Dream Inc.'s products. Please select."

When the voice of the system echoed in his ears, icons appeared on the touchscreen next to him. Players could then choose the games that they wanted from there.

"Geez, they've created the whole login thing for just one game. Did they imply that there will be more to expect?" Feng Bujue thought as he pressed the icon of the only game there: Thriller Paradise.

"Players have to be over sixteen years old to register. Players with heart diseases, mental disorders or related diseases are not

recommended to play this game."

The system did not only display this paragraph on the screen, but instead said it out loud. Afterwards, three different buttons appeared on the screen, including ‘Confirm Registration’, ‘Cancel’ and the last one, with an eye-catching link, was ‘General Disclaimer’.

"Mental disorders?" Feng Bujue thought, " I’d better take a look then."

He then selected the third icon, causing a maze of words to be displayed on the screen. From the tiny size of the scroll bar on the right, this General Disclaimer was really lengthy.

When normal people play games and they see something like terms and conditions or explanations, eighty percent of them would close the menu or skim over it, scrolling to the end and selecting the ‘Agree’ button.

But Feng Bujue wasn’t a ‘normal’ person.

He was twenty-four years old this year. Writing was his profession, which was all about detective novels. He often told people that he was addressed as the ‘Artist’ or the ‘Great Author’ whenever asked what he did for a living, but this wasn’t his most important feature. And now, it’s time to talk about his abnormalities.

First, the reason why he played this game was to ‘treat his illness’. Of course, this wasn’t internet-addiction, but a real disorder.

Feng Bujue had found something was wrong with his body around two months ago, and three days after, he confirmed that he had lost his ‘fear’.

No matter how scary the footage or the sound was, it couldn’t stimulate him.

He had begun to watch horror/thriller movies and read novels non-stop in an attempt to use his own imagination to scare himself, yet it all turned out to be useless. It seemed like a gate in his brain was sealed. He understood the jump-scare or the thrilling details of the movies, but he didn’t feel any fear.

For such reason, he decided to pay a visit to a hospital nearby. Well, it would have been alright if he hadn’t gone there, but he had, and they eventually found big trouble. MRI scanning showed a blurred shadow in his brain, near the amygdala—it could possibly be a tumor.

Later on, Feng Bujue had visited many famous hospitals in the country, but still, they couldn’t give him an exact diagnosis. However, there were various treatments.

After having undergone numerous tests and through an innumerable amount of excellent doctors, Feng Bujue understood one thing: his disorder would definitely be recorded in history.

Being the first patient, he had two things to consider. The first one, whose name his disorder would be named after, and the second one, after he died, whether he should donate his brain for medical studies or not—it would be his contribution to science.

Two months had gone by and the blurred spot in his brain hadn't changed a bit. No anomalies, no reduction or disappearance for his sake. The other parts of his body were normal, which even seemed to be much healthier. He had then weighed the pros and cons. After that, he decided to give up on the treatment and discharge himself from the hospital.

The loss of fear was the only symptom of this disease. Moreover, no one could be sure that he would die because of it or when would he die. Geez, just let the fate do its best.

One day, Feng Bujue randomly saw the advertisement of the Thriller Paradise-Closed Beta version. The advertisement read, "Break the traditional tactics. Bring up the feeling of fear and hopelessness. Fear is like your shadow, chasing after you. We promise to bring an extreme experience you have never had before."

He then studied the rules of the game and watched a detailed advertising video, which was labeled to scare the sh!t out of the kids. And, he found a link which said, "Selling game cabin, giving away Closed Beta's account."

There was something weird there, but Feng Bujue just wanted to play "to take a look", mostly to try to get "scared". He just hoped that fortune would shine on him. By putting himself in a horror

environment, perhaps it could stir him up to find his ‘fear’ again.

Of course, this rare symptom of mental disorder had proven that Feng Bujue was a patient, but it wasn’t only the tumor that made him not a ‘normal person’. In fact, before he even got sick, he wasn’t an ordinary person either.

He could even be described as a ‘freak’.

Feng Bujue had many strange features. They were not sort of OCDs, but they were weird and unfathomable. First, it was his reading addiction.

Other people would find it weird to explain his thirst of reading. For example, he could read all words that was written on a shampoo bottle, or the manuals of the household electrical devices. In fact, he didn’t even spare the labels of his clothes.

If there were anybody or anything that had formed a relationship of pros and cons with Feng Bujue, they would automatically collect all information related to that person or that object instinctively. Furthermore, besides his reading skill, he had a brilliant memory. It wasn’t as extreme as Zhang Song, but what he had seen, no matter how long after that, he could remember at least sixty percent.

"Oh… this clause isn’t much different to that of the other games." Feng Bujue had just spent two minutes to finish the clause of hundreds of thousands of words. "Those lines of the sixth paragraph are somehow special…"

He cocked his head as his left palm held his right elbow. The index and middle fingers of his right hand which were placed on his forehead slightly slid along his nose bridge—his familiar gesture when he was thinking. "It means, if the players die because of a heart attack or mental disorder, the company will not take any responsibilities."

He mumbled to himself, as if he had jumped to a conclusion.

Feng Bujue didn’t spare the case that this was a trick of the Dream Inc. He had read about the design of this game on the home page, and the most attractive feature of the game was the "Fear Value".

The Optical Computing program and the game cabin would depend on the stats of heartbeats, pulses and neurons reactions of the player to calculate the degrees of fear. During the game, if the player’s Fear Value had exceeded the limit, the nervous connection would be forced to quit, immediately ending the game. In case that player had a serious health problem such as breathing problem, or the heart stops beating, the cabin would instantly notify the emergency unit.

Anyway, all the connections with the players’ nervous systems were designed to be linked with the police and emergency units. The chances that some players would be scared to death wasn’t big.

After he had selected to continue, Feng Bujue heard another

notification from the system. "You have logged in for the first time. Please enter the name of your character."

A blank space appeared on the screen, where he was supposed to enter his name. Also, there were some restriction terms. For example, the name should have more than four characters, and no vulgar words were allowed.

In the age of the Optical Computing Generation, this restriction had become more accurate. The system intelligence and calculations had reached the peak that gave people goosebumps. ‘It’ just needed a glossary, even with a common term to allow for its calculation and prevent any violations. Such names like Bo Da Jing Shen, or FUC followed by some symbols and then the letter K, etc., those tricks were useless to the Fourth Generation Optical Computer.

Dozens of years ago, people had been worrying that Artificial Intelligence would strike back and enslave human beings, however, up to now, there were no trustworthy information supporting this theory.

In conclusion, Optical Computer was pretty smart. How smart it was, the later parts of this novel would mention.

"Verified. ‘Feng Bujue’ is available. Please confirm."

Feng Bujue’s given name was rare. Of course, it would be available to use. However, he had replaced ‘Feng’ (封) by ‘Feng’ (瘋). On one hand, he didn’t want to use his real name. On the

other hand, it was sarcasm that he gave himself.

After he had confirmed, the system notified, "Tutorial for new players will start soon. Players can only play the tutorial once. Scenario will be randomly chosen. When you finish the tutorial, you will receive corresponding rewards. Please be guided that the results of the new player tutorial will not affect the original attributes of your character, only the rewards will differ . If you skip the tutorial because of the high Fear Value, actively disconnect or leave the cabin. The next time you login, you cannot continue the previous scenario. The system will provide you with a new one."

After having listened to the reminder, Feng Bujue touched the confirm button. Unexpectedly, when his finger just touched the screen, the entire elevator suddenly became pitch black.

In the next second, a voice arose, but it wasn’t the robotic one as that of the system. At this moment, the voice sounded more like an old witch. "Welcome to Thriller Paradise."

As the sound reverberated, the elevator suddenly shook without any prior signs or indications. The interior of the box was so dark that one couldn’t even see their own fingers. It started to move, then it gradually descended.

Amygdala: Part of Limbic System responsible for the response and memory of emotions, especially fear

Obsessive Compulsive Disorders

Zhang Song: Zhang Song (died 213) was an advisor to the warlord Liu Zhang during the late Han Dynasty period of Chinese history.

He was famous for his excellent memory as he could remember everything he had placed his eyes on.

Bo Da Jing Shen: (lit.) big phallus, deep cave. It is a way of puns using similar sounds. The original phrase is actually a locution, which means wide-ranging and profound knowledge.

Feng (封), the MC's name, means seal or close off; while the other Feng (瘋) means crazy. Feng Bujue, his nickname in the game means 'unidentified mental disorder'.

Closed beta is a test version with a limited number of gamers. When the game producer completes this stage, they will release the Open Beta version, which is also the official release.

Chapter 2: The Bloody Corpse

The few seconds of sudden change could be considered a hello before the new player tutorial.

If he were a normal person, when darkness fell without a sign followed by the terrifying voice, he should be startled and scared. The feeling of free falling only existed for a short while, but it was enough to scare the players, making their hearts beat at a frantic pace.

However, Feng Bujue was calm; in fact, he didn't even flinch.

After the short trembling, the elevator started to descend at a regular speed. Then, a window popped up in front of Feng Bujue's eyes.

The game's menu only appeared in the player's vision, as such, it couldn't light up the surroundings. Reading the menu was individually private. When a player is reading their menu, even if there are other players standing next to him, they wouldn't know whether he was considering the options or just mooning over there.

The system didn't use voice notifications, but instead Feng Bujue saw a reminder in his menu.

[You can open this menu any time. You can find your attributes, status, equipment and items from here.]

At this moment, Feng Bujue saw that his entire menu was almost covered with a gray shadow indicating that they were locked. When the notification disappeared, the top-right corner glowed, and there appeared three same-sized bars, similar to the energy bar.

After which, an arrow appeared, pointing to the first bar, which was a green energy full-bar. Another description appeared.

[This is your Survival Value displayed in percentage. Specific value is not visible. When the Survival Value becomes 0%, your character is considered dead.

Current Survival Value: 100%.

Abnormal status: None.]

The arrow moved to the second bar. This one was also green, but the indicator there was in digits.

[This is your Stamina Value. The specific value could be seen here. Actions like running, hiking, carrying heavy objects, fighting and using skills will consume this value. You can take rest or use other items to recover it.

Current Stamina Value: 100/100].

The third bar, the one which caught Feng Bujue's attention the most, was empty. [This is your Fear Value, displayed in percentage. When your Fear Value gets over 100% for more than three seconds, you will be forced to quit the game as your character dies.

Current Fear Value: 0%]

Since he had read the basic information on the website before, Feng Bujue just took a glance to finish the description. He then waited for the other sections of the menu to open, but the menu automatically closed after ten seconds, so he had to open it again. Unfortunately, those gray sections didn't change.

Obviously, the tutorial for new players wasn't just reading the description and getting used to the user interface in this dark elevator. If not, the system wouldn't say that 'the tutorial will be interrupted when the Fear Value is high'.

The elevator soon stopped, but the darkness still remained. Feng Bujue could suddenly hear himself breathing.

The light inside the elevator flickered on for a second then off again.

However, within just one second, the footage that could make people jump and cry in fear appeared on Feng Bujue's retinae.

'I bet you still remember that one of the elevator's walls is a full-length mirror.' At the moment the light flashed, Feng Bujue saw

two people in the mirror.

One was him, definitely. The other was... with a glance, Feng Bujue could confirm that this was a creature standing upright with blood all over its body.

‘Geez, just let it be dark, why show people slyly like that. Just pretend I didn’t see it then.’

If it were someone else, they would scream, collapse on the ground, crouch to the corner, or they would go crazy and start to attack that bloody figure.

However, Feng Bujue still stood there with his unchanged complexion. He mumbled, "Oh... if it is the tutorial, it will not put the player in a deadly situation right at the beginning. At most, players have to spend some health or get scared. Then, something would happen to let the game continue."

After he had come up with this thought, there was a light that beamed into the elevator booth, which rapidly expanded. When the doors slid open, the smell of something rotten and moldy stormed his nostrils.

Outside of the elevator was a straight corridor decorated with a wooden ceiling and a wallpaper. The patterns on the wallpaper were really bizarre as they looked like realistic human eyes. The floor was covered with green mats, and there were no doors or windows on both sides of the wall. There were some dim wall lamps at a distance from one another.

The corridor seemed to be way long ahead, so those wall lamps far away looked as small as grains of rice. Nevertheless, his vision couldn’t reach over twenty meters; the further places were still hidden in the dark. He needed to get there to have a better view.

A normal player would worm his way out of the elevator even before the doors opened completely. Feng Bujue, however, didn’t hurry. To him, that dreary corridor wasn’t a better choice for a safer place than this elevator. If the surrounding weren’t that dark, he would turn around to see what was standing next to him.

When Feng Bujue just turned his head to watch, he immediately saw ten bloody fingers clawing at his face. He then retracted his neck to duck, squatted before rolling out of the elevator. When he turned around again, he finally saw the shape of that figure.

That was a corpse without skin. The muscles on its body looked like the human anatomy model in a health clinic, however, it was still alive and bleeding.

The elevator’s doors slowly slid shut. The bloody corpse cocked its head and beamed something that looked like a smile while its eyes were staring at Feng Bujue. When the doors were about to close, it stretched one arm out then swayed out of the elevator.

"Logically, I should run now..." Feng Bujue mused, "But this dude doesn’t seem to be strong. Perhaps I should try to hit it?"

The moment the bloody corpse stepped out of the elevator,

however, it roared with an immense vigor as it hit the wall of the corridor. The thick wooden wall under the wallpaper was broken, and an intrusion of cockroaches then flooded out from the break.

"Maybe not!" When Feng Bujue caught a glimpse of this, he turned around and immediately ran away.

It was the tutorial, so of course, the main idea was to lead the players to continue the game, not to kill them instantly! In fact, the bloody corpse did that to give the player a short period of time to run away.

The system also predicted some possibilities such as the player would stand transfixed in fear, or he would try to kill that bloody corpse when he saw it under the light. In those cases, the corpse's move could push the player who was standing still to crawl away from the scene; also, it could eliminate the intention to fight against the bloody corpse from some pugnacious badass.

Of course, if he got scared the sh!t out of himself that he couldn't get up or just wanted to risk his life, the game would be over. Then, the system would generate a new tutorial.

"First, there's an eighty percent chance that I couldn't break that wall. Second, even if I could break that wall, there would be no way out. Third, if I fight this monster, I would die young. Good." Feng Bujue calculated his chances to get the situation clearer.

It seemed in this new player tutorial, he didn't have many options.

After he had run for a long distance, Feng Bujue saw the other end of the corridor. A wooden-thick door stood there.

He tried to turn the knob, and it did open. There was no time for him to weigh the dangers behind that door, so he just entered and then thought about it later. The corpse was right behind him; he couldn't waste time.

At this moment, Feng Bujue abruptly understood that the exact thing to do was to run away right when the elevator's doors slid open. Staying there for a while just shortened his time, causing him to rush his next move.

He slithered in and closed the door. Inside, he found a steel latch; he immediately grabbed it and locked the door. Almost at the same time, that thing outside started banging the door.

Feng Bujue didn't bother about it anymore as he turned around to observe the new place.

This was a square room, around sixteen square meters. The interior didn't have any furniture, and the only notable things in this room were a lamp hanging on the wall and two doors—the bloody corpse was banging on one, and the other door was on the opposite wall.

Feng Bujue came to the only escape door in the room. He pulled the knob and found it was locked. He tried to kick the lock open, but it seemed to be useless. Obviously, he didn't use enough force.

He then guessed that he had to try several times more.

In the next second, the menu suddenly popped up in his vision, and a gray section was unlocked. It displayed a digit, which was, at the moment, zero.

[This is your Skill Value displayed in number. Skill Value can be used as currency and accumulated along with the player's actions. If your deeds can enhance the process of the game, you will be awarded with Skill Value.

Current Skill Value: 0]

"Giving the reminder on the Skill Value now could be an implication for a shortcut somewhere..." Now, Feng Bujue was looking at his Fear Value on the menu.

0%, nothing had been changed.

Feng Bujue sighed then turned around to look at the door which the bloody corpse was banging. The latch had started to deform, and it seemed like it couldn't hold any longer. Such pressure from a monster, which could storm in any minute and kill you, could make someone who was watching this game become anxious. However, our man was still calm as an ice cube.

Feng Bujue scrutinized the room one more time.

This almost-empty room indeed had some hints. There was a

spot up there in the corner, where the wallpaper was rubbed off. It wasn't easy to see with a glance, but looking closely, this detail was obvious.

Feng Bujue tip-toed to reaching that spot then ripped off the wallpaper there. He then saw a symbol drawn with blood. That symbol included a loop connected to a branch of a tree, which had the shape of a key.

At this time, a roar came along with the sound of wooden material breaking from behind him. Feng Bue Jue turned around to see one claw of the bloody corpse waving at him after it had broken a bowl-sized hole on the door.

He didn't know whether it could remove the latch with its intelligence.

This meant that the corpse was about to get into the room. No matter whether he wanted to kick the door or to solve the puzzle, time was running out!

Feng Bujue hurried to nudge the wooden sheet that had the blood symbol, and a real pain suddenly came to him. However, that wooden sheet was brittle; it was broken in just one hit. He had expected to see a flow of insects streaming out from there, but he got nothing except a mist of dust. A small space hid behind that wooden sheet, with a key laid inside.

When Feng Bujue picked up the key, the menu popped up again, and another section was unlocked.

[You’ve found an item. Because your bag and the items bar hasn’t been unlocked, you can only choose between holding it in your hand or throwing it away.]

Then he saw the item’s properties on the section that was just unlocked.

[Name: Rusted Key]

[Type: Consumable item]

[Quality: Normal]

[Function: to open the door]

[Being able to bring out of the scenario: No]

[Remark: I think you know how to use it.]

Feng Bujue thought that the remark was malicious, but he didn’t have time to think more. After he had skimmed over the item’s properties, he closed the menu then ran to the door. When he unlocked the door, the key disappeared.

At the same time, the voice of the system that long hadn’t echoed suddenly arose. "You received 30 points of Skill Value. Notification will only appear one time. Later, you can check your Skill Value on

the main menu."

Feng Bue Jue had no time to check things that he couldn’t use for now. He continued moving forward. Behind the door were some stone steps leading upstairs. The walls were made of stone, and there was no ceiling. He could see the sky at night now. The moonlight was shining on these steps, making them as luminous as snow.

Too bad he couldn’t escape using the walls. The walls were high with a glossy surface, and a distance of over two meters separated the two walls. Apparently, those were to prevent him from climbing up there.

While stepping on the stair, Feng Bujue spent some time to check his Stamina Value. It was reduced to 24/100 now.

He started to calculate in his mind. "After leaving the elevator, I’ve run hundreds of meters, then I kicked the door, broke the wall, and I’m climbing stairs now. Those actions must have consumed three-fourths of my Physical Value." This consumption speed was much faster than what he had calculated. Also, his Survival Value had been reduced to 98%. It seemed that the system had considered the fact that he was injured from his nudging action.

Just five seconds after Feng BuJue had opened the door, the bloody corpse had broken the door and chased after him, and now, it was laughing sinisterly. The laughter that echoed in his ears was so thrilling, however, Feng Bujue was totally emotionless even with a derangement of this degree.

What stood at the end of the stairs was a cliff, where a giant sword was pierced into the wall. Under the moonlight, the blade was reflecting a gloomy, cold light. When Feng Bujue gazed at the sword, the bloody corpse somehow figured out something as it wildly sped up to him. The distance of dozens of meters was shortened in an instant.

Feng Bujue was running like a hare because he didn’t want to be screwed when he was just about to finish the round.

When he stumbled to the sword, he immediately used both of his hands to grab it before pulling it out. Unexpectedly, the weapon was pretty light, not as heavy as it looked.

He turned around and saw the bloody corpse was approaching. The mournful wail pierced directly into his eardrums as a pair of bloody claws snatched towards him.

Chapter 3: Intermission (1)

Actions somehow happen faster than words. Feng Bujue immediately slashed his sword. Since he had no fear at all, he could strangely maintain his calmness, and his reflexes wasn't affected at all. As he slightly swayed aside to dodge the sharp claws of the bloody corpse, his sword horizontally severed the corpse.

Feng Bujue surprisingly saw the sword cut through the corpse just like it was cutting tofu. The corpse's torso was cut open, and the blood that gushed out spurted all over his face. Feng Bue Jue could taste a light, salty and viscous fluid in his mouth. It was even warm. Although this was fabricated, the disgusting feeling was real.

The bloody corpse was cut and it howled in pain. Its body, from the cut, started to melt into a pulp of flesh and pus onto the ground.

At this time, Feng Bujue finally had a chance to look at the sword's properties.

[Name: Bloody Corpse Must Die]

[Type: Weapon]

[Quality: Good]

[Attack power: Fair]

[Attributes: None]

[Effect: Could dissolve bloody corpses when striking them]

[Being able to be brought out of the scenario: No]

[Remark: This sword is an early work of the legendary dwarf blacksmith Aure in his collections, the ‘All Must Die’. One day, a cunning Goblin businessman had used some bottles of ‘Erguotou’ to exchange for this sword. Half a month later, Aure cast the ‘Goblin Must Die’.]

After Feng Bujue had spent several seconds to read the item’s properties, the system reminder arose. [You have completed the New Player Tutorial. Automatic teleportation will begin in sixty seconds.]

While the system was counting down sixty seconds, another section was unlocked in his menu. The new option was ‘Immediately Teleport’. Feng Bujue touched that option, and his body instantly turned into a white light and teleported out of the scenario.

A white light flashed and he was suddenly in that elevator again. The giant sword, bloodstains, and dust had all disappeared. Everything stayed the same inside the elevator as when he had logged in the game. The light was on, and there was only him in the booth. That period of roughly ten minutes had passed quickly, just like a nightmare.

[Scenario completed. Calculating for rewards...]

[EXP: 70]

[Game Coins: 700].

[Item/Equipment: None]

[Complete/Quest: 0/0]

[Special Quest, ‘Hidden Quest’ Completed: 0]

[Worldview Unlocked: None]

[Fear Value surged: 0 time]

[Highest Fear Value: 0%]

[Average Fear Value: 0%]

[Your Fear Rating: A whole sack of guts. Receive one additional reward. Please select later.]

[Skill Value: 30]

[EXP increased by Skill Value: 30]

[Game Coins: 300]

[Scenario’s bonus: New Player’s Luggage: 1]

[Calculation completed. Please continue]

Those information were displayed on the screen, but the system’s voice sounded again.

"You’ve reached level 2. Stamina Value has increased. Current Stamina Value: 200/200."

Right then, Feng Bujue saw the ‘Specialties’ tab was unlocked. There were six types of Specialties, but five of them were still locked; the grading beside them was N/A. Only the ‘Common’ was glowing with his current grade, which was F for now.

Specialties were the most important settings in the Thriller Paradise, which was used to assess players’ competence. Feng Bujue still remembered that it was mentioned in the game’s introduction. The meanings of the grade were as follows:

N/A: None, a complete blockhead, unable to use this skill.

F: very poor, almost zero. When players reach this grade, they can activate the skills with a success rate of 20%.

While the screen was displaying his rewards, the doors slid open again, however, there was no corridor outside, but a square room with metal walls. This room was at least thrice bigger than the elevator, lit up by a light installed on the ceiling. There were two hollow glass columns in the room, but nothing was inside those pillars.

Feng Bujue didn’t have any comment on his Fear Value. His Fear was quantified with digits, but he saw only three zeros there. The Fear rating didn’t bother him much. The introduction mentioned that after the player completed one scenario, the system would use his Fear Value to give him one of five grades: an entire sack of guts, fine courage, freaking out, shaking like a leaf, and body and soul separated.

They didn’t think that a case like his, which all values were zeros, would possibly happen. Or else, the designer had to add one more degree of grade, which was "extremely daring."

To the new player tutorial, Feng Bujue had completed it marvelously. Because the Survival Value and the Stamina Value didn’t affect the final calculation, accomplishing the scenario without shedding a hair or almost being dead were not much different as the rewards would be the same.

Feng Bujue’s reward was good enough, but he didn’t feel happy. He sighed then came to the glass pillars. A pop-up menu appeared.

[Please select your type of luggage.]

The screen then displayed two types of bag. One was a backpack that one could carry on their back, and the other one was a waist pack. After considering for a few seconds, Feng Bujue chose the first one. Then, the light started to condense, forming the bag amidst the hollow glass column. When the light had finally turned into the real object, the front of the glass column slid open, and he then stretched his arm to grab the bag.

At the same time, his Luggage Tab and Equipment Tab were finally unlocked.

[Your luggage is a space for storage. Currently, its capacity is ten items max. As long as you could put the items into the bag, it could keep them. To put living creatures into the bag, you have to tame and control them first. Special remarks: Player cannot get in the bag, please don't try it.]

[From now on, you can check your equipment from the Equipment Tab. Everything you can use is considered equipment. There is no limit on the total number of your equipment. For example, your right hand is holding a saber, and your left hand is holding a stick, while both of your hands are hugging a tiger. Your clothes are not your equipment. It's impossible to take them off or to destroy them. You can only change your costumes settings at the login space. Costumes can be purchased at Shops.]

Although it mentioned 'Shops', but currently, there was nothing to buy. In Closed Beta Version, players could only wear the default costumes.

In this age, many game producers wanted to take more benefits as they put the Shops into service when the test version was just 70% completed. It was possible to buy costumes, weapons, skin colors, blood, mana, etc. Some producers were despicable enough to send their henchmen to visit their rivals' websites often to market their products, especially rare and precious weapons or pets.

However, Dream Inc.'s strategy was different from them all. The sales target in the testing stage focused only on the consumption of hardware. When they had released Closed Beta Version, the game was already 95% completed.

When the Fourth Generation of Optical Computing Technique had been recognized and adopted, players didn't need to check for bugs since they had the almighty AI's calculating ability. Thus, the main target of Closed Beta Version was to promote the purchase of the Thriller Paradise's game cabin, model NL2055.

To virtual items and economic transactions, Dream Inc. had a strict policy to control. They didn't create the official website for the sole purpose of selling items, and, more than that, they also hid all the shops in the game. It brought difficulties for gamers who wanted to make some good deals.

This kind of confidence was close to arrogance. Dream Inc.'s managers seemed to think that the game's Closed Beta Version would succeed instantly. Money could wait, and in this stage, they only needed to increase the number of players and create their reputation.

[Please select extra bonus:

Random equipment that suits your level.

2000 coins.

80 EXP.]

When he reached the next glass column, this popped up in front of him.

Feng Bujue thought, "Today is the first day the Closed Beta Version has been released. Money would be useless in this period, EXP..." He glanced at the menu. He was at level two now. The EXP required to level up was 0/200, and this meant the third option was forty percent of the requirements to level up. His level was still low now, so this option wouldn't benefit him much. Then, he decided to take the equipment.

After he had selected, the light inside the glass column shone again then something appeared... a stone.

Feng Bujue was dazed. The first thought that appeared in his mind was that 'it should be some sort of magical stone or equipment'.

When he grabbed the stone, its properties were displayed.

[Name: A stone]

[Type: Weapon]

[Quality: Trash]

[Attack power: Feeble]

[Attributes: None]

[Effects: None]

[Remarks: This is a stone, whose shape is not followed by any regulations. It can be seen everywhere. Sometimes, people would pick it up to use it as a weapon. Although it can be brought in and out of any scenario, people will throw it away after using it. No one would put it in the bag or always hold it in their hands.]

The empty room then was filled with Feng Bujue’s indignant cry. "This is... this is... fraudulent!"

Erguotou: literally: "second pot head", i.e. "second distillation"), also known as Chinese white liquor is a Chinese alcoholic beverage. It is a type of baijiu made from sorghum. The name "second distillation" indicates its level of purity. It is a clear, potent spirit and takes six months to produce.

Chapter 4: Intermission (2)

Feng Bujue disconnected, opened the cabin, sat up and exhaled.

It was noon now, and sunlight was shining beautifully outside.

Feng Bujue lived alone in a rented room at the thirteenth floor, the highest floor of a building. His parents understood that they had no chance to take their POV in this novel; they had received the compensation from the author (San Tian Liang Jiao) angrily and passed away a few years ago, leaving our MC lonely here. Because I, the author, didn’t want to be bothered thinking about two other names for them, I had to let them go to Shangri-La right at the beginning of the story. Tsk tsk, this is what we call, "When you help people, you shouldn’t disclose your name."

Feng Bujue glared at the clock, and he found out that he had just played the game for 15 minutes. In non-sleep mode, the ratio between the time in Thriller Paradise and the real time was one-half. In simple words, he had been in the game for thirty minutes. Besides, in sleep mode, the nervous connection was deeper, and thus, the ratio of time could be up to 1/10.

There’s a saying that reads, "There is no time in dreams." If the players had played for the entire duration of their slumber, they could play for eighty hours non-stop. Of course, this meant they had been dreaming for eight hours continuously; they would surely have a headache when they get up the next morning. The manual said that players shouldn’t play for over four hours in sleep mode. Since Feng Bujue had read this, he memorized it all.

At this time, Feng Bujue got up from the cabin. It wasn't that he needed to get some rest, but he and his friend had set up a date as they would play the game together.

Today was the first day that Dream Inc. had released the Closed Beta Version. The server had opened since 8:00 am, but his friend was busy at that time, so Feng Bujue had to wait for him then. He just wanted to go online for a while to get used to the game control. He didn't want to upgrade his levels as it could create a gap between them.

The question here is, does Feng Bujue have nothing to do in the morning?

Yes, it's true, he doesn't have anything to do.

I've told you that he was a detective novel author, bet some of you still remember that. Does this kid, the author-sensei, have nothing to worry about even when he doesn't do anything?

Apparently, nope.

Feng Bujue was not famous, but just somewhat known. His works were not bad, and each was qualified enough to be published. There was a publisher that was working with him though. He was one of those authors that weren't rich but wouldn't be starved.

He got two pages in a weekly magazine, where he posted an ongoing detective story. Every month, he had to submit the draft

of the next month’s contents. If the quality wasn’t good enough, he still had time to re-write it. The deadline was always by the end of the month since the royalties would be settled at the end of the same month.

However, with this income, he could barely survive in S City. Thus, he had also written some series of detective novels, which would be published in the form of real books. After he had finished one book, he would have some savings, which could be considered as his small benefit.

But why doesn't he have anything to do in the morning?

This was easy to explain. Feng Bujue described his life and the inspiration for his works as follows: ‘profuse inspiration, timely delivery, lavish delicacies, fine cakes, dry ideas, no words, plain soup, noodles then.’ Apparently, he was in his ‘dry ideas’ stage, where he couldn’t give birth to any words.

This dude was very adaptive. When he couldn’t write, what he forced himself to write was just crap. Thus, he just played for now, and he called it ‘collecting inspiration’.

Consequently, waiting for that dude Feng Bujue to submit his draft on time was practically a myth.

Whenever half of the month had passed by, the magazine’s editor would hold the dagger while riding on the horse to knock on his door. And, his landlady, one hand holding the Lutetium Gold Tang Phoenix Wings, the other hand holding his spare key, would open

the door and slash him.

Every time that day came, Feng Bujue was well-prepared, arranging the formation, beating the battle drum, waiting for those two to fight for three hundred rounds with him. Then, under the sky that would be covered with black clouds, he would spit out only one sentence: ‘I don't have money, I just have one sheet of draft!’

All right, I just blow up the story. Anyway, he was satisfied with his life.

Now, we’re going to talk about his friend. Birds of a feather flock together. So, how could it be impossible that Feng Bujue’s friend was Mr. Right?

Yeah, he was indeed Mr. Right.

This guy was named Wang Tanzhi, Feng Bujue’s closest friend. In local sayings, they were bosom friends. They had been classmates since kindergarten until they had graduated from high school. Then, Wang Tan Zhi had enrolled to a medical school, while Feng Bujue became a lazy ass in this society.

How close their relationship was, we can describe in two ways, which are in supposition and reality.

First, we will talk about reality. Why did Wang Tanzhi choose medical school? It was because Feng Bujue had always wanted to

follow Sherlock Holmes' step, and Sherlock Holmes' assistant is Doctor Watson. He was then determined to go to medical school.

Now, it turns to suppositions. If Wang Tanzhi were a girl, my novel would be changed drastically since Miss Wang possibly had probably given her virginity to Feng Bujue years ago.

From that supposition and with what are rolling in your mind, I have to add this, don't worry, they are all males. Pretty straight ones.

Wang Tanzhi came from a rich family. How rich he was didn't matter because it was enough for him to survive this life without working his butt off. He was handsome, a little bit taller than Feng Bujue. Well, 6 feet it is. He was a kind, humble, and tender guy, who was also a little bit soft-hearted, and didn't want to bother others.

In short, it was hard to find his flaws. He totally contrasted with that old freak Feng Bujue. Wang Tanzhi was a homie that everybody would love, while Feng Bujue, in other people's eyes, was always a couldn't-give-a-damn type, moody, and even a young hoodlum.

However, life always has miracles. Those two people could still be the closest friends.

Noon had soon passed by. Feng Bujue had spent another hour to read information on the game's website. Since he had completed the newbie tutorial, it was easier for him to read and understand

the contents of the game now.

In the remaining time, he made noodles. It wasn't because he loved noodles, but it was because he had bought instant noodles to save money to buy flour.

He was a freak indeed. He had calculated his food intake for each meal, as well as the minimum amount of food that he should eat to survive. Then he used his savings, which wasn't much anyway, to buy the game's cabin. The remaining amount was used to pay for the utilities and flour.

If you are saying that he was an economical person, yeah, he had used the money that was beyond his limits to buy a luxury item (the new model of his cabin was surely a rip-off). If you are saying that he was extravagant, he had never let himself starve.

Soon, it was twilight. Feng Bujue had eaten a bowl of plain noodles as it was his dinner.

Wang Tanzhi had called to tell him that he had logged in the game and finished the newbie tutorial. He had gotten scared, sweating in fear. After he had logged out, he called Feng Bujue while trying to get himself together.

Feng Bujue thought, "I do admire you! What is cold sweat? It's been several months since I last had that."

After a few words, they exchanged nicknames, and they logged in.

高富帥: Gao-Fu-Shuai, Internet slang, lit. tall, rich and handsome

Chapter 5: The Abandoned Hospital (1)

Feng Bujue stepped into the cabin and logged in the game again, using non-sleep mode. (Non-sleep and sleep mode have different servers. Those two servers are not interoperable.)

He selected the game at the login space, and this time, there were no pop-up notifications. The screen displayed only the menu and its options. For example, the social communication, which were the friendlist and blacklist. Besides, there were many other introductions about the game. If players didn't have time to read the homepage, they could take a look here. If one consider about the time ratio, reading introductions here could help them save half of the time needed.

Feng Bujue searched for Wang Tanzhi's ingame name, added him, and sent a party invite to him.

When Wang Tanzhi joined the party, a list appeared on Feng Bujue's screen, which displayed their characters' names and levels.

[Feng Bujue, level 2.]

[Wang Tanzhi, level 1.]

[Please select game mode for your party.]

There were options on the screen, namely, 'Single-Player Training Mode', 'Multiplayer Training Mode', and 'Single-Player

Survival’ (Normal). Since they were in a party, two options for single-player were gray, which meant they couldn’t choose them.

"Jue-Ge, we can only choose the ‘Multiplayer Training Mode'," Wang Tanzhi spoke to Feng Bujue through the screen. From his login space, he could see the same information with what was displayed on Feng Bujue’s screen. However, only the captain could select the options.

"Yeah... just get in there first," Feng Bujue replied then selected the option.

[You’ve selected ‘Multiplayer Training Mode’. Please confirm.]

[Confirmed... Nervous connection adjusting... Generating scenario...]

[Loading... Please wait.]

Feng Bujue’s elevator booth started to move downwards.

Then, a description appeared in front of him together with the system’s reminder.

"You are about to enter the scenario with other players. This is the first time you have joined a multiplayer game, be sure you’ve read the following contents."

[A. Besides Fighting Mode, all attacks towards other players in other modes will be restricted. Player's intentions will not be interpreted into your character's actions. In scenarios of all modes (including Fighting Mode), all attacks towards your party members will be restricted. Player's intentions will not be interpreted into your character's actions.]

[B. Any word that the system considers sensitive will be deleted. For example, politician's names, cursing or using names of animals, plants or other items in special contexts.]

[C. Harassing behaviors such as mouthing, hand-gestures, words or drawings will be restricted. Player's intentions will not be interpreted into your character's actions.]

[D. To any genders, all behaviors that the system considers sexual harassment, including all acts with this purpose or intentions, mentioned at Article B and C, will be restricted. Player's intentions will not be interpreted into your character's actions. Players will be forced to quit if such behaviors are repeated several times. Players' ID numbers will be listed in the system's blacklist and subjected to the top-priority surveillance.]

[E. Any behaviors that the system considers discrimination will be treated in accordance with Article D. Accounts of Players who have violated Article D and E for several times will be deleted forever. Their ID numbers will also be locked, and they will never be able to use our products again. Considering the degree of the case, players' serious behaviors will be systematically recorded and submitted to the Police Department. For more information, please refer to the Network Public Safety Laws and Derivative

Regulations.]

At this point, you may need some further explanations. Feng Bujue lived in 2055, in some sort of a parallel universe. In his world, sexual harassment and discrimination (to disable, minor ethnic and disadvantaged people) would be treated very strictly. Although it wasn't too bad that it deserved the death sentence, ID numbers of those who had violated the rules would be put in the blacklist of other social bodies. They would also receive proper punishments before that.

Feng Bujue had chances to play many games, some with the helmet nervous system connection too. Basically, they all had the same regulations. As the Optical Computing Technique was thriving constantly, fewer players could hack or violate the regulations. One could say that their intentions were choked to death before that.

[Loading completed. You are now in Multiplayer Training Mode.]

[In this mode, the system will not provide introductions on plots, Weltanschauung, or quests.]

[Rewards for this Mode include only EXP, no given Skill Value, and game coins.]

[Rewards for this Mode does not include completion rewards or bonus from Fear Value.]

[Game has started.]

After the reminder had finished, the doors slid open. Almost at the same time, he could hear the low, scary rumbling of something. This time, it was a male screech. "Welcome to Thriller Paradise."

The evil laughter that he brought afterwards could scare the sh!t out of the players.

There was a corridor again, however, this corridor looked spacious. The ground was covered with enameled tiles, and the walls were painted white. Besides, there were three other closed doors. The lighting system on the ceiling worked well, and it brightly illuminated the surroundings. The air was filled with the scent of disinfectant, and together with the decoration, it looked like a hospital.

Feng Bujue walked out of the elevator booth, and the doors behind him closed immediately. Then, the image of the booth was twisted before it disappeared, leaving only a white wall. When he turned around, he saw another elevator that looked exactly like the elevator that he had just stepped out.

Feng Bujue walked to that booth and peeped in; he suddenly heard a terrifying scream.

"Ahhhhhhhhhh."

"Are you sick?" Feng Bujue asked.

Wang Tanzhi gasped. "I've just decided to walk out and you sneaked in, that freaked me out."

"Hey, can I ask you something? You've just gotten frightened, how is the Fear Value now?" Feng Bujue was really curious.

Wang Tanzhi then looked at his menu. In Feng Bujue's eyes, this was as if Wang Tanzhi was staring at some particular point in the space and he returned just several seconds after that.

"I'm calmed down now. The Fear Value has fluctuated at 3%," Wang Tanzhi replied, "but I don't know what it had hit at that time."

"Oh, is that because the Fear Value had increased then reduced instantly?" Feng Bujue muttered, "Hey, what is the color of the Fear Value bar?"

"Hm... bright red."

"Oh, that's it."

"Brother Jue, your illness... is your Fear Value always 0%?"

Of course, Wang Tanzhi knew that Feng Bujue was sick, but he had just graduated, so his hands were tied in this case. Also, it was

because he was a doctor that he understood that Feng Bujue's disorder could only count on his fortune for now. If he was lucky, he could live for several years more, but if he had bad luck, he could die in just three minutes.

"Right," Feng Bujue deliberately replied.

"Then I have to count on you. If something happens, you have to protect me," said Wang Tanzhi.

Feng Bujue didn't answer him and just continued, "Before the scenario starts, we only have three minutes to prepare. If you don't get out of the elevator by now, the system will force you then."

As Wang Tanzhi heard him said that, he hurried to step out of the booth.

Before the elevator vanished, Feng Bujue suddenly hauled out a stone from his bag then gave it to Wang Tanzhi. "Take it and lead the way."

Wang Tanzhi took the stone. After checking the item's properties, the corner of his mouth twitched. "Jue-Ge, even if you got this out of the Tutorial, there is no reason for you to keep it and bring it to the login space..."

"You're just jealous of me," Feng Bujue answered without feeling ashamed at all.

Wang Tanzhi didn’t speak to him anymore; he just threw the stone to the ground and hauled out a fruit knife about five inches from his bag. "This one has better properties."

"How did you get equipment?" Feng Bujue screamed. During their call, Wang Tanzhi had told him that after he had finished the Tutorial, he had been assessed as "Freaked out." The introduction on the website said that this level wouldn’t receive any bonus.

"I picked it up in the scenario," Wang Tanzhi said.

Feng Bujue said, "Let me take a look."

Wang Tanzhi shrugged his shoulders then passed the knife to him.

[Name: Fruit knife]

[Type: Weapon]

[Quality: Rubbish]

[Attack power: Feeble]

[Attributes: None]

[Effects: None]

[Being able to be brought out of the scenario: Yes]

[Remarks: At least this stuff has a blade.]

Feng Bujue handed back the knife to Wang Tanzhi then sighed sadly. "It’s karma. Stuff in my scenario were all things I couldn’t bring out of there."

"So your stone is..."

"Bonus after every calculation for rewards is done," Feng Bujue added, "scary?"

"Yeah..."

"Lead the way!"

Wang Tanzhi had no choice; he took the knife and walked forward.

When the game began, he felt a little bit scared. He was just an ‘ordinary person’ after all. And if one is an ordinary person, no matter how big their guts are, no one dares to be sure that they wouldn’t get frightened. Fear is a normal reflex. Moreover, Thriller Paradise was a game based on the nervous system connection, as it made the feelings more real.

There was a turn twenty meters in front of them, and on this path, all three doors were on their right. The wall on their left was white, blank and smooth. None of the familiar items, like the doctors' information, the layout of the building or basic health knowledge were hung on the wall.

When they had just walked for five meters, not even having reached the first door, a baby girl's laughter arose. Then, numerous bloody handprints appeared on the white blank wall on their left and covered the entire wall to the other end of the corridor. Suddenly, they saw a shadow flash and slide into a corner far from them.

Chapter 6: The Abandoned Hospital (2)

"J-J-Jue... Jue-Ge, i-i-i-it's..." Wang Tanzhi stammered as his Fear Value surged. Although he had already calmed down after a few seconds, his Fear Value didn't return to the lowest point yet because his feeling of fear was piling up. It was held at 15% now.

Feng Bujue's face was still emotionless as he spoke with a calm voice, "I suppose we have two options now."

"What... what are those?" Wang Tanzhi could speak more words now.

"The first option, you take the knife and storm forward. At the corner, if you meet anything, just slash it," Feng Bujue answered, "I got your back."

"I choose the second option," Wang Tanzhi could suddenly talk smoothly, even when he didn't know what the second option was.

"Indeed, I prefer the second option." While he was speaking, Feng Bujue crossed over Wang Tanzhi, reaching the door on their right and pulling the knob.

Everyone knows that the doors in a thriller game are the sources of horror. No one ever knows what is waiting for them behind the doors. Moreover, there's something like, 'die instantly when the door opens'. It could be said that at the moment he opened the door, the danger they were about to face was not less than that of chasing after the thing, which just disappeared at the corner.

In this case, ordinary people would carefully open the door, duck their body and try to stay as far from the door as possible. Furthermore, they were ready to run away at any minute.

Well, meanwhile, Feng Bujue had opened the door deliberately as if he was just opening his toilet door. He rushed to the door, opened it, and entered.

Only the light from outside illuminated the room. The interior was horrible.

This was a patient room, about 10 square meters. The closet in the corner and even the trash bin were upside down. There were many things scattered on the ground. All were debris, including bandages, toilet paper rolls, dirty cotton, and broken medicine jars, etc. The sheet on the bed was ragged. The scent of blood filled the whole room, and the light from outside revealed bloodstains almost everywhere.

"Training mode will be invisible when players reach level five. Apparently, it has been designed to help players reach level five easily."

While Feng Bujue was speaking, he came to the closet and opened it to check the contents inside.

After they completed the New Player Tutorial, ‘hotshots’ would play this training mode only once. Perhaps they would skip this training mode and start the Single-player Survival Mode directly,

because those sort of players have definitely read the instructions before. They know that the reward of the training mode, which is only EXP, is far behind that of the survival mode.

Feng Bujue found an unopened pack of syringes in the closet. After taking a look at the properties, he put it directly in his bag. "Seems like the rewards of the training mode are worse than that of the New Player Tutorial. I think the difficulty level should be the same with the Tutorial. If the players are not frightened too much, they have to cut the connection. Even if they can’t solve the riddle, they can still pass the scenario."

He was actually bending over, sniffing the broken jar.

"In fact, we don’t need to check every room. We just need to chase after that shadow to continue our game. It would take us 20 minutes max and several punches and kicks that will definitely drain our Survival Value, then we could finish this scenario."

"So why did you enter the room?" Wang Tanzhi asked.

"I told you there were two options. You didn’t want to hear all and you have chosen the second one." Feng Bujue picked up some sheets of paper on the ground, then brought them to the light to read. "The second option is to solve the puzzle."

"Hey… you’ve just said that…"

"I said we don’t need to solve the puzzle to pass the scenario, but I

didn’t say that we won’t do it," Feng Bujue added, "even if we could solve the riddle, we wouldn’t receive any extra points for Skill Value."

He continued to study those sheets, his face unchanged.

"But solving the puzzle brings us an advantage, which is reducing the difficulty level. In simple words, we will use our brain to reduce the physical power needed to complete the scenario." While saying, he held up a paper sheet, gave it to Wang Tanzhi then said, "Take a look, what is it?"

"This is..." Wang Tanzhi took the sheet. After studying it for a few seconds, he said, "Medical records?"

[Name: Unidentified Patient’s Medical Records]

[Type: Related to the plot]

[Quality: Normal]

[Function: Unknown]

[Being able to be brought out of the scenario: No]

[Remarks: Many contents on this sheet are covered by bloodstains]

"Your job, buddy." Feng Bujue held up the rest of paper sheets in his hand. "I'll take care of these."

Wang Tanzhi just glared at it, and he immediately felt his scalp tingling since the top sheet in Feng Bujue's hands had a bizarre human face drawn on it.

Two of them came to a spot on the corridor where the light was shining on. They stayed there and read the material for several minutes.

Wang Tanzhi read the sheet carefully. There were many bloodstains on the medical records, so he had to guess the contents at some points. At the same time, Feng Bujue was cursory, skimming through those drawings quickly. He was so addicted to reading. His reading pace was fast enough, moreover, his memory, understanding, and reasoning were pretty effective. Anyway, the drawings on those sheets couldn't scare him. To Feng Bujue, they were like illustrations in magazines.

"Are you done?" Feng Bujue was the first one who asked.

Wang Tanzhi still glued his eyes on the medical records. He contemplated for a while then answered, "Male, 13 years old... still a kid."

Feng Bujue caressed his chin. "Oh... member of the Young Pioneers."

It’s impossible to know how his brain works.

"Oh... He has leukemia and have been hospitalized for quite a long time. However," Wang Tanzhi dropped the medical records, "according to his medical records, his days are running out."

He lifted his head, raking his eyes to the other end of the corridor. "He may have turned to a ghost now."

Feng Bujue said, "Not sure. There are three doors here. We have just entered the first one, which perhaps, is the little boy’s patient room. However, we are not sure if that shadow belongs to him."

He handed the paper sheets he was holding to Wang Tanzhi. "You don’t need to read it, just check the properties."

After having paused for one second, he continued, "There are six different portraits on these sheets, numbered at the corner."

[Name: Portrait Sketch x6 pcs]

[Type: Related to the plot]

[Quality: Normal]

[Function: Unknown]

[Being able to bring out of the scenario: No]

[Remarks: Apparently, these portraits were drawn by only one person. They can be piled up or separated. When they are piled up, they are considered as only one item]

"I’m getting more confused," said Wang Tanzhi.

Feng Bujue nodded. "It’s okay. Because the clues to solve the puzzle are not enough."

Then, he walked to the second room. "Besides, I have a hypothesis. This is also the reason why I want to complete the scenario after I solve the puzzle."

While pushing open the door of the second room, he added, "I believe that there is at least one real piece of equipment in these three rooms."

Young Pioneers: is a mass youth organization for children aged six to fourteen in the People's Republic of China. The Young Pioneers of China is run by the Communist Youth League, an organization of older youth that comes under the Communist Party of China. The Young Pioneers of China is similar to Pioneer Movements that exist or existed in many Communist countries around the world.

Here, Feng Bujue wanted to say that the little boy is in the age range where he should be a member of the Young Pioneers.

Chapter 7: The Abandoned Hospital (3)

The objects inside the second room were even more eccentric than that of the first room. Countless portraits had covered the entire place, from the four walls to the ceiling. The room was almost empty, but the drawings were everywhere. Only a lone safe stood in the middle of the room.

"Seems this puzzle is quite clear now." Feng Bujue walked towards the safe then squatted down to take a closer look.

"This is just the training mode, and they have considered the case when ‘players can’t think thoroughly because of being too frightened’." He spoke as if this difficulty level was too low for him.

Wang Tanzhi followed him. At this moment, he felt that those faces on the walls were as peppy as real ones. There were no identical faces there. This gave him the feeling of being scanned over and over by hundreds of pairs of eyes. Just that alone was enough to give him goosebumps.

"Jue-Ge, can’t we just bring the safe outside and check it?" Wang Tanzhi asked.

"Just a couple minutes and I’m done with it." Feng Bujue stood up, put those sketches in front of him, then started to study the portraits on the walls.

"When I came close to the safe, the system reminded me that it

needed a password of six digits to open the safe." His eyes stopped at some place. "Oh, there!"

He walked to the wall and cocked his head to the left. "This room has a lot of faces drawn on the wall just to mess with the players' vision."

He then pointed to the wall. "You see, there are six faces aligned in a diagonal line. They look exactly like those sketches we have."

He started to compare those drawings, which were too scary to look at directly, from left to right and from top to bottom. He was muttering the numbers written on the bottom corner of the sheets while eyeing them, "4, 1, 6, 3, 5, 2."

Feng Bujue came to the safe and entered the password. "If you just searched through the first room by opening the door and threw a quick glance, you couldn't have found the clues from the drawings. Then, of course, you wouldn't have been able to find the password to open the safe in the second room as well."

He turned around to look at those six faces on the wall. "In fact, the answer has been revealed where the light shone most clearly when we had opened the door. But, even if we didn't have the sketches, even though we both knew that the password would be in this room, we still wouldn't be able to find it."

At that time, the safe was opened. There were two items inside, including a key and a card.

"Wrong moves," Feng Bujue said after he had checked out the two items' properties.

"What?" Perhaps Wang Tanzhi was affected by Feng Bujue's deliberateness, so he had calmed down. His Fear Value was now 3%.

"Soon, we have to use the Key. And this..." Feng Bujue handed the card to Wang Tanzhi.

[Name: Exploding God Fist]

[Skill Card's Attributes: Active skill, disappear after being used twice]

[Type: Fighting.]

[Effects: Explode after hitting the target, giving Fire Attribute damage]

[Consumption: 50 points of Physical Value]

[Usage Condition: Fighting Specialty level F]

[Remarks: BOOM!]

"I thought that the rewards would be some equipment. Turns out

it is only a Skill," Feng Bujue said.

"First, not to mention the equipment or skills, how did you know there would be hidden rewards?" Wang Tanzhi asked.

"Isn’t it obvious? Although this game mode doesn’t offer players anything besides EXP, to ensure fair-play, the scenario allows players to complete the round in two ways," Feng Bujue explained, "now we are following the way in which we are going to solve the puzzle and not to use the power to kill someone."

Holding the key in his hand, he led Wang Tanzhi out of the second room.

"If players don’t want to solve the puzzle, they have to overcome their fear to encounter the enemy. If their fighting capabilities are effective, they can improve their Specialties. When their level and Fighting Specialty are improved, they can receive Skill Value during the round.

"Meanwhile, we are focusing on the general progress of the game, not just only on improving our Fighting Specialty. If we can solve the puzzle, we can decrease the level of difficulty, reduce the unnecessary fights, and we can make the plot better. Players who follow this way will be left behind with their low Specialties. Thus, the system would do something to make it up for them. The Skill Value awarded would be more than regular."

At this point, Wang Tanzhi had understood; he then continued Feng Bujue’s flow, "Training Mode wouldn’t offer Skill Value...

thus, if players chose to solve the puzzle, they will be rewarded with items."

"Exactly." Feng Bujue tried to pull the third door. It was just like what he had assumed—the door was locked. He immediately used the key to open the door, and once it was opened, the key disappeared.

The third room was clean. There was a table placed against the wall, and a notebook laid on top of it.

"Hey, how many slots of the Specialties have you unlocked?" Feng Bujue asked while picking up the notebook.

"My Fighting and Common Specialties are both ranked F. How about yours?"

"I have just unlocked the ‘Common’." Feng Bujue started to open the notebook. "Your Fighting Specialty has been unlocked in which circumstances?"

"In the New Player Tutorial, something that looked like a monkey had attacked me. After I had killed it, the system notified that I had unlocked the Fighting Specialty ranked level F, " Wang Tanzhi recalled, "But the Common Specialty has appeared after the scenario has ended."

"Oh, that’s it. We just need to find the chances to unlock all six slots of the Specialties then," Feng Bujue said while musing.

He turned to ask Wang Tanzhi, "Your Skill bar is unlocked now after you got the skill, right? You are qualified, just take that Skill Card. Maybe we have to use it soon."

That was the first time Feng Bujue picked up a Skill Card. When he was reading the properties, the system reminded him that his Skill Bar had been unlocked.

The Skill Bar in Thriller Paradise only had twelve slots. Players could adjust them before they entered the scenario. This meant no matter how many skills their character has, once they enter the scenario, they could only equip themselves with twelve skills max. Moreover, the Skill Cards they have installed in their Skill Bar—even if they have never been used before—are locked with their character, unable to be exchanged. If players found a Skill Card and they wanted to sell it, they could only put it into the bag, not the Skill Bar. Once the card has been installed, the card would disappear while the skill would be recorded as the players' data and displayed on their menu.

There was another rule which said that when the Skill Card was yet to be used, it could only be brought out of the scenario, not the opposite way. This was to prevent players to have themselves equipped with a full set of twelve skills, but still carrying many Skill Cards in their bags as they enter the scenario.

There was an exception. If players picked up a new Skill Card in the scenario, they could learn it on the spot. In case their Skill Bar was full, they could replace one of their old skills with that new skill. This required them to return to the login space to do the

replacement.

"It has appeared but why can we only use it twice?" Wang Tanzhi didn’t understand that.

The one who raised this issue obviously hadn’t read the game’s introduction.

Feng Bujue answered him while passionately reading the notebook in his hand, "The attributes of the skill are the most important features. Skills are divided into active and passive skills. Active skills consist of three types, including ‘Permanent Possession’, ‘Time-limit Possession’ and ‘Consumed with times of usage’. Passive skills have just two types, which are ‘Permanent Possession’ and ‘Time-limit Possession’."

After contemplating for a few seconds, he added, "Your card is a ‘Consumed with times of usage’ one. After using it twice, it will disappear."

"I got a feeling that they are just teasing us." Although he had that comment, he still installed the Skill as Feng Bujue’s request.

"No, it’s reasonable," Feng Bujue said, "with your current Physical Value, when it’s full, you can only punch twice. In such circumstances, the plot of this scenario would not require the third punch. Even no punch is needed."

He hesitated for a while then continued, "If it were a ‘permanent’

or a ‘time-limit’ one, the conditions and the consumption wouldn’t be that low. Perhaps it would require higher Fighting Specialty and cost you much Physical Value. If not, this skill would be ‘discounted’. For example, if there were a level 50 player with Shooting Specialty that equipped himself with a permanent Wrestling Skill; if that skill just required Grade F to activate and only consume fifty points of Physical Value, then this meant he could use the skill for one hundred times continuously, isn’t it?"

Wang Tanzhi thought it was quite reasonable. "Yeah, it is. And, if they give me a skill that requires Fighting Skill Grade F, but the Physical Value consumption would be one hundred and one points, the problem here comes from the game design team."

"Hey, I need to remind you that the success rate is just twenty percent for this type of active skill at Grade F. Thus, if a low-level player picks up a skill, the chances of successfully using it, it all depends on Karma," Feng Bujue added.

"Isn’t that fraudulent?"

"That’s why I wanted to search for equipment. I’ve checked the home page. They’ve just released the Closed Beta Version this morning, and there are instructions in the afternoon. Some guys who reached level 10 said on the forum that when the character is ranked at low levels, equipment is the best. Equipment ranked ‘Excellent’ and above are ‘extremely rare’."

Feng Bujue was doing two tasks at the same time. After a little bit of chatting, he had almost finished the notebook. "Perhaps it’s easy to get to level 10. If players have good equipment, they can survive

the situation without solving the puzzles. Just use violence to finish the scenario, then the game will not reward good equipment for lower levels."

He closed the notebook. "After passing level 10, low-level Excellent Equipment will become bland food, but it’s a waste if we dump them. Currently, they haven’t opened Shops yet; putting them in our bags just wastes our limited room."

Feng Bujue was startled while talking, "Oops, wrong calculation!"

"What?" Wang Tanzhi felt tense in an instant. He raised the fruit knife and turned back to look at the corridor outside the door. He didn’t see anything else except those bloody footprints on the wall.

"And, later on, if we need to open the chests, you should do it. I will tell you the password or how to open it," said Feng Bujue.

"Beep, I thought you wanted to tell something else," Wang Tanzhi continued, "that Karma thing is nonsense, just about probabilities. Wouldn’t it be rubbish if you opened it?"

"I really want to go outside, pick up a stone and smash it on your head."

"Alright, my bad."

Feng Bujue put the notebook into his bag then said, "Move. I will tell you the plot while we are walking..."

Chapter 8: The Abandoned Hospital (4)

[January 10. If I didn't see it with my own eyes, I wouldn't believe what this child could do. The spoon was hovering, and he could bend it as he pleased.

January 13. He said that someone was watching him... Many... many of them. He was terrified.

January 16. He seemed not to feel fear anymore. Sometimes he smiled, sometimes he kept quiet...

January 17. All tests showed that he was normal. None of us, a group of six, could explain what was happening to this child...

January 19. He started to draw. His parents told us that he had never shown his talents in arts before, however, he was able to draw realistic portraits.

January 22. He kept asking for papers and pencils. He just drew and drew, not stopping to eat or sleep. He only sketched portraits. Normal faces now turned into freakish and weird ones...

January 25. Bloody faces appeared on the walls. We found a carcass of a sparrow on his bed, but his hands were all clean. This got me worried and I recalled the spoon...

January 26. All the windows on the wall had disappeared, leaving a windproof blank wall. Last night, the security camera recorded a

shadow. I don’t know whom I should ask to help us. Police? They will think that I’m crazy and arrest me soon…

January 30. Richard went missing. The five of us are worried. More portraits appeared on the walls. This time, we couldn’t find… I don’t know… Richard’s corpse?

January 31. I have to leave this place! I should apply to leave! Until this child passes away due to his sickness… no… I’d better resign!

February 1. I don’t think I could escape. I can’t find the way out of this building… if anyone read this notebook, remember my words. He’s wary of… (this line was covered with bloodstain)! If you have a chance, kill him! Don’t hesitate! If not, the dead one will be you!

…]

Feng Bujue and Wang Tanzhi made a turn at the corner. The corridor ahead of them was spacious, but there was no door this time, just snow-white wall on both sides. After they walking for dozens of meters, there appeared a crossroad.

They were cautiously walking forward. After thinking about the contents of the notebook, Feng Bujue told the story again. He had tried to make it less scary, but Little Tan’s face was still pale, and he had goosebumps all over him.

"What we are about to face is not a ghost. It’s just a child, who has suffered from psychic pollution, and the super powers which he has acquired after a bout of serious illness," Feng Bujue concluded, "at least it’s the plot of this scenario."

"What is useful from this information?" Wang Tanzhi’s voice showed that he was bearing massive pressure.

"First, psychologically, I think your fear would be reduced when you know the mob is a human," Feng Bujue answered, "second, the true meaning is we know that it has a physical body and we can salvage it."

"Hey, did you think that the guy who wrote the diary and the other victims in this scenario haven’t tried that?" Wang Tanzhi panicked. "They were more than two people, right?"

"Did they know the Exploding God Fist?" Feng Bujue snapped.

"Brother Jue, I’m still confused... If we couldn’t find this skill or if our Fighting Specialty hadn’t been unlocked, and we didn’t choose to answer the puzzle, what would it be like?"

"Then we have to make a choice when we meet it, " Feng Bujue asked himself, "should we run or fight against it recklessly?"

He had mused for a few seconds then continued, "If we hadn’t solved the puzzle, we would base on the actual situation when we meet it. For example, how much life we would lose. When we are

threatened by fear or death, the difficulty will increase. However, when we got the plot, we won't need to make contact with it to know that we have to run away since our fighting abilities are trash. It would probably screw us over big time. Then, I think among the options to finish this scenario, there should be a running away one."

"However, considering our dangerous situation right now, isn't it the same with the option that we can't solve the puzzle!" said Wang Tanzhi.

"Nope. It's different. At least, you got a skill in the second room."

"In the third room, we also know its weakness. Then, no matter if we choose to kill it now or to run away to complete the scenario, the chance of success is much improved."

"First, not to mention my skill, which is 20% successful, didn't you said that the line related to its weakness was covered with bloodstains?"

"Well, the system has planned a simple chain of logic. With the notes from the diary and the analysis of that child's behaviors, except the other bullsh!t details which are to mess up your mind, the contents of the notebook are as clear as the Lost Tapes (1)."

While they were discussing, they made another turn.

A spacious lobby appeared in front of them. The ceiling there was

much higher than that of the corridor. The lighting system was good, but its walls also didn’t have doors or windows.

"January 16, telekinesis, using thoughts to move objects. January 19, innate super power awakened. January 25, able to use his thoughts to affect living objects. January 30, able to deal with bigger objects, humans. February 1, slaughter like a Demon." Feng Bujue analyzed in an extremely calm manner that was almost icy-cold. "Related to his weakness, it is in the paragraph of January 26. Same with what we have here." He paused for a moment then continued, "He is afraid of sunlight."

"But it’s very..."

Feng Bujue interrupted him even before he was able to say the word "bright".

"It’s the sunlight, not the artificial light," Feng Bujue explained, "when we have entered the first room, which looks like a patient room, I could feel something was abnormal. Besides the scent of fresh blood, the patient room and the corridor don’t have windows. It doesn’t suit the basic architecture rules. At that time, I doubted that this building was underground. Then, I found that the second and the third rooms also doesn’t have any window. Why is that?"

Feng Bujue paused for a while. "I can understand the strange layout of these rooms, because, as in the plot, this is a hospital. Maybe it’s because of the twisted space that we could see such scenes after we opened the doors. However, after reading the notebook, I understood that this is a hint."

He pointed to the light above his head. "In fact, those lights are also a hint. He’s afraid of sunlight, but why does he need light? There’s nothing besides two reasons. First, he needs light to move because he is blind in the dark, just like us. Second, he is wary of the sunlight and the darkness. Because, in the dark, there’s something staring at him..."

All of a sudden, the little boy’s laughter echoed again, not far from them this time.

Now, they knew that the source of the laughter was a little boy. Not a ghost, but a child who liked to draw with blood.

Even though his mind had been changed and he was well prepared, Wang Tanzhi’s heartbeat had increased as his breath got heavier. The hand, which he used to clutch the fruit knife, was soaked with sweat.

"Put the knife away. We can’t use it," said Feng Bujue.

"Brother J-J-Jue, you... you... you... have..."

"Yes, I have a plan." Feng Bujue pointed towards the lobby. "Use your skill to break the central wall there."

Before he could finish speaking, the little boy, the BOSS of this scenario, suddenly appeared.

He was standing two or three meters away from them, wearing the patient uniform. Although he was standing under the light, his face and body were still covered with a blurry shadow. Right when he appeared, the ceiling, the wall, and even the ground had been instantly filled with bloody faces. Even the light had turned into a red color.

This scene could make a man scream, but Feng Bujue didn’t hesitate when he saw it. He stormed to the little boy, who was just four foot tall, standing in front of him.

"Break the wall!"

Wang Tanzhi jumped and run towards the direction that Feng Bujue had just pointed to. Actually, he had jumped because of fear. After running several steps, he started to feel as if his feet were made of jelly.

He turned around to look out while running for half the way. Feng Bujue hadn’t touched the boy, yet he was blown away, hit the wall by an invisible force, and spurted out a mouthful of blood. It was like a car had struck him along the way.

It looked fierce, but it was just a game, and players didn’t have to bear the real pain. In Thriller Paradise, no matter how severe the players got hit with, even if the train had rolled over them, the highest pain level that they received was just like hitting one’s fingernail with a hammer.

When Wang Tanzhi saw this, he exerted more efforts to run

towards wall.

Apparently, the boy knew what he wanted to do, however, he didn't know how to use teleportation; he could only run after him.

That child couldn't reach the speed of teleportation. Also, his running form was weird; it looked he was a marionette, and someone was manipulating him through some strings.

A hand snatched the boy at his ankle.

Our BOSS cocked its head to see Feng Bujue had gotten up and caught him. Feng Bujue had the advantage on his build; even if the four-foot boy was able to run faster, he could still reach him in a short distance.

At that moment, Wang Tanzhi used the skill. His right fist was covered in an orange halo as he punched the wall.

Although the success rate was just 20 percent, the wall was a large target that was hard to miss. Also, his fortune was good enough. This attack was successful.

The wall actually exploded with some effects, leaving a hole, roughly one meter in diameter there. The excessively blazing sunlight, which was strange anyway, shone directly to the lobby through the hall.

At this moment, all bloody faces in the lobby disappeared. The

boy kept backing off with extreme fear on his face in an attempt to stay away from the sunlight.

However, he couldn’t do that because Feng Bujue was gripping his ankle...

"Just one hit and I’ve lost eighty-four percent of my Survival Value! It’s my turn now." Feng Bujue got up and deliberately pulled the boy to the ground. Now, that little boy wasn't able to resist.

Feng Bujue used his free hand to wipe the trickle of blood on his mouth, while his other hand was grabbing the boy’s leg, dragging him to the source of sunlight. "This BOSS is strong. Even if you use your skills and hit it, I’m afraid that you still couldn’t kill it."

Finally, Wang Tanzhi felt relieved. "If I couldn’t break the wall, or if there would be another wall outside, what should we do next?"

"If it was dark out there, you could hide in the darkness. If there was another corridor, just go in that corridor and run away then. If we couldn't break the wall, just find a way to escape."

Feng Bujue spoke to him while walking, "I’m quite certain with that; thus, I asked you to use the skill. This kind of hospital’s lobby, you just need to observe the general layout and the location of the main doors to guess the direction. Look, there are corridors on both sides, and the wall behind us is sealed, but we can still see the old outline of the windows..."

He lifted the BOSS and exposed him under the sunlight which was shining through the hole.

"Brother Jue... isn't this a little bit cruel?" Wang Tanzhi looked at the pair of eyes which were filled with pain and the balled body of the child.

"You're right, it's too much," Feng Bujue answered him, but he had no intention to stop.

This was his working attitude since his childhood until now: humbly admit his faults but unlikely to change.

"Now I can put it down, let it be hospitalized again, and we will go through this hole to escape. We could finish the scenario then." Feng Bujue said, "I told you, this is a strong BOSS. Although we got the plot thoroughly when facing it, it will be pretty tough to defeat it. I think if we could kill it to complete the scenario, we would receive more EXP than that of running away."

"What? Since when have you paid attention to EXP?" Wang Tanzhi asked.

Feng Bujue rose his mouth's corner as he lifted the BOSS higher under the light. "Now I have at least three reasons to play Thriller Paradise in a proper manner.

"First, sheep fur grows on sheep. I want to play to earn back the money I've invested in this game cabin.

"Second, those random scenarios are good. From what I've read on the website, the system has a massive data source. It could combine numerous pieces of memories from players to generate the plots. In the future, the Multiplayer Survival Mode would have more complicated scenarios. Then, I can collect materials for my novels from the game.

"Third, so I can continue to find my 'Fear'!"

After finishing his words, Feng Bujue clasped his hands, then he waved at Wang Tanzhi.

Wang Tanzhi understood his move, so he moved forward and gave him the fruit knife.

"Let's see, after I killed this BOSS, how much EXP we will receive."

Feng Bujue took the knife then started stabbing...

Chapter 9: Intermission (3)

[Scenario completed. Calculating for rewards...]

[Player receives:]

[EXP: 500]

[Coins: 0.]

[Equipment/Items: None]

[Complete/Quests: 0/0]

[Complete hidden/special quests: 0]

[Worldview Unlocked: None]

[Fear Value Surged: 0 time]

[Highest Fear Value: 0%]

[Average Fear Value: 0%]

[Your Fear Rating: A whole sack of guts]

[This scenario does not have bonus rewards]

[Calculation completed. Please continue]

Now we have to know some rules related to calculation for rewards in multiplayer mode.

In Thriller Paradise, the number of mobs a player had killed by themself would not affect the EXP rewarded. EXP would be calculated altogether when the scenario was completed. Generally, if a player weren't being a d!ckhead that he caused a serious problem that affected the progress of the scenario, survivors would receive the same EXP. In case the player's performance suited the phrase 'dumber than a pig', the system would then reduce that one's EXP reward.

This was to limit 'snatching mobs' and 'over-performance'. Some players, to ensure that the items and EXP rewarded from killing some monsters belonged to them, would use unnecessary attacks excessively. For example, they would use a rocket to kill a dog in order to create bigger damage and faster performance than that of their teammates. This is an individual performance that wastes the resources of the party.

However, this rule gave birth to another problem. If the EXP rewarded was the same, killing more mobs just wasted their blood and Stamina Value. This reduced the players' will in fighting actively.

In fact, it didn't go like that since the active players who were

good at fighting would receive more Skill Value. The following parts would explain this.

In Thriller Paradise, besides no reward for killing mobs, there was no ‘dropping items’ either. For example, when a mummy died, it would be certain that there was no saber, shield or something like guns that could drop from its body. If players determinedly wanted something from the mummy, they could only take the ragged, decayed bandages or its rotten flesh. And, they had to take it themselves. When they could tear the ragged bandage and hold the item in their hands, the system would provide the properties of that said item. How crooked it was, please refer to the [Stone].

Searching for items in the game is an ‘interesting’ job. Besides solving the puzzles to enter some special places that hid items, generally, players had to ‘find’ many items for their quests on their own. For instance, the window of the shop opposite the street hung a tight Spiderman Suit. Perhaps it would be totally useless, or perhaps it was an ‘Excellent’ rated item with some given attributes. Another example is when players are wandering in the sewers. It is possible that they could find some weapons such as a pair of sabers, nunchaku, Emei dagger (1), a long rod, etc.

In short, if players wanted to find items in the scenario, they would need one of these: intelligence, luck and effort. The first two, we couldn’t wish for. The last one just required more time. Of course, if players wanted to find more items, their stamina had to be strong. Usually, the scenarios wouldn’t give players much free time to wander, moreover, they have to spend their Physical Value just to run around.

In Closed Beta Version, it was still impossible to collect the items out of the scenarios. When the game is finally released, places for such transactions would be opened too. Then, players could use coins and Skill Value to trade for them.

There was no need to explain the ‘Coins’ in the game. Its function was same with the others. Players could use coins to buy items from shops or auction items sold by other players. Or, they could do direct transactions.

Besides, the Skill Value was like a rare ‘currency’. Players couldn’t exchange Skill Value, and it couldn’t be used at shops. Skill Value could only be spent at a place called ‘The Box of Fear’.

That was the name of a special shop in the game. No one knows why it’s called like that. Maybe the designer thought that players would be startled after seeing the goods in that shop.

Skill Value could buy two things from the Box of Fear. First, it was coins. Players could exchange at the rate of 1:10. Second, items that couldn’t be brought out of the scenarios. For instance, the ‘Bloody Corpse Must Die’ that Feng Bujue had found in his newbie tutorial. Apparently, this sword was an item related to the plot of a scenario that could help him defeat the bloody corpse, which he couldn’t do with his current ability. Thus, the sword didn’t have any limitations in the players’ levels; also, it couldn’t be brought out of the scenario.

The system wouldn’t delete the data of something like items, equipment, and skills after the scenario was completed. Although players couldn’t bring them along, they would enter some places,

which were like the recycling stations. That was the Box of Fear. In this special shop, they would become goods and players could only use their Skill Value to purchase them. Their properties would be changed accordingly. For example, the requirements to use the item would be adjusted; some effects would be changed too. Most of the time, Skill Cards would become permanent, but of course, the learning conditions would be upgraded.

In Closed Beta Version, the Box of Fear hadn't been introduced yet. This 'recycling station' was empty for now. When they released the Open Beta version, the number of players would be flooded. So, at this stage, they had to store a certain amount of goods. When this special shop officially opened after seven days (real time, since the items were displayed to be sold), if the item still remained, the system would delete it to control the number of goods. Closed Beta Version had a limitation to players as they could only reach level 20. This game only based on the completion of given scenarios, so levels wouldn't be an advantage. Moreover, later players could use real money to purchase game coins. Thus, the biggest advantage of players who had participated the game since Closed Beta Version was the Skill Value they had accumulated. The very first slots of goods in the Box of Fear, only players who already had Skill Value could buy. This is a priority for them to choose the best items first.

Then, we will talk about the active fighting, which is easier to explain now. Fighting for Skill Value.

Not everybody is good at solving puzzles, but fighting, anyone could do that. Skill Value was set to reward 'the actions that promote the plot's progress'. This was not only in the form of solving puzzles but also fighting. More fighting, more chances to

receive Skill Value. For example, killing, serial killing, slaughter or using the current conditions to savage mobs in a particular way with limited damages and highest effects.

Here's a practical example. In Feng Bujue's tutorial, if he hadn't found the key and had chosen to kick the door open, he would still have received Skill Value. The important matter was the way he had kicked the door. Generally, people would kick the door with their soles. Many actors did the same in movies. In fact, that method had wasted their energies the most. A side kick or a swing kick would help them save more energy. If Feng Bujue had used a better way to kick the door, he would have still received Skill Value. Not as much as that of solving the puzzle, but at least he would have received 10 points.

Those are the two ways of playing the game. Two different thriving ways. Players who liked to reason to solve the puzzles and decode the Worldview could receive more Skill Value within one try. Players who liked to fight would constantly train to receive Skill Value out of violence. In general cases, players who fought to earn Skill Value often received more points; because if the players who were just one step away from revealing the curtain of the puzzle but still failed to solve it, no Skill Value would be given to them then. Meanwhile, players who fought could accumulate points from time to time.

No matter which way they choose, the most taboo behavior in this game was 'chuckle-headed' actions. Horror details of this game were designed to take the calmness from players and force them to do some stupid actions like using a bazooka to kill a dog. In Thriller Paradise, the most logical fighting tactics would earn the biggest benefits. Using a bazooka, one would just receive a pulp of

dusts. Using Beating Dog Stick Method, one could have the fur and a hot pot.

Feng Bujue returned to the login space then read all the data of the calculation. When he opened the menu, he found out that he had reached level 4, whereas his Stamina Value was now 400/400, and the EXP required to level up was 0/400. It seemed that the EXP required to level up in this game wasn't much. At least, up to now, each level required only one hundred points, same with the Stamina Value increase. Their homepage didn't show the particular EXP required for each level. Hotshots who wrote guides didn't discuss this either. As such, he didn't exclude the possibility of incredibly high EXP required to level up when they reached higher levels.

"Jue-Ge, I'm at level three now. Moreover, it's just 30 points more to reach level four," Wang Tanzhi's voice sounded in his communication channel.

"I know." Indeed, Feng Bujue had soon guessed about Little Tan's EXP, because the difference of 30 points between their Value Skill points had come from the bonus of the newbie tutorial. "If we play another training round of the Multiplayer Mode, we will reach level four. However, this mode doesn't offer many benefits. When we reach level five, of course, we will try Multiplayer Survival Mode. That is the core of the game, but now we are desperately lacking of equipment. Let alone good equipment, we don't even have the regular ones. If we enter some parties, we will hold them back."

"What? Party? Holding them back? Hold who?" Wang Tanzhi was bewildered.

"Surely, you haven't read the game's introductions," Feng Bujue said, "the number of members of a party could be from two to six, and they will be chosen randomly before the scenario is generated. If we have six members, it will be okay. But if we have only two and we are going to enter a scenario for three, four, five or six people, we have to team up with others.

"If we are too bad, we will probably die in the scenario. Then, when our party completes the scenario, we can only receive the EXP relative with the efforts we had made before we got killed. And, we will not receive rewards after the scenario had been completed.

"Moreover, there's the problem of looting. Between the players who aren't acquaintances, whoever finds the items or skills could keep them. Except for those that couldn't be brought out of the scenario, not anyone is willing to share the skills or equipment they found.

"That is how people's hearts work. Even if they have collected some useless items that couldn't be sold or traded, they will sell them to the system to earn some coins. They won't give them for free to their teammates. You have to exchange something to make them feel better."

Upon hearing his words, Wang Tanzhi added, "In short, if we don't take this chance to level up, after level five, it will become very difficult. And, if our Specialties are not yet unlocked, and they

want to give us trash items or useless skills, we will not be able to take them."

"It’s good that you understand. Now, we will split up then start the Single-player Survival," said Feng Bujue.

"You spoke that much because you want to abandon me! Hey!"

Feng Bujue burst out laughing and said, "I think we have completed the previous Multiplayer Training Mode perfectly. Because logically speaking, we couldn’t receive that much EXP. I think this BOSS was not originally designed to be killed. The possibility of killing the BOSS to pass the round is really rare. Regularly, players would only need to run away, then they could roughly receive 300 points.

"This leveling up is faster than what we have expected. Now, we have to complete the Single-player Training Mode by ourselves to reach level five. Our capacities would then be improved significantly. At least, we will be able to unlock one or two more specialties. Perhaps we could even receive some skills or equipment."

"Alright then. I will play alone, but I can still see your status on my friendlist, right?" asked Wang Tanzhi.

"Yeah, sure," Feng Bujue answered, "whoever finishes the scenario first should wait for the other. If there’s no unexpected event, it will take one hour max to get into level five. Then, we can try that legendary ‘Multiplayer Survival Mode’."

Chapter 10: Let's Play a Game (1)

After a quick discussion, they immediately left the party. From his friendlist, Feng Bujue saw Wang Tanzhi's status had changed from 'Idle' to 'Playing', but it didn't show the particular mode he was playing. This was to keep the player's information private.

The community menu of the Thriller Paradise had three sections, namely, 'Most recent teammates', 'Friends', and 'Blacklist'. Players couldn't add friends or put someone in their blacklist within the scenario. These tasks could only be carried out at the login space.

How to politely refuse someone's request is always a tough question to social networking websites. Dream Inc. had exerted many efforts in this term also. The cabin game could adjust the character's appearance settings, which didn't require players to log in to do so. However, Feng Bujue had never tried the settings. On one hand, he didn't care about appearance, and on the other, he was kind of handsome anyway. Although they all knew that the 'hot chicks' they would meet in the game might not be real beautiful ladies, female players always received a lot of requests.

Also, the 'holding the thigh' situation appeared. Later on, Feng Bujue would encounter this a lot. Apparently, it was normal to receive many friend requests after completing a scenario since everybody wanted to play with good players to reduce the levels of difficulty, instead of teaming up with random ones.

No matter whether they came for beauties or hugging the thigh, or just simply wanted to befriend, being denied wasn't comfy at

all. Dream Inc. had come up with a solution, in which players could only send the friend request from the login space. If one got denied, only the one who requested and that person would know. Moreover, the scenario would be completed by that time, so being denied wouldn't affect the scenario.

Only players who were friends could communicate through voice from the login space. However, video call wasn't supported; one's friends couldn't see the others' countenance.

Players who weren't friends could only communicate through email. Within 24 hours real time, one could only send three messages max to one person. If the receiver didn't reply, the fourth email couldn't be sent. Each message should not exceed 1000 words; the system also kept track of the contents. Those threatening or harassing messages would be prevented by the system. Also, the system would send an official email to the receiver to advise that a particular person had sent them a threatening or harassing message and whether they wanted to put them to the blacklist.

Once a player put another player in their blacklist, it meant that person was totally blocked. After that, they would never meet in any playing mode or receive any emails from each other. If the player who was put in a player's blacklist joined the party that had sent the same player an invite, the system would give them a prior notification.

Those terms and conditions could help players eliminate the possibility of playing a scenario together with someone they didn't want to see. This was the best effort of Dream Inc.

Of course, the actual situation wouldn't be that extreme. Most of the players, after their friend requests had been denied, wouldn't try anymore. They would continue playing though. However, sending another sarcasm could only get them in the blacklist anyway. There's a saying that reads, 'Our paths will cross again someday'. One does not play a game with the hopes of being irritated.

Feng Bujue didn't rush to start the next round. Instead, he checked his status first. He found that only 'Common' was available in his Specialties now, and the other five were still gray as they were still locked.

According to the introduction, the six 'Specialties' included Fighting, Shooting, Weapon, Investigating, Curing and Common. Specialties were not only the conditions to learn new skills, but also the core competence of a player. Although Feng Bujue didn't follow the fighting path, he couldn't be a dumbass in knowing his specialties. He had planned to open some 'Specialties' in the next scenario, better to be 'Weapon' or 'Investigating'. In Closed Beta Version, the players' fighting capacity was still low, so avoiding direct combat was the best way to complete the game.

The last thing to do was to check the items in his bag. Those sketches, which couldn't be brought out of the scenario, of course, had disappeared.

[Name: Single-use Syringe]

[Type: Consumable Item]

[Quality: Normal]

[Function: Extract or inject liquid substances]

[Remarks: Stay away from drugs. Love your life]

Feng Bujue's bag was almost empty, and he could store 30 items at the login space. Currently, he didn't have the pressure of having no space to store his items. He had thought this syringe could be useful, thus, he had taken it. Anyway, it was better than the stone. After taking a look at his status of 'no equipment nor skills', he realized that there were so many things he had to do in Single-Player Survival Mode. If he couldn't collect anything, it would be very difficult after level five. Once the training modes were closed, the difficulty level of the scenarios for Single-player Mode would be increased according to the players' levels. At that time, he might become an encumbrance to his teammates.

Feng Bujue had many expectations for the upcoming scenario. He thought that it should be as creepy as possible. As long as the rewards suited the scene, he would absolutely take it.

[Name: Feng Bujue, level 4]

[Please select game mode]

[You’ve selected ‘Single-player Survival Mode’ (Normal). Please confirm]

[Confirmed. Generating scenario...]

[Loading... Please wait]

After Feng Bujue had selected the mode, he was expecting the elevator booth to move then the door would open to the scenario. However, he was directly teleported.

Everything became dark in front of his eyes. Both of his feet didn’t touch the ground as he felt himself floating. There was nothing to hold on. The welcome voice arose again. "Welcome to Thriller Paradise." This time, it was a middle-aged female voice. It seemed that the greetings wasn’t related to the scenario. The voice and the tone were chosen randomly just to utter the welcome.

[Loaded. You are about to start the ‘Single-player Survival Mode’ (Normal)]

[This mode offers an explanation of the plot. There are chances of side/hidden quests, together with special Worldview]

[Completion Bonus: Random Skill Card that player is able to learn]

[Plot’s introduction is about to play. After the introduction, the game will start immediately]

The black scene in front of Feng Bujue had turned into a photograph. It looked like a room or a corner of a warehouse. Because of the camera angle, he could only see a part of it. It was hard to guess how big the room was. The walls seemed to be made from metal. Certainly, it wasn't wooden, and there was no painted or peeled off layers, or wallpapers. The ground was concrete. There was no furniture in the photograph.

Then, the subtitles appeared in front of his eyes. The familiar voice of the system started to narrate.

[Your name is Arthur Seagal, a famous photographer. You have a happy family, a well-paid job and a social position that could satisfy a man. Until one Christmas night, you woke up and saw yourself in a strange warehouse. The last thing you could remember is that you were walking to the parking lot to take your car after work...]

The plot wasn't long with very limited information. After reading, a white halo flashed and he was teleported into the photograph.

He was now sitting on the ground, leaning against the wall. As he hadn't clearly observed the place, he cocked his head unconsciously since he found his left hand was tightly gripping an object. It was a silver Walkman music player.

In 2055, this kind of portable tape music player was quite outdated. Feng Bujue had never seen a real one. He had seen it

once in a movie, and this scenario reminded him of that movie.

When he pressed the ‘Play’ button, a husky male voice echoed. The first sentence that man had said in English helped Feng Bujue understand the basic plot of this scenario, "Hi Arthur, I want to play a game with you..."

...

Chinese Internet slang. to cling on somebody skillful, powerful, or influential

Chapter 11: Let's Play a Game (2)

"You love your job. A job that requires a strong sense of dedication and responsibility. You've used your lens to record countless bloody images to awaken people's consciousness to stop being apathetic. But do you really care about that? Are you really a fighter who's fighting for justice? Or are you just a hypocrite hiding behind a mask?

"At this moment, a poison is diffusing in your body, nibbling your life away. After you have awakened, your metabolism rate will increase to a certain speed. You have 40 minutes to find the sole way to escape this place. Show us if the conscious of a man who's always hiding behind his camera help him return home to his loved ones? Dead or alive, choose it yourself."

After he had listened to half of the record, Feng Bujue got up and observed the surroundings. He was still wearing a black T-shirt and a pair of trousers—his character's default costume. As some tricks he had learned from movies, he checked his pockets, but they were all empty. The items he had been carrying along in the bag stayed unchanged, only a pack of syringe.

"Choose my frickin' ass," Feng Bujue cursed after he finished the record. Anyway, he was playing in a Single-player Mode, so the system would not restrict his swearing behaviors. He then checked out the Walkman's properties.

[Name: Portable Music Player with a built-in magnetic tape]

[Type: Related to the plot]

[Quality: Garbage]

[Functions: Play the magnetic tape]

[Being able to be brought out of the scenario: No]

[Remarks: You better believe what the record said]

Perhaps it was a single use item related to the plot. Although Feng Bujue had remembered exactly each word from the record, he still played it one more time, not bothering with the fact that he had to waste two minutes more.

When he finished the record, he put the Walkman into his bag. This scenario might not only have one tape, so he should be prepared.

The place in front of his eyes was spacious in which the ceiling was over 20 meters from the ground. On the wall adjacent to the ceiling laid a giant ventilator. Sunlight from outside was shining through that fan, but there was nothing to aid him climbing up there. The warehouse had a vault. From where he was standing, he could see many beams being installed parallel to the ground. Fluorescent tube lights were hanging from there, and they were all turned on. The wall was hard, covered with a thin layer of metal. Perhaps there was a brick wall behind the metal layer, however, no matter what kind of wall it was, Feng Bujue, of course, couldn’t

break it to get out of this place.

The system wouldn’t create a scenario that players could finish within just three minutes. Supposing he had the ‘Explosion God Fist’, which was usable for two times, and his Fighting Specialty was graded F, the system would definitely change the scenario or make the wall double thick. This would prevent Feng Bujue from using skills to get out directly, even though this thought was just in theory since the success rate of the fist skill was just 20 percent, and he couldn’t know how thick the wall was before punching it.

When the system had generated the quests, it would inevitably kill all the possibilities. Taking Feng Bujue’s case now, he wouldn’t definitely meet this type of scenario.

In short, the system, certainly, would not generate a scenario that players could complete with only their original status, of which they had when entering the scenario, no matter how small this possibility was.

Feng Bujue stepped forward. There were many boxes piled up in the middle of the warehouse. The tallest pile had three layers of boxes, but it was still a way up to the ceiling. Those boxes were placed one after another, forming the only path in front of Feng Bujue.

"Oh, I have a bad feeling about this." Of course, he didn’t mean he got scared. He just thought that the rewards for this scenario wouldn’t be positive for him. According to his thoughts, such scenario that looked similar to Saw couldn’t make a normal player’s Fear Value fluctuate much.

In Jigsaw's slaughter game, the horror came from 'time'. In this game, dangers were hidden everywhere, making death crawl to the player. If there were no abnormal situations, player's Fear Value would increase rapidly. Moreover, the ways that the movies' characters had used to run away were all 'self-damaging'. Physical pains and the feeling of their time running out were the core reasons that made them fail. However, players of Thriller Paradise could only feel a small pain like a hammer hitting their fingers. Even if they experienced a lot of pain all over their bones, they could still bear it.

Whoever watched these series should all know that Jigsaw's purpose isn't killing people but 'saving them'. He used pain to save someone who didn't treasure their lives, giving them another point of view about life and helping them understand how precious life is. They just need to follow the 'rules of the game' and dare to hurt themselves; eventually, they will find the way out.

After Feng Bujue had weighed those factors, he confirmed that 80% of the difficulty level of this scenario was focused on 'solving the puzzle'.

The system wouldn't create a situation that could put players into a must-die consequence. At least, this possibility would not exist in a playing mode with the 'Normal' difficulty. The difficulty level of the scenario would be designed accordingly with the player's capacity. It would only be increased in the 'Multiplayer Mode'.

To a player who had his capacity, besides the Physical Value,

which was equal to that of a level one, the system could only create such a scenario. His current status didn't enable him to fight, so if the scenario had created a BOSS or a mob that suited players at level four, he couldn't have beaten it. Thus, the way to complete this scenario was clear.

Two options. The first one, he had to solve the puzzle. The second one, he could follow the players in the movie series, using his Survival Value to endure or die.

Not long after that, Feng Bujue walked on the path created from numerous boxes towards a wall. There was an arrow on the wall that pointed to a door hiding behind some boxes. The gap there was narrow, just enough for one man to slide through.

Feng Bujue glared at his Stamina Value and Survival Value on the menu. They were all full, however, the Survival Value would be reduced gradually when the 'poison' started to expand. About the Physical Value, he didn't care.

He pulled himself together and adjusted his breath. He understood that Jigsaw's game would start once he opened the door. He should focus from now on.

He wormed through the narrow space then opened the door, and a cracking sound echoed in his ears. Apparently, there was something behind that door that he had just activated. The room was lit up after a few seconds. After Feng Bujue stepped into the room, the door automatically closed. He didn't know if it was the mechanism of the door or if the system did that.

A small wooden chair stood in the middle of the room where a doll in a black suit was perching. It was holding a piece of paper. The doll looked exactly like a baby boy—creepy hair, pale face, black eyes with red pupils, rosy cheeks and juicy red lips.

If this face appeared in front of you at midnight, it would be very scary. But at this moment, unless it jumped up and bit him, Feng Bujue would not be shocked let alone be scared.

"Hi, Arthur! If you are here, it means you didn’t choose to wait for death quietly. Let’s hear the rules carefully then."

The record hidden in the doll’s belly automatically played after the door cracked open. "Sure you saw the machine is working."

Feng Bujue’s eyes moved to a machine as big as a washing machine. There was a plate-sized hole on the machine, big enough to put one hand in. The sound of working machine came out from there.

Feng Bujue stepped forward to check it. Half a meter deep inside the hole were two rolling gears, connected closely to each other, leaving just a very narrow slit. Those two gears were rotating inward, which looked like two waterfalls merging with each other. They didn’t move fast, but the twisting force was strong.

With that capacity, it was easy to grind wood or even metal materials.

There was also a countdown clock attached near the hole. The remaining time was only five minutes, and it was running fast. Next to the clock was a weighing scale with kilogram as the measuring unit. The hand of the scale was now pointed at zero.

"This machine could crush things, but it could also open the door leading to the next room. What you have to do is to put heavy objects in it. When you put something that is heavier than fifteen kilograms in the machine, the door will open. If you try to show that you are a smartass and unplug the machine or wait until the countdown is over, the machine will stop working..."

Feng Bujue's eyes moved to another place. He was searching for something to put into that machine.

Besides that chair and the doll, of course, there was something else.

"That steel cage is welded to the ground, holding a Macaque monkey, who has been injected with a high-dose of anesthetic. It weighs 10 kilograms. Of course, the first thing you want to do is to throw the chair and the doll into the machine. Too bad, the total weight of them combined is just seven and a half kilogram..."

Feng Bujue picked up the newspaper in the doll's hand. The article was titled, 'They are not your dinner!' The illustration below displayed a small, vulnerable infant, lying flat on its back in the cage, looking out with helpless eyes that only animals could have. Arthur Seagal was the author of that article.

"You criticized illegal hunters as the cheapest and the ones who buy wildlife products as the ‘luxury butchers’. However, during your vacations, which you called the business journey, you have enjoyed meals made from protected species. Your wife’s closet has more than one fur coat. You’ve seen them being killed with your own eyes, but you just stood there and watched indifferently. Now, you have the chance to experience the butcher’s job. Will you trade their lives for your chance of survival? Choose, Arthur!"

Then, the record stopped.

Feng Bujue was still reading the article. His old illness came again as he wanted to read the article thoroughly—the one that the system had just made up.

Saw: is an American horror franchise distributed by Lions Gate Entertainment, produced by Twisted Pictures and created by two Australians, director James Wan and screenwriter Leigh Whannell, that consists of seven feature films and additional media.

The franchise revolves around the main antagonist, John Kramer, also called the "Jigsaw Killer" or simply "Jigsaw". He was introduced briefly in Saw and developed in more detail in Saw II. Rather than killing his victims outright, Jigsaw traps them in situations that he calls "tests" or "games" to test their will to live through physical or psychological torture. Despite the fact that John was murdered in Saw III, the films continue to focus on the posthumous influence of the Jigsaw Killer and his apprentices by exploring his character via flashbacks.

Chapter 12: Let's Play a Game (3)

"Oh, this old trick could apply on the female players who are full of motherhood. Perhaps it would work."

Feng Bujue lifted his eyes from the article and glanced at the infant monkey in the cage.

"Well, if needed, even in real life, I would do that without any hesitation, let alone a game!" He put the newspaper down, seemed not too interested in it anymore. "But if it repeated the exact weight, there should be a hint."

He walked towards the machine and crouched down to observe closely. Then, he walked around it one time, knocked his hand on the cover and kicked it twice.

Apparently, the cover of the machine wasn’t just a layer of iron, but a solid one. The screws were installed tightly that it couldn’t be removed just by bare hands. Moreover, one person couldn’t move it with all of his strength.

There was no visible crack on the surface of the machine. The weighing scale also looked tough. It would be useless wasting three minutes looking for some hints there.

Feng Bujue tried to shake the cage while holding the Macaque infant several times to see if it had been firmly bolted to the ground.

He walked around the room, and besides the wall, there was nothing else.

He then returned to the middle of the room, lifted the doll and tried to sit on the chair. Since it was so small, Feng Bujue now looked like he was crouching on the ground.

"If I want to get out of this room without killing the infant... besides the chair and the doll, which are 7.5 kilograms, I need to find something that weighs seven kilograms more." He rested his right hand on his knee, cocked his head, and tapped on his forehead with the index and middle fingers.

"The Walkman is one kilogram max. No need to mention the syringe. The system won't let me take off my clothes or shoes. Man, I miss the stone now. At least it weighs one or two kilograms."

He burst out laughing. "Then, there is only one thing I could touch in this room."

Feng Bujue lifted his head and looked at the light on the ceiling.

It was a hanging fluorescent tube light. The tube was about one meter long, fixed to a plastic holder and hung there by two strings. Wires were coiled around those two strings.

The ceiling of this room was much lower than that of the storage

outside. Still, it was roughly four meters from the ground. Although the tube light wasn't hung close to the ceiling, it was out of Feng Bujue's reach.

He got up, stepped on the wooden chair then tried to reach out for it. His fingers were around 10 centimeters away from the tube; this distance wasn't short or long but it was enough to prevent people from touching the tube. The chair was so small; there was barely any space between his feet for him to jump up and grab the object.

Time was running out. Feng Bujue had 73 seconds left.

He checked the distance and turned around to look at the clock, then he laughed and muttered, "It's tough right at the beginning. I like it!"

After having roughly estimated things, Feng Bujue glared at the doll again. It seemed that he had finally come up with a solution as he ran to the doll, took off its black suit and stepped on the chair again.

Feng Bujue now held the suit by its sleeve with his left hand then threw it up there.

Although the children-sized cloth was small, it was enough to tangle on the tube light. Feng Bujue raised his right hand to grab the sleeve that he just threw over the light.

The suit looked like a pair of reins on the horse's mouth. Feng Bujue tightly held both sleeves and pulled. One string broke.

One end of the tube light was sagged, and the other end was hung there like a sausage swinging from the ceiling.

Now, Feng Bujue could grab the tube directly. Since three sides of the tube were covered by plastic material, he didn't worry about breaking it with his tight grip. The room was sunk into darkness as it lost the sole source of light. However, it wasn't difficult to hold the dangling tube light in front of him. He then pulled it with a little force to break the other string. Now, he had the one-meter fluorescent tube light with its plastic holder.

Feng Bujue was still counting the time while he was taking the light. There was around 35 seconds left now. In the dark, the machine was still working. He didn't hurry to get to the source of the mechanical working sound but carefully got off the chair, using his foot to search for the doll on the ground. When he had memorized the locations of these two objects, he counted the number of steps while walking to the machine.

When he got near to the machine, everything became simple. He could use the noise to locate the hole. Feng Bujue kept his head backwards while putting the tube light into the hole. The gears started to crush the tube light and let the crumbling pieces fall through the slit. There were some pieces of glass that scattered during the process; as Feng Bujue was well-prepared, he didn't get hurt.

When three-fourth of the tube got into the machine, Feng Bujue

let go of it and turned to the previous direction. He counted his steps while walking in the dark.

Moreover, he tried to control his steps so as he wouldn't kick away the things he wanted. If he did, he would have no time to grope for them in the dark.

As he had estimated, he touched the doll on the ground after ten steps. Time was running out. Feng Bujue squatted down and snatched the doll with one hand, while his other hand grabbed the chair. This time, his steps were longer as he didn't need to calculate the distance. It just took him a few seconds to throw the doll into the hole.

The backrest of the chair was larger than the hole's diameter. Feng Bujue learned this before and always remembered it. If he hadn't considered this, he would have found the chair stuck in the hole. Feng Bujue, of course, wouldn't make such a silly mistake. Never before. He had already calculated all things he needed to do in the dark before he pulled the light.

While the machine was grinding the doll, he grabbed the chair by its backrest and trod on it to deform it. It would save time when putting the chair through the hole.

The countdown clock was ticking its last five seconds. The deformed wooden chair went through the machine smoothly. After three seconds, the rumbling sound of the machine stopped. The room was dark, and Feng Bujue couldn't see the scale and the clock now. He didn't know whether he had put enough of the required 15 kilograms into the machine or the time was over, so the

machine had to stop.

In the next seconds, time was passing by interminably and painfully. Nothing happened. Feng Bujue's heart gradually sank. Wasn't the weight of the tube light heavy enough? In reality, this kind of fluorescent tube light and its holder might be not as heavy as 7.5 kilograms. However, when he had held them, he could feel clearly that they were heavier than usual. He thought the game had designed them that way. Would it be a bug in the logic of the puzzle and that the only way to get out of this place was to kill the monkey?

However, his doubts vanished after a strange cracking sound echoed out. Then, the door led to the next room opened. It seemed that the total time the machine took to react was 10 seconds.

A beam of light shone through the slit just like it was announcing the game was still continuing.

Chapter 13: Let's Play a Game (4)

Feng Bujue heaved a sigh of relief seeing that the door cracked open. He didn’t rush out of this place, however, with the limited light sneaking into the room from the door, he came by the cage, opened the latch, and took the sleeping monkey out.

[Name: Sleeping Macaque]

[Type: Related to the plot]

[Quality: Normal]

[Functions: Unknown]

[Being able to be brought out of the scenario: Yes]

[Remarks: A brave, lively breed of monkeys, which are almost extinct]

"A plot-related item that could be brought out of the scenario..." Feng Bujue mused then tried to put the monkey into his bag.

It worked!

And just like that, he left the room.

There was a path outside the door which had four metal walls. The ceiling was still four or five meters from the ground. The lighting system was the same, but no windows could be seen. There was a turn and a door, however, the door couldn't be opened since it was blocked by a big object. Apparently, he had only one choice. Along the way, there were arrows, painted in red, showing him the way. Feng Bujue walked around the place. After several tries, he came to a conclusion that there was nothing useful on this path. He then sped up, following the arrows on the wall. It was about seven or eight minutes before he reached the end of the path, where a metal door with a red mark stood

The door didn't have a knob. Instead, a hand valve wheel was laid in the middle of the door.

Feng Bujue stepped forward and tried to pull the valve. The resistance force was strong, so he had to put a lot of effort to make it move.

After being turned half a circle, the object started to move. An icy-cold air current flooded out from the slit.

Feng Bujue immediately had a strange premonition. When he pushed the door, he found out that this metal door was very thick and the room it locked was apparently a closed freezer. Cold air immediately slapped his face just as he opened the door.

The interior of the room suited the name 'a world of ice and snow' well. Snow covered the entire ground, and frost appeared all over the place. Feng Bujue lifted his head to observe. Besides the lighting system, there were three round pipes, around one meter in

diameter, located at the three upper corners of the room. Right when he opened the door, snowflakes started to flow out from those pipes. Although those pipes looked big, not many snowflakes were scattering.

Feng Bujue took a deep breath then exhaled his warm breath to his palms while rubbing them together to generate some heat. He then entered the room. After crossing the threshold, he immediately found that the elevation of the floor was not right. The ground in the room was lower; it wasn't on the same plane with the path outside. The mist he saw on the ground was actually a knee-high layer of snow. When he started to step forward, his ankle sank into the snow. The freezing cold made him jump several times to not touch it too much. But it was useless. The snow was so soft. The method to keep him from sinking was to increase the contact area, thus, he determinedly kneeled down.

He didn’t close the door but started to crawl to the opposite wall right away. There was a door without any handles. Only a PIN electronic lock was installed on the door. The screen displayed four blank slots for a four-digit password. On the adjacent wall, there was a movable square iron plate, about 10 centimeters wide and had a handle on it. Feng Bujue pulled the plate and the thick metal door was automatically closed.

A small space hid behind the iron plate, where a magnetic tape could be found. It was clear what to do next.

Feng Bujue picked up the magnetic tape, hauled out the Walkman player, took the current tape out, put the new tape in, then pressed the Play button.

"Merry Christmas, Arthur. This is the wonderful time when families finally get together. At the same time, the holiday also means blessing and repaying..."

As Feng Bujue was listening to the record, he was observing the room carefully for the second time. He immediately noticed the most eye-catching object in the room: a sheet of newspaper, which looked new, was taped on the metal wall. Obviously, this wall was designed not to be frosted. The room's moisture wasn't high either; it didn't blur the words on the piece of newspaper.

The most prominent title on the page was 'They are no different from us' with an illustration of a group of homeless people surrounding a burning bonfire in an oil drum to warm themselves up. The background was winter with a white snowy ground. Of course, this article came from the hand of 'Arthur Seagal'.

"You always attend charity parties and show yourself in front of the screen. But we know you have never donated to any organization. You've called on people not to discriminate the homeless, but you have never given those lower-class people your respect. Your harsh and snobbish attitudes made people sick. You've talked about the elderly and publicly explained that they deserved more attention, but every year, you make up excuses to not stay with your parents on Christmas.

"Arthur, you've not only criticized human's indifference and the society's injustice once, but your actions have proved that you actually don't know what you are talking about.

"Now you have a chance to win the challenge without any available help. There's a piece of cardboard in this frosted room with the password on it. What you need to do is to find it under the layer of snow.

"Just like those people, who are still waiting for hope on a cold winter night, you don't have a time limit. However, whatever you are looking for, the best result is to be able to survive until dawn. "

The recording ended when Feng Bujue felt so cold he was shivering. The default costume promised to make the players comfortable when the ambient temperature was around 20 Celsius degrees. If the environment temperature had fluctuated, players would have the relative sensations. Currently, this room was like a freezer that was adjusted at zero degree; moreover, the pipes on the ceiling were still discharging snow at low speed to increase the quantity of snow in the room. To ensure his fingers' flexibility, Feng Bujue kept breathing out warm air to his palms. He played the record in his head once again, then muttered the last sentence of it, "Just like the people waiting for hope on a cold winter night... find 'something' to survive until dawn..." He assumed that this was the only hint. It was uncertain, but it still indicated something.

Feng Bujue got up again; his knees were numb. It was okay to walk in the snow now because he was so cold he had lost his senses. He staggered to the piece of newspaper, scrutinizing the illustration on the article with his bright eyes. He was searching for anything that could be a clue.

Feng Bujue knew that this was the best time to find some hints. Draining his physical strength with other activities would let his

time run low. If he had started to dig the snow with his hands, after five minutes, even if his fingers weren't numb because of the coldness, his body's temperature would have decreased faster. If it had developed to the hazy state and slow-action before his body became stiff from the cold temperature, it would be impossible to find any clues.

"Things that could help the homeless survive until dawn..." Feng Bujue spoke out loud to gather his attention, "They congregate around the oil drum bonfire and burn something to warm up until morning? No, not that..."

The image of an old man wearing a pair of sunglasses popped up in his mind. "Oh yeah... three holy weapons when MADAO sleeps outside are a carton, a dog, and a radio."

When he had come up with this thought, he immediately started to take action.

The piece of newspaper was unfolded and taped at its four corners. Feng Bujue tried to take the page out of the wall by tearing a bit at each corner. He was careful not to tear off the article.

"The dog is impossible. Unless I can make one out of snow. The Walkman could replace the radio. Cartons..."

Feng Bujue peeled off the piece of newspaper. Even though it was torn a little bit at the corners, it was still good enough for what he was about to do.

This piece of paper was new as said above; thus, the folds on it were clear. Normally, one would not fold a newspaper more than twofold, but this page had many creases. This showed that it used to be folded into something.

Feng Bujue started to fold the paper with those old creases. His hands were still working, not yet affected by the freezing coldness. In fact, the special status next to his Survival Value in the menu was displaying the word ‘Frozen’ now.

Although that piece of paper was torn at the corners, Feng Bujue could still easily fold it into a small box.

Feng Bujue held up the box, then shifted it, changing his angle of views to study it. Eventually, he found a spot where the folds overlapped, making a chain of words and numbers.

The letters on the newspaper couldn’t always be the same. It would randomly have different fonts for title and body of the articles or the credit notes under the photographs. Besides the fonts, there were also uppercase and lowercase letters.

Feng Bujue found a chain of words, consisted of the same font and were all written in uppercase. From the different words at different locations on the newspaper after being folded, they became a neat one.

"FM27.3 MHZ..." Feng Bujue murmured, "Radio frequency of an amatuer station..."

Then, he changed the Walkman to the radio mode.

All the frequency gave the same noise. Even the FM 27.3 MHZ. Since he had determined that this was the correct one, he just turned on the volume and waited patiently.

After 40 seconds of crackling sound, a husky voice read, "9, 5, 2, 7."

Then came the rustling sound.

Feng Bujue stormed to the door, entered the password and said with an unhappy voice, "I feel that this damn password somehow wants to say, ‘inferior people and dogs are not allowed to get inside’..."

The password was correct, and the door opened. Feng Bujue sprinted out of the room. When he got to the corridor, he had to roll on the ground two times. Afterwards, he got up and stretched his arms as he jumped up and down dozens of times. During this process, he had glared at his menu. The Survival Value had been decreased to 67%, however, the ‘Frozen’ status had disappeared.

No matter what, his method cost him less than crawling on the ground and digging snow. Feng Bujue always had bad luck playing games. The games that required to ‘find the needle in the haystack’ were like a piece of cake to him. He didn’t expect to find the piece of paper by digging up every inch of that room.

After he had gotten through the second door, he didn't turn off the Walkman immediately. He then found the frequency of it. After each minute, the broadcast in channel FM 27. 3 would read the password once. The other frequencies didn't have anything else but irritating static white noises.

As he had recovered his body's temperature, Feng Bujue continued to walk forward. He guessed that this scenario didn't plan or calculate how long it would take 'Arthur Seagal' to reach the hospital after he broke out. At the beginning, the record mentioned that he had 40 minutes to get into the exit; if not, the poison in his body would kill him. However, Feng Bujue didn't see the 'Poisoned' status on his menu. At this moment, he couldn't reason the cause of the reduction of his Survival Value, whether it was due to the cold or the poison, which was slowly expanding in his body. In short, it didn't matter whether he was really poisoned or not—it was only related to a part of the plot. In simple words, he had to escape the scenario within 40 minutes. If he couldn't do that, it would be 'Game Over' for him.

Feng Bujue had already spent 20 minutes. The time he needed to break through the second challenge was short, plus the five minutes he had spent in the first room, and the time he had been running. He would only have roughly 15 minutes left for the third challenge. The system would definitely consider the possibility where players had chosen to dig up the snow and stayed there longer. From the time balancing, the last challenge Feng Bujue had to face would be the final one. When he finished it, he could complete this scenario.

MADAO: is a nickname of a character in GINTAMA, who is an unemployed middle-aged man living in the park. English translated terms: Middle Aged Dumb Ass Oldies.

Chapter 14: Let's Play a Game (5)

On his way to the next room, Feng Bujue found something that made him happy. His Weapon Specialty was unlocked, graded F now. He didn’t know whether it was because he was messing with the Walkman or folding the paper, but it was good that he had unlocked a new specialty. Later, when he finished this scenario, if the system awarded him with Weapon or Common skills, he could be able to learn them.

A few minutes later, he reached a door marked with a red symbol. He pushed the door and slid through.

The room wasn’t so spacious. There were two televisions leaning against the wall, and a table stood amidst the room with a key on it. In the right corner of the room, there was an installed vertical pipeline, roughly one meter in diameter, protruding from the ground. Feng Bujue came near to take a look, and discovered the pipe’s diameter was big enough to put a tennis ball into it.

Although he hadn’t touched anything since he had entered the room, the door automatically closed behind him. At the same time, one of the two televisions was turned on. A white-faced puppet appeared on the screen.

"Hello, Arthur! Perhaps you are thinking that our game is going to end and you can get out of here alive. However, ask yourself if you deserve this. Would the temporary kindness and short-lived pain be able to change your deceitful natures?

"Both you and I understand it. You’re not totally redeemed."

Feng Bujue didn’t say anything. He thought this video wouldn’t be the same with the previous recordings. The ‘temporary good turns’ and ‘short-term pain’ seemed to indicate the ways he had chosen to get through the first two rooms. It also meant that this video was just being recorded several minutes before, or it was being streamed live.

The second television suddenly turned on. Feng Bujue couldn’t believe his own eyes—Wang Tanzhi was on TV!

Wang Tanzhi was walking through a corridor and he looked like he had already gotten hurt. There were bloodstains on his body, and his walking posture was weird.

"Rolling in the puddle of fame and wealth helps you make friends with nasty people. I believe they won’t bat an eye knowing you have gone missing. However, Arthur my dear, you have a friend. A true friend."

The puppet continued, "Johan is playing a game now, but he is going towards a dead end. The only thing that could help him escape and help you get out of here is that key on the table.

"You can use the key to open the last door, or you can throw it into the pipe to bring it to Johnan.

"There’s only one key. If the despicable two-faced Arthur Seagal

chooses to die, the kind, upright Johan will survive.

Dead or alive? Choose it yourself!"

Feng Bujue stared at the TV bewilderedly for a whole two minutes. He was wondering what was happening to Wang Tanzhi on the second TV. "Is it just a fake image that the scenario has made up or I am really watching Wang Tanzhi playing his Single-player Survival Mode? If it’s true, this system is so cool it could relate two different players in different scenarios for a moment!"

He thought, "Seems like I have to ask Little Tan after we finished the game. Now I could only assume, no way to test it."

Feng Bujue couldn’t help but praise the intelligence of the scenario. The plot settings had made Arthur a bad guy, who hadn’t changed a bit after the two challenges as if those two rooms were insignificant to him.

According to the plot, his last decision was the most important. If Arthur sacrificed Johan to run away, his life would constantly be bothered by his consciousness, making him live in sorrow. His selfishness and deceit would be amplified endlessly, torturing his mind. Eventually, Arthur would become an insane follower of altruism, making him a real philanthropist as though it would make him feel better.

This is the so-called ‘Salvation’. The game had set up players to overcome challenges to make them treasure their lives. Then, they would appreciate their remaining time on earth.

In the other option, Arthur would choose to die to give his close friend Johan a chance to survive. This is ‘sacrifice for salvation’.

Feng Bujue shrugged, then approached the table and picked up the key.

After giving the last look to the closed door, he talked to himself, "If so, I have to fail this scenario?" He walked to the pipe and threw the key into it without any hesitation.

Then, the second TV turned off. The puppet in the first TV opened its mouth and spoke up again, "A decision that’s worth our respect! Arthur, don’t worry. Death is the sublimation of the soul."

Seemed it wasn’t a real video.

"That door..." Feng Bujue turned around, pointing towards the door. "Is the threshold leading to death."

The puppet’s neck in the TV slightly moved, but it didn’t answer him.

"You’ve played with the words well, very logical. I almost got fooled."

Feng Bujue said, "The only thing that could help him ‘escape’ and help me ‘get out of this place’," he smiled, "ha-ha, if I took the key

and opened the door, I would die, wouldn’t I?"

The puppet still didn’t reply.

"You said that I could use the key ‘to open the last door’, but you didn’t say that I could survive when I open the door. I could only think of the way to ‘get out of this place’."

Feng Bujue continued, "The key hint here is the saying ‘If the despicable two-faced Arthur Seagal chooses to die, the kind, upright Johan will survive’."

He opened his hand and continued, "I had thought for a few seconds to realize that those options are not conflicted. At this moment, Johan got the key. He could be alive, but the ‘despicable two-faced Arthur’ is dead now.

"Standing here is Arthur Seagal, who had been through the games to become a man who could sacrifice his life for his friends —a man who earns respect from other people. He has received the ‘sublimation of the soul’. Am I right?"

The puppet finally spoke up, "Excellent! You’ve discovered the rules of the games, but it makes me doubt the results of the challenges."

"You are really just a combination of data generated by the system, aren’t you?"

Feng Bujue narrowed his eyes as he walked towards the TV. "To you, my choice wasn’t a logical foregone conclusion? Or the fact that I passed the test thanks to my cunning conscience is more important?"

He crouched down in front of the TV and spoke with a voice that he was trying to press down, making it the type of a recorded voice, "Indeed, the last choice in the scenario isn’t about life or death. It is about me and how I undergo the scenario.

"If I put myself in Arthur Seagal’s character, my choice would be as predicted. The despicable journalist wouldn’t care about the others, just take the key, and open the door. He had to die.

"If I weighed the game under the ‘player’s point of view’, I would choose it with my own calculation. To the players in Thriller Paradise, this is just a scenario. The options are simple: pass the scenario or ‘Game Over’. Thus, I would choose to take the key, open the door and die.

"Only when I use the objective thoughts to apply it to the subjective thoughts of the character, ‘a player who plays Arthur Seagal’s roles’, would I be able to overcome his self-assumption to make the correct decisions. Thus, even if I didn’t break your circus show, I would still choose to throw the key to the pipe since it is the perfect climax for this scenario.

"And then, you would give me a happy yet scary result, right?"

At this moment, the TV suddenly darkened as though the puppet

had actively cut the discussion. The familiar emotionless system voice echoed in Feng Bujue's ears.

[You've completed the scenario. Automatically teleport in 60 seconds.]

Chapter 15: Intermission (4)

[Scenario completed. Calculating for rewards...]

[EXP: 450]

[Coins: 4500]

[Items: Sleeping Macaque]

[Complete/Quests: 0/0]

[Special/Hidden Quest complete: 0]

[Worldview Unlocked: None]

[Fear Value Surged: 0 time]

[Highest Fear Value: 0%]

[Average Fear Value: 0%]

[Your Fear rating: A whole sack of guts. Receive extra rewards for ranking #1. Please select later]

[Skill Value: 100.]

[EXP increased by Skill Value: 100]

[Coins increased by Skill Value: 1000]

[Scenario's bonus: Skill Card x 1 pcs.]

[Calculation completed. Please continue]

After Feng Bujue had checked his rewards at the login space, the system's notification came up right away.

[You've reached level 5. Your Stamina Value has increased up to 500/500]

His EXP was now 150/500.

The EXP rewarded in 'Single-player Survival Mode' and 'Multiplayer Training Mode' were not much different. When Feng Bujue and Wang Tanzhi played the 'Multiplayer Training Mode', they had been ranked level 1 and 2 respectively. If the system hadn't considered the super-tough level of difficulty that they had completed by killing the BOSS, the EXP rewarded after completing the scenario would have been only 300 max—never would it be 500. However, this time, the system hadn't generated the scenario for the Single-player Survival Mode based on his level of 4. According to the EXP ratio, at his level, if he had played the basic 'Single-Player Training Mode', he would have earned roughly 400 points for his EXP.

Thus, the rewards from the ‘Survival Modes’ were much better than the ‘Training Modes’. Currently, Feng Bujue had received more Skill Value, more EXP and game coins. Besides, he had the bonus with his exceptional Fear rating.

However, this scenario’s calculation had something that gave him doubts. Previously, when he took the [Single-use Syringe] from a scenario, the [Items] in his calculation showed ‘None’. Relatively, the [Sleeping Macaque] was calculated into his rewards this time.

He was sure that there was no paragraph mentioned this circumstance in the introduction of the game. Apparently, it was a normal situation. The game’s website said that the advertisement and the general rules that the game publicized there would not go into details.

To Feng Bujue, something that he couldn’t explain was like a fish bone stuck in his throat. Especially the matters that looked insignificant but still, he had no clue. It irritated him so much.

He was too lazy to skim through the game’s forum since information related to the system like that wouldn’t be discussed thoroughly there. Then, he directly contacted the Customers Service from his login space. The clerk was really stumped for this matter. He had taken a lot of time to give Feng Bujue a reasonable answer: To ‘consumable items’, such as medicines, bandages, synthetic components, mechanical parts, etc., and other items that were rated ‘Normal’ and lower, even if the player had gotten them from the scenario, they would not be listed in his calculation list

later. It was the same with the case that his item was rated ‘Garbage’.

Feng Bujue immediately understood that in the scenario of the ‘Multiplayer Mode’, there were so many items that met the conditions above. If later, players could equip themselves with massive luggage, and for people who felt too bored, at the final 60 seconds countdown, they would collect everything on the ground, e.g., rock, a piece of brick, a tree branch, some grass, etc., then brought all of them out of the scenario, their list of reward would be super lengthy. It would trouble the system for sure. That was why the system had settings like that.

After he understood the matter, Feng Bujue hauled the monkey out of his bag and checked its properties. Unexpectedly, what he had taken out of the bag wasn’t a monkey, but a card as big as a tarot card. At the same time, the system’s notification popped up in front of him.

[After completing the scenario, players could possibly receive items that are ‘related to the plot and could be able to be brought out of the scenario’. Those are necessary to complete the quests or received at the crucial moments in the scenario. Due to different causes, in case the players could complete the scenario without using the items, those items that are ‘related to the plot and could be able to be brought out of the scenario’ would be brought to the login space, turning into [Jigsaw Puzzle Piece] as one piece of a set of cards (not yet opened).]

Feng Bujue read the notification then eyed the [Jigsaw Puzzle Piece] on his hand. The material of the card seemed to be paper,

but it was unbendable. The edges of the card were glowing with a strange white light. Both sides of the card looked identical, not distinguishing the front or the back. The drawing on the card was an ink wash painting of a monkey.

[Jigsaw Puzzle Piece: Monkey] was the only description of the item. Only a name, nothing else.

Feng Bujue checked Wang Tanzhi's status in his friendlist. His homie was still playing, so he didn't hurry to take the rewards but instead called the Customer's Service again.

Alright, let me (the author) give you a sparse explanation for this set of cards.

First, we have to know the 'Qualities of items'. It was publicized on the website as follows:

Garbage: It's not easy to make this worthless piece of garbage work normally.

Broken: Old, worn out, flawed, but better than having nothing.

Normal: a normal item, if you could use it properly, it would help you out.

Excellent: a reliable, good equipment, a trustworthy partner in crime. (Items ranked 'Excellent' have at least one attribute or special effect.)

Perfect: top flawless equipment, rare but intimidating. (Items ranked ‘Perfect’ will definitely have special effects, but not necessary to have attributes.)

Legendary: a fantasy item that any players would dream about, enough to upgrade the user to another level.

From the ranks of quality, it could be seen that the ‘Excellent’ items are the main equipment and items in the game at this stage, as well as the rank of quality that a majority of players could achieve.

I’ve mentioned that the way to find equipment in Thriller Paradise is to ‘seek’ for them. But what if the players couldn’t find them, end up without any equipment, and resulted in lowering their competencies, hence, their lower competencies will trouble them with finding equipment? It could form a vicious circle, what should we do then?

This set of cards is what the game producer has come up with to solve the problem. It would give the players an alternative way to have an equipment. When players have collected a series of cards, they could exchange it for an item ranked ‘Excellent’, at the very least. It’s even possible to have Perfect items.

What is considered a ‘series’? The answer is random. There are countless ways to have a series of cards.

For example, this [Jigsaw Puzzle Piece: Monkey], if you have

other [Jigsaw Puzzle Pieces] of a Monk, a white horse, a pig, a cannibal, this set of cards could be considered a series.

Same principle if you have cards of mouse, buffalo, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, ram, rooster, dog, and pig, together with this [Jigsaw Puzzle Piece: Monkey], you can make a series of twelve cards.

When the system accepts your set of cards as a series, you can immediately use it to exchange for items.

Thus, a random Jigsaw Puzzle Piece could join many different series, and a card would be created randomly. For example, Feng Bujue brought a monkey out of his scenario, but it wouldn't be definitely turned into the [Jigsaw Puzzle Piece: Monkey] as it could probably be a jigsaw puzzle piece of an orangutan, King Kong, a lock of hair, or even a peach.

Another example, if someone took a pair of straw sandals, it could turn out to be the Jigsaw Puzzle Piece of feet, straws or the Royal Uncle.

This sort of diversified settings aims to make each item of which 'related to the plot and could be able to be brought out of the scenario' to become a useful Jigsaw Puzzle Piece. At the later stages of the game, if the players are strong enough to be able to use force to solve the majority of problems, those items that are related to the plot will alter their strategies to finish the scenario.

Thus, players who don't have equipment could play the 'Single-

player Survival Mode' to take out a 'related-to-the-plot' item and make it their Jigsaw Puzzle Piece when they have completed the scenario.

Of course, players couldn't commit suicide after taking their desired items, because the minimum requirement for earning Jigsaw Puzzle Pieces is to pass the scenario. In case the players die, they could bring with them any items that they had previously gotten, except for the one that was related to the plot. This is to prevent the situation that could happen in 'Multiplayer Mode', in which the whole party couldn't complete the scenario after a member got killed.

Feng Bujue had finished his call with the Customers Service. He did some required touches to turn his Jigsaw Puzzle Piece into his data at the login space. Then, he went to receive the rewards and bonus.

Since the beginning of the scenario, he hadn't had any hope for his Fear Value in this round because this scenario was just so-so. However, he was interested in the random bonus.

After a player completed the scenario, the system would reward them with a suitable skill. It should be a skill of 'Common Specialty' or 'Weapon Specialty'. The bonus depended on the player's Fear rating. He had to choose his equipment now after already finishing one scenario, but he was still unarmed.

Feng Bujue stepped out of the booth, entered the metal room which had the two hollow glass columns.

First, he came to the glass column for the rewards. There was a Skill Card being condensed inside the column. At the moment he took the card, he was still calm; but when he glared at the properties, he mournfully cried out loud again, "Fraaaaaaaauuuuuuuuuuuud!"

This detail related to the main characters of "The Journey to the West", including a Monk, the Monkey King Sun WuKong, Zhu Bajie the pig, and Sha Wujin, the cannibal.

Those twelve animals are the Chinese Zodiac represent the Twelve Earthy Branches in the traditional Chinese way of numbering days and years.

They are all related to the character the Monkey King, whose favorite food is peach.

Royal Uncle as in Royal Uncle Liu Bi. Liu Bi a warlord in the late Eastern Han dynasty. In his early life, he and his mother sold straw shoes to support themselves.

Chapter 16: Intermission (5)

[Name: Perfunctory Maintenance]

[Card Skill's attributes: active skill, permanent possession]

[Type: Weapon]

[Effects: Could make one 'garbage' or 'broken' mechanical item temporarily become a 'normal' one within 3 minutes]

[Consume: 100 points of Stamina Value]

[Learning conditions: Weapon Specialty grade F]

[Remarks: everybody knows that the founder of Apple Inc., a pioneer in the computer technological industry, an inventor, and a businessman, Steve Jobs, was a mechanic when he was young. He wrote, "Only an amateur would try his best to fix a perfect item." To emphasize this, also to spread his idea reaching to more people, he had the company's logo, a bitten apple, engraved on his gravestone.]

When Feng Bujue was playing games, his fortune was always bad. This random skill was a typical example. At low levels, those skills that required low learning conditions and consumption, with limited use, e.g. the [Exploding God Fist], would give players an upper hand.

However, the [Perfunctory Maintenance] was a skill suitable for level 20 and onwards. Although his Skills Bar still had many free slots, he still had a feeling that he didn't need to equip this skill.

He assumed that this skill could only give poor effects but could consume much. Even worse, it was limited to only 'mechanical items'. If this had been effective on any types of equipment, it would have had more value. For example, if a player had picked up a [Rusted Iron Pipe] rated 'Broken', with their full bar of Stamina Value, this skill could make the [Rusted Iron Pipe] become a 'normal' pipe, which would empower the player.

However, reality is always cruel. This skill could only be applied on mechanical items. Feng Bujue was imagining what sort of situation he would be able to use this type of skill. Yeah, if he found an electric chainsaw, 100 points of Stamina Value for three minutes use of the saw would be worth it. Theoretically, this skill could repair broken vehicles. In case he met a wrecked car on the street and he still had an abundant amount of Stamina Value, if he could do the timing accurately to use the skill at a few seconds before it was over, he could run the car for almost 15 minutes max.

However, these were only assumptions. It was hard to say whether the cars could be subjected to this skill or not since cars were large objects, and the scenario didn't consider cars as 'items'. Players couldn't check the properties of 'cars' anyway.

He should keep this skill nevertheless. Before the Open Beta version was released, he didn't have any idea on how to sell it. For this reason, Feng Bujue then chose to learn the skill and had it as his first skill on his Skills Bar. Then, he walked to the second glass

column and the system suddenly popped up a notification.

[Please select your bonus: One, a random equipment that suits your level. Two, 5000 coins. Three, 200 EXP]

Feng Bujue determinedly chose equipment. First, the second and third options weren't necessary at this moment. Second, he was at level five now, but besides a non-fighting skill and a syringe, he got nothing. He absolutely believed that he wouldn't have another [Stone] this time.

The white light condensed, turning into a real object. A white equipment gradually appeared inside the glass column. It wasn't done yet, but Feng Bujue was certain that he still had hope this time. Looking at that shape, it should definitely be a weapon!

[Name: Mario's Pipe Wrench] (1)

[Type: Weapon]

[Quality: Excellent]

[Attack power: Medium]

[Attributes: Fire]

[Effects: When used to attack the human head or the head of any human-formed creatures, the damage rate would be pretty high]

[Remarks: The owner of this wrench is famous. He calls himself a plumber, but he has never fixed any pipes. He just come in and out those pipes all day, fighting with evil forces to save the Kingdom and the Princess. Sometimes, he will disguise himself as a green frog, a raccoon, or even the Earth Store Bodhisattva (1). Sometimes, he can throw fireballs or hammers, but he has never, pay attention please, ever used this essential tool of a plumber. Thus, the wrench got mad. It has a tantrum now! It wants to prove that a pipe wrench is able to fight!]

"Seems that this worldview is weird..." Feng Bujue read the properties. Although he was babbling, he was happy now. No matter how awkward the remarks were, at least this weapon's properties were not bad.

When he got back to the elevator booth, he saw Wang Tan Zhi was calling him. Feng Bujue accepted the call and sent the party invite.

"How are you doing? Reached level five yet?"

Wang Tanzhi answered, "Ah. My EXP is just enough. How about you, Jue-Ge?"

The friend list just showed the player's screen name and status, but not the level. When Wang Tanzhi answered him, he had already accepted the party invite. The menu of the party appeared on his screen, so Wang Tan Zhi was able to see Feng Bujue's level too.

"Level five, ha! Jue-Ge, did you get any equipment?" Wang Tanzhi continued, "I'd used the last usable strike of the [Exploding God Fist]. Besides the [Fruit Knife], I have another defensive equipment."

"Let's not talk about this right now. Hey, at the last location in your recent scenario, did you find a key?" Feng Bujue said.

"Ah, yeah. How did you know that?" Wang Tanzhi replied.

"How did you get that key?" Feng Bujue continued.

Wang Tanzhi was bewildered as he answered immediately, "At the last moment, I saw a key on the ground right in front of the exit. I didn't expect that. I was about to be screwed as my Survival Value and Stamina Value were running out, and there was something chasing after me. I didn't expect that at the last moment, I could pick up a key. I opened the door, and the scenario was completed directly," he paused for a while, "oh wow, Jue-Ge, do you know something? Your scenario was the same?"

Feng Bujue said, "How could it be! My scenario was really tough. I guess the system estimated that with your wisdom, picking up a key and opening the door was the optimum option to finish the scenario. That's why it was set up like that."

"This sort of setup is for a chimpanzee!" Wang Tanzhi cried.

Feng Bujue smiled. He wanted to change the topic, so he had purposely explained to Wang Tanzhi like that. "Are you ready? Before we enter the ‘Multiplayer Survival Mode’, is there anything you want to prepare?"

"No problem, shall we go?" Wang Tanzhi said.

Feng Bujue selected the game mode from his menu. They were both at level five now, so the game modes that they were able to play had been changed accordingly. Now his menu showed the ‘Single-player Survival Mode’ (Normal) and ‘Multiplayer Survival Mode’ (Normal).

The ‘Training Modes’ were closed. At the same time, the ‘Single-player Survival Mode’ was gray, indicating that they couldn’t select it.

[Feng Bujue, Level 5]

[Wang Tanzhi, Level 5]

[Please select Game Mode for your party]

[You’ve selected ‘Multiplayer Survival Mode, please confirm]

[Confirmed. The number of your party’s members is confirmed: five persons]

[You are joining the party. Searching for ready individuals or other parties...]

[Searching completed. Adjusting nervous system connection... Generating scenario...]

[Loading...Please wait...]

Chapter 17: First Multiplayer Scenario (1)

The light suddenly vanished and darkness immediately covered the entire surroundings. Feng Bujue couldn't open the game's menu. Shortly after being dazed, he noticed that in this darkness, he had shifted his position from standing to sitting. Now he seemed to be sitting on a solid chair, which had a backrest.

"Welcome to Thriller Paradise!"

The greeting this time was a male teenager's voice, but the creepy feeling stayed the same.

[Loading completed. You are entering the 'Multiplayer Survival Mode'(Normal)]

[This mode offers a brief explanation of the plot. There are chances of side/hidden quests, together with special Worldview]

[Scenario completion bonus: Rewards would include 80% required EXP]

[Plot's introduction is about to play. After the introduction, the game will start immediately]

The computer graphical interlude appeared in front of Feng Bujue's eyes. It was similar to watching a movie while wearing a pair of sunglasses. The narration then echoed in his ears.

"This is a modern and luxury city, just like any other cities in this world. Skyscrapers jut out like a forest of trees. Vehicles are weaving on the roads. Big population leads to air pollution..."

A chain of images of a regular city came along with the narrator's voice.

"Until one night, the sun sets and never rises again. The ambiguous moon hides behind the dark clouds, shining on the dead silence of the lonely city."

The scene in front of Feng Bujue's eyes soon darkened until it was completely pitch-black. A few seconds later, the light had returned, but it was a blurry light of the dim moon. The city still had some sources of light, but they were meager enough for a city with its luxurious nightlife. There were many vehicles on the streets, but they were all motionless. In fact, nobody was there either. Nothing was moving.

"You open your eyes only to see yourself sitting on the last train that you usually take to go home. Soon, you realize that the strangers sitting around you and yourself are the last survivors in this city."

Upon those words, Feng Bujue saw the light was getting brighter as his senses gradually recovered. He could also open his menu now. It seemed the plot had started.

He was actually sitting on a running subway train. The sights outside his window were rapidly flashing backwards, turning into

some thin streaks of light. He jerked his head up to see Little Tan sitting in a row not far beside him.

On Feng Bujue and Wang Tanzhi's left, there were one male and one female sitting on the seats of the other aisle. They both looked younger than 20 years old. Perhaps they were still students. The male student had bright skin with long hair. To be honest, his appearance wasn't much different from the girl sitting next to him. Their heights were ordinary and could be considered a handsome guy and a pretty girl. From their screen names, they were absolutely a couple. That guy was called 'Miss you when I feel lonely the most' and the girl's name was 'Thinking of you when I feel lonesome the most'.

In 'Multiplayer Survival Mode', this were the last couple of minutes for them to adjust before the game begin. It was also the time that the system gave them to get to know each other. At this time, the player's screen name would appear on their head, as other players could be able to see it. When they left this place, the screen name would disappear. If they wanted to see their teammate's name, they need to check the Party Menu.

The information displayed in the Party Menu was limited. First, players couldn't see their teammates' appearance, just names, and levels. Then, players' status displayed there was just 'Alive' or 'Dead'. They couldn't even know their other teammates' abnormal states or their Survival Value.

There were five people in this car and only one man sitting opposite to Feng Bujue and Wang Tan Zhi hadn't been introduced yet.

Even though he was sitting, it was easy to see that he was at least 190 centimeters tall, and weighed about 100 kilograms. From his appearance, he wasn't more than 30 years old with a cold face and a rigid chin. He had a broad shoulder with a V-shaped body. In fact, his impressive muscles could be seen through his sleeves.

This sort of appearance made one deserved to be called 'Sai Governor'. Although the game allowed players to adjust their appearances, it had its limits. They could 'Photoshop' their faces as much as they pleased, but they couldn't change their physical appearance more than eight percent since it would cause big troubles. For example, a two-meter tall guy couldn't use a one-point-five-meter tall dwarf's body.

Thus, if the player was 180 centimeters tall, he could only adjust his height up to 194 centimeters or down to 165.6 centimeters. A person who weighed 60 kilograms could add or reduce 4.8 kilograms to their total weight. However, it was an uncertain concept talking about body shape. For example, a beer gut could be modified to relatively flat tummy, but it would never be some abdomen muscles.

So, just putting his face aside, this brawny guy, in reality, could be an 80% muscular guy. It seemed like he had not adjusted anything on his appearance.

Their eyes met. The buff guy spoke to them first. "Short introduction," he beat his chest, "Longao Min, just reached level 10."

"I see, I see... pleasure to meet you," Feng Bujue replied.

Wang Tanzhi curiously asked, "Da-Ge, is that your title in front of your name? Are we allowed to make such long name?"

"Ah, that... that is the title. You will have a title when you've reached level 10. System's appraisal." Longao Min answered him. The title above his head read, [The Brave Vanguard – Longao Min].

Feng Bujue, of course, knew of these settings. Thus he said 'I see'.

"You look so strong," Wang Tanzhi said with his bright and adorable eyes.

Feng Bujue interfered, "What 'look so strong'? Do you know the right words?" He said solemnly, "This is very strong!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha! Nope. It's just because I've played too much." Longao Min smiled. Feng Bujue's words had pleased him much.

"Long-Ge is so humble. Just a look and I know you are not just an ordinary guy." Feng Bujue directly called him 'Long-Ge'. He admired this person right after he had read his title. The title brought him a tyrant aura that was pasted right on his face.

Feng Bujue turned around to see the other two students, "You students, it's nice meeting you."

"A... nice to meet you too," they answered him casually. It seemed they didn't like the group of three sitting on the opposite aisle much.

The next couple of minutes, Feng Bujue and Longao Min chatted about some experiences in playing this game. Wang Tan Zhi also contributed in the conversation from time to time. Today was the first day of the Closed Beta version; indeed, they were all newbies and they had a lot of things worth exchanging.

Longao Min shouldn't have been called Longao Min; it should have been 'Gu Da Lu'. He was a generous man; he treated people well and sincerely. People could see and feel his attitude right away. His opinions were focused, and he didn't underestimate Feng Bujue and Wang Tan Zhi for their low levels.

Besides, the couple over there were making out and whispering tenderly as if they were so bored and there was nothing else to do. Somebody may ask, people can do intimate actions in this game? Please be noticed; the previous part has mentioned 'prohibit sexual harassment'. This is a situation in which both of them are willing to do so. Of course, they couldn't go over the line. At most they could only kiss or hug, and couldn't go to the second base. This was a harmonious society and such behaviors would be restricted.

Not long after that, the train started to slow down before it completely stopped.

The lighting system at the station looked normal, but there was no sound, except for the sound of the running trains. Not even a single beat of advertising music.

When the doors slid open, almost at the same time, all the lights inside the car were shut.

Little Lonesome Girl was frightened, screamed out. The Little Lonely Boy sitting next to her was also startled, but he didn’t scream. However, he had a short shudder.

"Ahhhh...! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! !"

This ghostly horrifying howl came from our Little Tan.

After he had finished, Feng Bujue sighed. "If the system didn’t restrict me, I would put the pipe wrench down to your throat." He was shaking his head while walking out of the train. Although the lights were all shut off inside the car, they could still vaguely see things, thanks to the normal lighting system from the station. Wang Tanzhi’s cry made him ashamed. Both of the Lonely and the Lonesome threw him a despising look. Longao Min was trying hard not to laugh out loud, following closely behind Feng Bujue and getting out of the carriage.

After 10 seconds, all of them had arrived to the station. Feng Bujue raked his eyes around and said, "I’m going to walk to the cab to see if there’s a driver."

"You shouldn’t go alone. It’d be better if everybody stays together," Longao Min said.

"Sigh... why do we need to find the driver? It just wastes our time. We have a level 10 Da-Ge here, just follow him. Then, we just walk out of this place. If we see anything on the streets, just smash it. Killing all of them could get us through the round," the Little Lonely Boy spoke up.

Feng Bujue could see their levels in the party's menu. Lonely and Lonesome were at level seven and six respectively. They were ranked higher than Little Tan and him anyway. Their words should have some values.

"Alright," Feng Bujue showed that he agreed with his suggestion, turning to Longao Min and asked, "What do you think, Long-Ge?"

"No problem, you guys follow behind me. If we encounter something that requires fighting, just give me a hand," Longao Min said readily. He then took long steps going on the escalator. "Follow me." Standing on the escalator, he took out a hand shield and equipped it on his right wrist.

"Jue-Ge? What is going on?" Wang Tanzhi lowered his voice, muttering to Feng Bujue. He understood Feng Bujue well. How could Feng Bujue change his own opinions just because of others' words? Let alone the suggestion of that Little Lonely Boy which wasn't a wise one. Wang Tan Zhi had doubts now.

"Nothing. I just thought that the possibility of having a driver for this train is not high. I just wanted to confirm that," Feng Bujue whispered to him, "Since somebody has opposed, it wouldn't hurt taking a step back."

While they were talking, they had followed Longao Min to the other end of the escalator. However, the five of them were still in the underground station. There was one more level until they reached the ground.

And at the top of the escalator, there was an information board showing the directions and locations of exits. However, it wasn’t important to them. They just needed to find the nearest exit, get out of the station and take a look at the current situation of this city.

Suddenly, a notification echoed in their ears. "Main quest, activated!"

Sai Governor: A Chinese Government Officer that lived during the Song Dynasty

Da-Ge: Big brother, Chinese informal allias to address older or stronger male.

Gu Da Lu: A character in a wuxia novel ‘Happy Heroes"

Chapter 18: First Multiplayer Scenario (2)

After the notification had played, Feng Bujue opened his menu and saw the Quest Menu was unlocked. This was the first time he had received a main quest. In the ‘Single-player Training Modes’ and ‘Survival Modes’, the scenarios had been set up within close buildings, as their plots were short. As it didn’t have many paths to develop the plot, the system didn’t generate more complicated quests. The ‘Multiplayer Survival Mode’ offered players a lot of freedom with big maps, thus, the system had to provide a main quest to guide players. If not, they wouldn’t know what to do or which way to follow.

After the Quest Menu had been unlocked, Feng Bujue saw a window pop up in his Quest Menu, displaying the quest he had just received. The description of the main quest was short, [Search the city to find the Demonic Gateway]

"Seems like it’s the Dark Magic Settings..." Feng Bujue skimmed the quest’s description then closed the window.

"This is a big city. Looking for a gate is like searching for a needle in the haystack, isn’t it?" Wang Tanzhi said.

"The quest emphasizes the word ‘Demonic’ not just the ‘Gateway," Feng Bujue explained to him while walking to a ticket vending machine. He looked at the route map above the machine then said, "There are 12 subway lines in this city. Although they are demonstrated with different colors, there are..." his finger traced along some routes crossing the map and finally stopped at one point, "over 10 routes that come across this area..." Both of his

hands were placed on the map and covered some parts to expose a part in the middle. "These five lines cross each other, forming a typical star shape in Geometry."

"Da-Ge, this is too far-fetched," Little Lonely Boy said, "Well, if you scan over the map again, you should be able to find many different geometric shapes."

"My hand had stopped there for one second, which means I've carefully looked at it." Feng Bujue turned around, explained more to them, "Before we've reached here, no matter if it's inside the subway or on the railway platform, we've only seen the maps that showed the stations' names and their schematic diagrams. We didn't see a full map down there.

"When the notification played, we didn't meet any mobs or delay the time. We almost didn't do anything that could be considered 'taking actions'. However, the main quest was activated. There should be a trigger somewhere. If not, when we were sitting in the train, we should have received the quest. Why did the system have to wait until we've reached the higher floor?

"Thus, I think there should be something on this floor that the lower floor doesn't have. That thing would give us information or directions to finish the quest—finding the Demonic Gateway."

Then, he tilted his body, patting on the map of the subway routes above the ticket vending machine. "There are only 12 subway lines, but there are thousands of streets in this city. If this route map doesn't have any significant meanings, I don't think the map of this city would have any. Unless we could find a tourist map that

reads ‘the Demonic Gateway’."

He took a deep breath then continued, "In short, if nobody can suggest a constructive opinion which contradicts mine, or feels the opinion itself does not have a valid foundation to it, I suggest we should go to that place. If I’m wrong, we shall discuss again. If I’m right, I can earn the Skill Value, and everybody will finish the scenario. All will be happy."

Feng Bujue said it without any unnatural pause, which caused everybody to drop their jaws in awe. Wang Tanzhi’s expression was quite normal since he had experienced this many times from their childhood up to now.

Feng Bujue’s reasoning ability was generated from his reading habit. Feng Bujue was a smart guy. In fact, when he was just 16, he had taken the Binet test (1) with the total scores of 138 points; his left brain and right brain each scored 69 points, indicating that he had a balanced thought. Well, he still belonged to the group of ‘normal people’ compared to the group of ‘extraordinary people’ who scored 140 points and above. However, his abilities to observe, memorize, analyze and reasoning were strictly trained that ordinary people couldn’t compare.

Just like Sir Conan Doyle said through his character, Sherlock Holmes, a good detective, besides his broad knowledge and experience, his logical reasoning ability is the most important. In his novels, Sherlock Holmes was always praised for his outstanding 'Deduction'. Feng Bujue was a big fan of this series.

The reason why Feng Bujue loved reading was from another

Holmes' point of view, which said: let's consider knowledge as the items to be stored; your brain is like a storage that you have to maintain, trash should be cleaned, and important documents should be put in your library, place it at your fingertips.

This was somehow like systematizing thoughts and idealizing the skill to memorize things. People could do it after a course of training, and Feng Bujue was a typical example for successful self-learning.

There were so many things easier said than done. For example, if a guy did dozens of pushup at home, he would become muscular. If someone learned several words a day, he could pass a level four English test. If an author could write thousands of words a day, he would be a famous author. If those actions had been listed in the list of high delusion, they would have been right on top for sure.

Normal people, when facing such self-training, 80% would give up. However, old people always said, old monster had more tricks. Feng Bujue was one of the persistent people, who had turned reading and reasoning into his own hobbies and passion.

"Yeah. Feng-Ge is right. We should follow this to find the gate. It'd be better than just seeking aimlessly." The last part of his words, Longao Min told the Little Lonely Boy.

"A... Yeah? Ah, good... Alright." The Little Lonely Boy had just recovered from Feng Bujue's speech. Indeed, he wasn't able to follow Feng Bujue's flow of thoughts. However, it generated a feeling in him, which was 'I don't understand what he is saying, but he looks cool'.

The five of them started to move. Longao Min was leading while Feng Bujue was walking behind him to show the way to the exit and the other directions when they got to the street. When they were passing through a tunnel, Feng Bujue found something that had a matching color with the wall. It was an advertisement of the Thriller Paradise placed among the other advertisements pasted on the wall.

They made a right turn at the end of the tunnel. The exit to the street was up there. There stood an escalator which wasn't working, and also a normal stairs for people to climb up to the street.

They emerged on the street one by one. The moonlight was dim, and other lights in the city were vague. There were many vehicles on the street, but none of them were running. All the lights of the buildings, the advertising billboards, the malls and the residential areas were off, except for the streetlights.

Although there were no vehicles running on the street, the quality of air was bad as they felt irritated while breathing. Everything in front of them was immersed in a faint mist. They couldn't even see things from a further distance.

When they were at the subway station, they were underground and bounded by the walls. They didn't feel strange at that time. But now, considering the fact that they were standing in a spacious place with an eccentric ambiance, this bizarre quiet atmosphere had made it hard for them to breathe.

Four of them had their Fear Value surged. It increased from 5% to 15% now. They started to show their fear with some significant signs.

"We now walk straight ahead, turn left after four crossroads, and just continue walking forward." Feng Bujue's voice was calm. It seemed that he wasn't affected by the strange atmosphere there, so he quickly matched the landscape to identify the route.

Longao Min held his shield, nodded and led the way. The other four followed him. No one said anything. They were all alert, cautiously listening for strange noises, and walked closely to the streetlights on the pedestrian sidewalk.

There were sounds echoing from the dark, including animal breathing, rattling noise, whispers, and laughter. They could hear them, but they couldn't locate the sources of the noise.

After every 10 meters, Longao Min would turn around to look. As the time was ticking by, he felt something was wrong. "Feng-Ge, I... I think your profession, in real life, should be something very dangerous, right?" Longao Min asked. He had reached level 10 straight away, but he had never met any player like Feng Bujue. Fear was a feeling that was very difficult to hide. However, there wasn't a beam of fear in Feng Bujue's eyes. It could be seen that he didn't fake his guts. In fact, he wasn't frightened at all. Together with the sharp logic from which he had just explained the situation to them, Longao Min doubted that Feng Bujue would be some sort of spy or secret agent.

"Artist," Feng Bujue simply answered, like what he had just said,

he couldn’t be more honest.

Wang Tanzhi didn’t want to join the conversation. He knew that when Feng Bujue told other people about his profession, he would say one of these, an artist or a famous author. No matter which profession, his manners were worth some whips.

Longao Min hadn’t expected such an answer; he didn’t know what to say to continue the talk. The Little Lonely Boy spoke up from behind him, "What kind of person would address himself as ‘an artist’?"

"I can explain in another way," Feng Bujue continued, "I’m a person with a relatively high-aesthetic taste, skillful creative techniques, engaged in artistic creations, and have certain achievements in art."

"Didn’t you just explain that word?"

"It’s more humble than saying that word directly, isn’t it?"

"It’s more exaggerating!"

Lonesome smiled. Lonely pursed his lip then said to her, "Can I rebuke him for playing possum?"

At this time, Feng Bujue suddenly stopped, quickly hauled the [Mario’s Pipe Wrench] from his bag. "Agh, just when we have eased down the tense atmosphere, it seemed like trouble is coming."

Longao Min and Feng Bujue saw two shadows dashing in the dark almost at the same time. However, they didn’t see clearly their shapes, and they didn’t know what they were; surely, they were mobs though.

"They look like infants with two scythes on their hands. Wow, pretty quick. Number... Hm, I think there’re more than one," Feng Bujueg calmly commented, holding the wrench in his hand, walking into the darkness. He didn’t notice that his Investigation Specialty had been unlocked just after he said that.

Chapter 19: First Multiplayer Scenario (3)

"One, two, three, yeah. Five mobs." Feng Bujue counted those mobs while walking to the central of the street, out of the covered area of the streetlight.

He directly stepped on the hood of a car, holding his pipe wrench tightly, keeping his eyes and ears opened. He was standing there under the dim light to attract those Odd Infants.

Wang Tanzhi took out his [Fruit Knife]. Moreover, he had also equipped himself an item he got from his Single Survival Mode's scenario, a defensive item—an ugly black iron helmet. He was standing back to back with Longao Min, not straying too far from the streetlight. Each of them was guarding against a different direction.

The Lonely and Lonesome's reactions were not much different from a scene from a thriller movie. The girl clung to the boy, and the boy leaned forward to cover her. Just like that, they were standing in the 'suicide posture'.

Those Odd Infants glided in the dark, hiding themselves under the shades of buildings and cars. They were too fast. They exposed themselves to the light for one second, flashed, before disappearing.

Feng Bujue was standing in a place that was far away from the streetlight. Darkness had covered him, so no doubt that he was the first one who got attacked. An Odd Infant jumped up to two

meters, trying to stealth him from behind.

He had soon been prepared as he abruptly turned around to face the mob. The thing that was caught in his sight had a copper green skin, resembling a newborn baby with a terrible face. Its yellow teeth grew from both inside and outside of its mouth. Two scythes replaced its arms, and its lower body belonged to some kind of animal.

Feng Bujue had planned to stand on the roof of the car since he had considered the height of those mobs, which was shorter than one meter. When they attacked a higher up target, they had to jump up. Now, this mob had jumped up to attack him. Jumping meant their feet couldn't touch the ground, and it also meant they couldn't dodge his attack.

Talking about strength, Feng Bujue was dominating. Moreover, he had lured his opponents out of their hiding to slash them. Fully prepared, he aimed for the Odd Infant's head and pounded. The 'thud' sound of the hit echoed. Well, this attack could make people puke out.

Everybody, let's imagine this, a watermelon is flying to you, but you hold your stick and beat it in mid-air. That watermelon, however, is full of stinky liquid substances, gooey pus, and blood. All of it will explode then pour onto you because of the inertia.

Feng Bujue was encountering such situation. Those 'downstream' liquids that poured on him had real disgusting odors. Artily speaking, Feng Bujue's entire body was projecting a dark and mysterious miasma. Well, frankly speaking, a stinky corpse.

This Odd Infant was knocked down, but there were still four more to go. The number of them might depend on the number of players. Anyway, they were not set to have one target for each mob.

Besides Feng Bujue, everybody else was standing under the light. Well, in thriller movies, monsters always hunt down the one who strays away from the herd. Thus, the other four mobs didn't aim for the other people, but all came converging upon Feng Bujue, who was standing in the dark.

In this situation, Feng Bujue had worried about his situation, but it was a pity that he didn't feel any 'fear'. In fact, he was still calm enough to think, thus, he directly crossed the option in which he would run to the streetlight cover area. Now he got the concept of those mobs' speed. He knew that whenever he got off the car's roof, two mobs would come to him immediately and he could kiss goodbye to his legs within five seconds.

If they were standing on the same ground, those shorties were too fast to deal with. Feng Bujue assumed that with his current strength, he could do one on one. But two, he would definitely get hurt.

10 seconds later, the second Odd Infant stormed to him. Feng Bujue didn't know when the other three would jump up to attack him; he had to solve this one quickly. He used the same trick, swinging his wrench. He wasn't as accurate as the first time, but the wrench still hit the side of the mob's head. The Fire attribute and the massive weight effect helped him to smoothly kill this

second Odd Infant.

However, when Feng Bujue hadn't retracted his arm from the second hit, the third wave of attack was launched. Two Odd Infants came this time, and they were ambushing behind him on his left and right simultaneously. If he turned around to confront them, he could handle only one mob. Moreover, he wasn't sure that he could kill it with one strike.

It had happened faster than words. At the moment, a golden light appeared from afar, and a sturdy figure joined the battle. Longao Min was dashing forward like he was standing on a skateboard. He didn't lift his feet, but instead, it looked like he was using some kind of skill.

He was worthy of a level 10 character as he started to fight by using his power. Longao Min with his shield in front of him glided to an Odd Infant and bumped it away. Then, he lifted his arm, swinging the shield, hitting another mob by its waist, and deviating it from its current flying direction.

How could Feng Bujue let this chance slip away? These two seconds of delay gave him enough time to react. He hammered his wrench on the mob that just got hit by the waist. Stinky fluids scattered everywhere instantly.

Longao Min saw Feng Bujue finish that mob, so he quickly ran to the direction that he had just blown the other one away, kneeled down and pressed his shield on it.

The Odd Infant that had just landed didn’t have time to balance itself; suddenly, a muscular guy stormed over, so it could only put up its scythe-arms to confront him. Sparks flared up from the shield, however, the mob wasn’t a strong one; it was impossible to cut this Perfect ranked attack-defense equipment.

Longao Min roared, pounding the shield in his hand. After shrieking several times, the Odd Infant had become a pulp of flesh. Apparently, it was screwed.

"Where is the last one? We will chop it up!" Wang Tanzhi came to stand beside them. In fact, he had started at the same time with Longao Min, but his senior had used a skill to move, and it just cost him only half of a second to reach the destination. Wang Tanzhi had taken a few seconds to get to the spot, but just within these few seconds, Longao Min had quickly finished one mob.

"Don’t be careless. I think it wouldn’t be that easy..." Feng Bujue hadn’t finished his words when their surroundings suddenly darkened. All the sources of light in the city were off just in a blink, and even the moon in the sky had disappeared.

It was like something had just swallowed up the whole world. The noises of breathing, whispering, laughter, etc., had become pretty clear at this moment, just like something was standing right next to them in the dark that they could touch but couldn’t see.

After a few seconds, computer graphics background of the game had appeared again just like at the beginning of this scenario. The dim moonlight reappeared. Those streetlights lit up again, recovering the previous light-covered area.

And the last Odd Infant, who was hiding in the dark, after the strange and gloomy baptism, had abruptly transformed.

Chapter 20: First Multiplayer Scenario (4)

When darkness had fallen on them, the Little Lonesome Girl screamed out in fear. The Little Lonely Boy was also frightened, however, his girlfriend was clutching on his arm, so he couldn't scream out together, and could only pretend to be calm and tell his girlfriend, "Don't worry. I'm here." In fact, the Little Lonely Boy didn't even have any low-quality weapon to confront the mobs. Thus, protecting himself was already difficult.

Since level 1, the Lonesome and he had been playing together in 'Multiplayer Training Mode'. When they reached level 5, they had played 'Multiplayer Survival Mode' once, but they eventually died and failed the scenario. However, he received more EXP since he had contributed to the party more than the Little Lonesome Girl. Later on, they had played the 'Multiplayer Survival Mode' one more time, but they couldn't finish it. Thus, they were now at level six and seven, but neither of them had a single piece of item. If they had to fight the mobs, they could only hit them with their bare hands.

At this point, I think many people now know why Longao Min had been teamed up with them. The system did that. At one time, there were more than 100 players ready to join the party, but why were the five of them chosen to join this party? It was because the system had assessed that the Lonely and the Lonesome were 'poor players'.

To support them, the system had to put Longao Min, a level 10 player, who was strong enough, to this party. At the same time, to ensure the level of difficulty, the system then had to choose two other low-level players, who had performed well in their games.

This was to equalize the levels of the party.

Thus, the total level of the five of them was 33, and the average level was 6.6, enough for a hard scenario ranked level 6 or 7.

Honestly, the system had created a chance for Lonely and Lonesome to ‘hold the thigh’ in hope that they could finally finish a scenario. It was to prevent their grudge generated from being dead many times.

"What has just happened?" Longao Min asked this, but he didn’t expect someone would answer him. It was just because the situation had frightened him a little bit, so he wanted to ask for other people’s opinions.

Feng Bujue unexpectedly answered him with a calm and clear voice, "There are three possibilities. I’ll explain to you later."

Wang Tanzhi didn’t try to join their conversation. His face was pale as his voice was trembling, "It... it... it... how... how...? The light was off inside the... the... the... car... okay... but... the moonlight... How could it turn off the moonlight! They really want to scare us to death!"

"The thing that has scared you is over there." Feng Bujue pointed to a place behind Wang Tanzhi with his unchanged visage.

Little Tan turned around with his freezing neck. Longao Min, Lonely, and Lonesome, who were standing away from there, they

could see what Feng Bujue was pointing at.

That was the last Odd Infant. It was crawling on the roof of a bus, shrieking. Its appearance had changed. Now it had black skin with green light shooting out from its eyes. Its teeth had evolved to fangs. Its short body remained, but the scythes and its legs had been doubled. When the Odd Infant stood upright, it was almost 160 centimeters. Moreover, the attack range of its arms were absolutely wider than that of a human.

Wang Tanzhi gulped, cocked his head to look at the [Fruit Knife] in his hand, then shifted his eyes to the ‘Saber-armed’ monster. Inferiority complex arose in his heart.

"It’s like it has just eaten something to evolve." Feng Bujue jumped off the car with the wrench in his hand.

"I’ll attack it from the front to make it fall down. You should find the perfect timing to attack it from the sides." Longao Min moved forward while talking. Unlike Feng Bujue, he didn’t like to joke at serious moments.

Unfortunately, Longao Min’s tactic couldn’t work. Perhaps this Odd Infant could either understand their convo or have a high default intelligence that was beyond their imagination. The mob didn’t care about Longao Min. It cocked its legs and jumped up into a curve in the air, leaving two concave dents on the roof of the bus. It glided over their heads, flew for about 10 meters, and aimed for Lonely and Lonesome who were standing under the light.

Longao Min really wanted to use another skill to help them. Nevertheless, he had just used the [Colliding Lightning], which was a special ability the system had given him together with the title [the Brave Vanguard], to rescue Feng Bujue. That skill had consumed 30% of his Physical Value and the CD (cool down time) required almost one hour.

Now we are not going to discuss the ‘System Tag’. In short, at this moment, only the two of them could rescue Lonely and Lonesome.

Seeing the Odd Infant descending from the sky with the two scythes crossing in front of it and about to strike out, three of them started to dash over the couple. But the mob was flying like the stone shot out from a catapult. It would be very hard for players because they had to run just to keep up with its exaggerating speed.

"Run to us! Duck!" Feng Bujue shouted.

No doubt that he was telling the couple what to do, also a correct method to react. No matter if they backed off or dispersed into two different directions, one of them would still be killed when the Odd Infant reached them. If they stood still in a daze or tried to protest against the mob, they would be dead a little bit earlier.

They could only now bend down and storm forward. When the mob missed them, it would take the mob a few seconds to return. They had to take that chance to get to where Feng Bujue’s group was standing, then they would have a chance to survive.

At the moment, when their lives were hanging on a thin thread, a strong order would make a threatened helpless person follow it without any hesitation. Indeed, Lonely immediately pulled Lonesome to bend down and ran to them.

When the Odd Infant flew to the couple, they had gotten out from beneath its feet, running away. The scythes slashed to the void, and the mob gasped in rage. When it touched the ground, it immediately turned around to chase after them. Just two seconds, and it was about to reach them again.

But this Odd Infant wasn't lucky enough. A muscular man running from the opposite direction with the couple had suddenly appeared in front of the mob just in a flash. A round shield that looked like a wall of steel was blocking its way.

The evolved scythes were hacking and slashing onto the shield constantly, generating clinking sounds. However, this attack could only make some sparks and a shallow scratch on the shield. The Odd Infant seemed to slow down its attack and powers.

[Name: Ultron's Fragment]

[Type: Defensive item]

[Quality: Excellent]

[Defense power: Strong]

[Attributes: Refraction]

[Effects: None]

[Equipment conditions: Fighting Specialty grade E, level 8]

[Remarks: This is the wreckage left behind after the Age of Ultron was destroyed. The thing itself was just around the size of a thumb. After being refined and forged together with the secondary alloy Erdmann, the shield is the final product. It is a little bit stronger than the other mass-produced items. However, after several quality tests, there's no evident data to support this statement.]

This shield was pretty good compared to Feng Bujue's pipe wrench. At this early stage of the game, the shield could be a big source of assistance. The Odd Infant had slowed down its attacks as it knew that if it continued striking the shield this way, its scythes would be worn out very soon.

The mob gave up striking to break Longao Min's defense. Now, it wanted to use the advantage of speed to pass by this tough bone and attack the other players. It had spent too much time here. A man who was wearing a black iron helmet and holding a fruit knife in his hand was approaching the mob from behind in silence.

Since his weapon was garbage and he wasn't brave enough, Wang Tanzhi didn't dare to rush. He ran around a car then approached the Odd Infant from behind. He then rose the weapon and stabbed the mob at its neck. No one knows if anyone who has studied

medical majors will always choose the spot where people would not die but only get paralyzed like the mob.

A bizarre screech echoed. Black blood and pus were splattered all over Wang Tanzhi. However, the mob hadn’t died yet; it was still struggling.

Then, a wrench appeared from aside and cruelly poked the Odd Infant in its left eye socket.

Chapter 21: First Multiplayer Scenario (5)

This battle couldn't be considered a violent one since none of the five players had their Survival Value spent. However, after this battle, they could know the real fighting capacities of the members of the party.

In simple words, there were three players who were able to finish the scenario, and the other two were hopeless ones.

Wang Tanzhi was enveloped with the disgusting substances from the Odd Infant. Fortunately, the blood of these mobs didn't have toxins or other special effects, except that it was really stinky. Longao Min had a shield, thus, his clothes were still clean. Feng Bujue was seriously 'contaminated', but he soon had a way to deal with it.

Feng Bujue looked like he had a thought about cleaning himself earlier. After he had finished the last mob, which was a mutant Odd Infant, he immediately turned away and approached a car, opened the door then pulled off a leather seat cover. Next, he came to a fireplug on the sidewalk, using his wrench to open the valve. The seat cover was now his towel. Using the water from the fireplug and the leather towel, he quickly cleaned himself up and washed away the unpleasant odors.

Wang Tanzhi copied him, walked to a car, took out the seat cover, then crouched down next to Feng Bujue to wash himself.

Longao Min checked the dead bodies of those Odd Infants to

make sure that they were all dead. He then took a breath in relief and sat down directly on the ground to recover his Stamina Value.

Lonely and Lonesome came to the cover area of the streetlight. "Thanks. If you didn't help us, we might be OVER now," Little Lonely Boy spoke up with a humbler voice. At the beginning, he thought that his level was at least higher than that of these two badasses, which made his voice more value. But now, he wouldn't doubt Feng Bujue's ideas.

"I guess before we get to the Demonic Gateway," Feng Bujue had washed his face, he was talking while wiping his clothes, "we should find some items for you. Even if it is rated broken, it'd be way better than having nothing."

"The city in this scenario is really enormous. I think it wouldn't be hard for us to find some weapons on the streets. In case we couldn't find anything, we could pick up a stick or Feng-Ge would use his wrench to break something that we could use as weapons." Longao Min continued, "Hey, you've just mentioned the darkness, which could have three possibilities."

"The first one, the light that surrounds us didn't change, but something had disturbed our vision and hearing at that moment," Feng Bujue answered him directly, "the darkness had covered our eyes and strange voices had echoed in our ears, but the surroundings stayed the same." He paused for a short while before continuing, "If it was true, there would be something irritating. The 'subject' that had bothered us, we didn't know whether it had stayed hidden near us, just we couldn't see it... or it is still far away from us?"

After having listened to him mentioned ‘near’ and ‘couldn’t see", the other four had goosebumps crawling on their skin. Only Feng Bujue showed that he didn’t care at all.

"Moreover, why did the last mob evolve? Was the thing that had affected us also did something on that mob during that short while of darkness?" He threw the seat cover on the ground after he was done with it. "Now, we have no way to check the possibility of my reasoning. I don’t want to dig any further now. Alright, I’m going to talk about the second possibility, in which the darkness is actually here, exists in this city or even envelops the whole world of this scenario."

Wang Tanzhi interfered, "How could it do that? Not to mention those streetlights, but the moon isn’t a light bulb that could be turned on and off as we please."

"Don’t care how it did that, but we just need to assume that there is something could do that. Thus, it’s possible that this world is being conquered by a dark force. When the darkness falls for a few seconds, those monsters, under the effect of this darkness, would be Staminaly mutated."

He put the wrench into his bag and sat down directly on the ground. "I prefer the second possibility. The darkness is some kind of a natural phenomenon. It doesn’t aim for a specific target, and it isn't triggered because of us."

"How about the third possibility?" said Longao Min.

"The system had changed the scenario since it recognized our performance when we had killed the first four mobs," Feng Bujue answered.

"No way!" Lonesome said, "Lonely and I have played two scenarios, we have never seen this situation. Although the party could finish the mobs easily, the scenario wouldn't suddenly become more difficult."

Lonely added, "We've met some players whose levels are the same with Long-Ge's. They could kill the mobs instantly. That's why I've said at the beginning that we had a level 10 player in our team, we could just kill the mobs to finish the scenario," he told the truth. However, in their previous scenario, that level 10 player didn't protect them, so they couldn't survive until the end.

"Yeah. I could understand the third possibility just a little bit," Feng Bujue mused then replied to him. He came up with this possibility as what he had learned from the time he had played the 'Single-player Survival Mode', in which the AI (Artificial Intelligence) had set up for him. He immediately turned off this possibility. "This is the first time I've joined the 'Multiplayer Survival Mode', I don't know the situation well. Then, we can cross out this possibility."

At this moment, Wang Tanzhi had also cleaned himself up. He stood up and said, "So we need time to prove these two possibilities? According to Jue-Ge, no matter which possibility, when we decide to continue and play, the darkness will eventually fall again."

"It indeed makes sense." Longao Min got up; his Stamina Value had slightly recovered. "It’d better if we meet the mobs before the darkness falls, and we should solve the Lonely and Lonesome’s weapon matter."

Feng Bujue also stood up and said, "We will pass by a police station on our route. We can go there to find some police batons or even guns. If we are lucky, we can find bulletproof vests, gas masks or riot shields." He looked like as if he couldn’t hold it anymore, "I’ve longed for firing a shotgun for a long time!"

Longao Min felt threatened hearing him said that. Feng Bujue said like he was a loony serial killer who just lacked murder criterias to satisfy his desire to kill.

Everybody had discussed for a few minutes more before they departed to the police station as Feng Bujue had shown the way. Although the pressure of the strange ambiance was still lingering on them as they didn’t know how many monsters were still hiding in the dark, they still had hopes for the place that Feng Bujue was describing, the Police Station.

One needed to know that at the early stage of the game, shooting weapons were rare. Moreover, those with firepower that was relatively large like shotguns or submachine guns were worthy of dying for even if it meant a short end in the scenario.

Chapter 22: First Multiplayer Scenario (6)

After walking for about 15 minutes, all of them had finally arrived at the police station. This building was around 500 square meters. The main entrance faced the street, and the side gate led to the parking lot.

Feng Bujue checked the side gate. There was a traffic lane, and at its end was a high wall with a chain link fence to close the entrance. He looked through the chain link fence into the darker place deep inside. It seemed impossible to go through this path.

When he had returned to the main entrance, Longao Min had finished his observation. The main gate was made of thick wood. It was now closed tightly as if there was something that had jammed the door from inside that prevented the door to be moved or opened.

Feng Bujue lightly shook his head, indicating that the side gate didn’t work. Longao Min stretched his arms and said, "Can’t open this door either."

Wang Tanzhi stormed forward for several steps, observing the wall structure. "There are grilles on the windows. It would take too much effort to get in this place..." He hadn’t finished, yet his voice suddenly changed, "Ouch... Did you hear that?"

Feng Bujue, of course, had heard something. He shouted, "Back off!" then grabbed Wang Tanzhi by his shoulder, pulling him backward.

Longao Min, Lonely, and Lonesome already took several steps backward. After Feng Bujue had just pulled Wang Tanzhi over, a low breaking noise resounded behind them. They turned to see the main gate of the police station had been broken from inside. A hefty monster was piercing half of its body through the broken door. If Wang Tanzhi stayed there for a few seconds more, he would have been buried under that pile of debris.

"Well, I think we've heard it stomping to the wall." Wang Tanzhi paled, and his voice was feeble. At this moment, he had surpassed the 'threatened phase', which could push his Fear Value to beyond 50%. He was numb now with the successive events since his Fear Value had been at 35% for quite a long time.

As the wall had collapsed, the little BOSS made its debut, which was a loud roar. Feng Bujue knew this mob well. It was the Bloody Corpse.

Apparently, this Bloody Corpse was much sturdier than the one he had met in the New Player Tutorial, at least one size bigger. Moreover, the one he first met could break the thin wall with one punch, but this current mob could slab the wall to ruins.

"Well done! Not only did it give us an access, but it also used the mob to tell us about the good rewards inside the building." Feng Bujue rose the corner of his mouth, eyeing the sturdy, violent monster while speaking as if he had encountered a good deed.

"Feng-Ge, 'good rewards' will only happen after we kill that

monster." Longao Min was sweating. He didn’t consider much but still knew that this battle wouldn’t be easy.

"Take this." Feng Bujue handed the pipe wrench to Longao Min, "This item doesn’t require any equipment condition. Long-Ge, use this. It could intensify the damage."

"This item..." Longao Min was hesitating. Feng Bujue was offering him a trade request, a free one.

In this world, the trust between people is relatively bad. Good items in the Closed Beta stage are treasures. If you want to give your items to other people, you have to think carefully. What if the person you’ve given your items to had a greedy desire for it? He will then force himself to quit the scenario to take your items. You then have no way to take it back since you’ve actively offered it to him. The system couldn’t help you either.

"Quick, take it!" said Feng Bujue

Longao Min took the [Mario’s Pipe Wrench]. After he had taken a look at the item’s properties, his face changed. Feng Bujue had made people think that he was a cautious smartass, so how could he just simply give his item to others? One could hardly imagine that he would carelessly act that way.

"Feng-Ge, aren’t you afraid that I would take your item with me when I log out?" Longao Min spoke to him. If he said this, then he wasn’t a sort of person who would take the others’ stuff. If he were that type of dirty, he would directly log out and take the item with

him.

"Afraid?" Feng Bujue forced a smile and talked to himself. "It'd be too good if I can be afraid."

He then answered, "Well, 'worry' to be more exact. However, honestly, I'm more worried that we will be doomed here altogether."

The Bloody Corpse had broken the whole wall as it walked to the street. When it completely got out of the station, the Bloody Corpse looked more ferocious. The two-meter tall body boasted of a good build of big muscles. Blood had covered the entire rigid body of the disgusting mob. That face without skin was much scarier than a simple skull. The mob was obviously a small BOSS. The trigger for this mob was that the players had stopped by the police station for a short while and tried to find a way in.

"Long-Ge, you hold it back for a while and try to delay time. I'll go behind it and enter the station from that hole. I'll search for something like guns. When I find some, I'll go back to support you." Feng Bujue continued, "Try to save your Survival Value. Don't be reckless." When he saw the Bloody Corpse, he had already weighed the results and the damages. Now they didn't have the equipment that could kill the mob, which was the same type with the [Bloody Corpse Must Die]; what they could use to attack this monster were just a shield, a wrench, and a fruit knife. Those were fine to use in close combat with small mobs like the Odd Infants, however, the Bloody Corpse in front of their eyes was even taller than Longao Min. This situation was intense!

Thus, the best solution was to strengthen Longao Min and make him stall the mob for a while. And Feng Bujue would risk his life, entering the police station to find weapons. The presence of the Bloody Corpse had enhanced Feng Bujue's belief that there should be some valuable items in the police station. Skills, items, related-to-plot items, whatever he could find, then he would return to finish the Bloody Corpse.

"Don't worry. Even if I got killed before you've come back, I would still find a way to return this item to you," Longao Min said then came forward to attract the monster. He started the fight with the hit and run tactic.

"Nah, don't need to be that serious. It's just an item." Feng Bujue looked like he didn't care at all, facing that ferocious Bloody Corpse with an unchanged face. He then bent down, moving fast from one side of the mob then jumped through the hole, disappearing into the darkness inside the police station.

Unfortunately, Lonely and Lonesome still didn't have anything that they could use as weapons, so they begrudgingly stepped aside and tried to not disturb them.

Wang Tanzhi was carefully approaching the Bloody Corpse. The mob now focused mainly on Longao Min. When the right time came, Wang Tanzhi could storm forward, jab it once, and immediately run away. He would only attack the BOSS as long as he wouldn't get hurt.

It was different from Longao Min's fighting style, which was using force to attack and defend at the same time. Wang Tanzhi's

fighting style was agiler. Dodge, run, ambush, run again. This type of martial arts moves weren't suitable to use together with blunt devices, or any kind of shields. Sharp weapons would be the best choice. He didn't need strength, just a good speed was enough. The sharp knife brushed over could create damage.

Later on, these two players would depend mainly on their Fighting Specialty. Same school but different fighting styles. In this scenario, their styles were the new tricks to win, which were all about 'Force' and 'Speed'.

At the later stage of the game, the players' competencies would become more intimidating. With the same Specialty, from their different fighting styles, it would generate unimaginable different effects. Moreover, with their existing Specialties, they could make some useful combinations such as 'Fighting' and 'Shooting', or 'Fighting' and 'Curing'. With the numerous possible combinations of skills, Thriller Paradise's characters could have unlimited abilities.

This was the reason why the game didn't design 'Classes'. With the impressively powerful system, classes would become a restriction to players.

Some studies on the later stage of online games showed that experience and personalization were the most important features to players. If their characters, with the same attributes and ranks, were restricted to using some skills due to their 'classes', it would be very annoying. Any typical players could take a look at the hotshot list to know how their characters would be developed at the end, what kind of attributes or skills could be combined

together, or which items were needed for the skills, etc.

However, this game's settings had given players a big room for their own development. First, besides the Stamina Value, there was no 'Character Attribute'. The 'Survival Value' and 'Fear Value' were always displayed in percentage without particular points. Also, the system wouldn't give the stats of damage by attacks or to what particular degree the defending items could hold.

Next, all skills and items were generated randomly. Players didn't have any class but only Specialties. During their time on playing the scenario, players would gradually solve the puzzle and figure out what were their most superior specialties. If possible, they could even train six types of Specialty to grade S.

Under the settings which gave players much room and freedom, besides the 'Fear Value', Thriller Paradise had something more special, the 'Title System'. This would save players from the mess of the complicated fighting styles at the later stage of the game and ensure that they could personalize their unique characters, giving them a 'focus'. It could be said that Dream Inc. had really put their hearts in this.

'Title' wouldn't be in the 12 slots of the Skills Bar, but it would still assign players a special ability. For example, Longao Min's 'Colliding Lightning' was his special ability, but it wouldn't be placed in one of the slots of the skills bar. The 'Title' would be changed in accordance with the player's development. When they reached level 10, the system would base on their performance to give them a title after they had finished the scenario. Moreover, the titles were all very special. Even though two players had the

same title, the special ability they had received wouldn’t be the same. The special abilities might not always be active or passive skills; sometimes, they could be invisible and insignificant boosts.

At the Open Beta stage, to players at level 20 and above, their titles would be more like a brand. When players join a party, they wouldn’t care about their teammates' names, but their titles. Then, they would have the basic information about their specialties. Such titles like [the Brave Vanguard], [Imprudent Pugilist Master] or [Accurate Gunman] were clear and simple. Of course, players could guess the competencies from their teammate’s titles. After level 40, besides the said Titles, maybe one could see something like [Eastern Heretic], [Western Venom], [Southern Emperor] and [Northern Beggar](1). Those titles were like a hot brand, which other players would want to ‘hold their thighs’ for sure.

Ahem. We should get back to our story. As Longao Min and Wang Tanzhi were struggling with the Bloody Corpse, Feng Bujue was walking, searching in the dark police station.

Reference to the famous novel series "Legend of the Condor Heroes" by Jin Yong. They are the titles of the most powerful individuals in Jianghu excluding the [Central Enlightened].

Chapter 23: First Multiplayer Scenario (7)

There was no light in the police station, so it seemed like the power was cut out. However, it wasn't too dark to see one's own fingers. The moonlight shone through the grille and the glass windows barely lit up a small area. Of course, it was just enough to help Feng Bujue not to be completely blind while the other places were still sunk in the darkness.

After he had entered the police station, Feng Bujue started to dash as if he was flying. On one hand, it was to prevent the Bloody Corpse from returning and thrusting him all of a sudden, and on the other, this place was bright enough as the light that came through the hole on the wall had lit up a part of the corridor.

The first floor was a spacious lobby. Because of the limited light, Feng Bujue found it hard to find the stairs leading to the second floor. In the gloomy space, Feng Bujue fumbled everywhere, turned every knob and opened every drawer that he could land his hands on. However, he didn't find anything useful.

Since his vision was limited, his other senses became more sensitive. Soon, he could smell a thick and dense scent of blood.

He followed the smell and walked to a dark corner. He groped his way to the wall, finding something really sticky there. Following the viscous trail on the wall to the ground, he finally touched something... Bones? Rotten flesh?

"Ouch... The head is screwed off...." Feng Bujue was touching a

corpse, which didn’t have anything attached to its neck. What Feng Bujue had touched was a part of its neck bones that was exposed.

"Well, I’ve thought that we couldn’t see any living people or any corpses in this city. A corpse is here, so there should be something strange in this police station." Feng Bujue mused.

Touching a dead body didn’t scare him at all. Quite the contrary, he continued to search the corpse. Of course, he didn’t want to certify the gender of the corpse; he just wanted to guess the dead’s profession through its costume.

Feng Bujue soon found badges on its shoulder’ straps. He immediately knew that this was a police uniform. Feng Bujue couldn’t wait any longer; he immediately started to search the dead police. A few seconds later, he touched a holster. Too bad, it was empty. He then followed the direction of the dead’s arm and found a gun.

[Name: M1911A Pistol]

[Type: Weapon]

[Quality: Normal]

[Attack power: Medium]

[Attribute: None]

[Special effects: None]

[Equipment conditions: Shooting Specialty grade F or Weapon Specialty grade F]

[Remarks: This is not a movie gun, please remember three things. First, undo the safety lock before shooting. Second, pay attention to the recoil. Third, don’t forget to reload bullets!]

Feng Bujue put the gun into his bag then continued into searching the corpse. On its waist, he found a flashlight. Feng Bujue felt extremely happy. He picked up the item, turned it on, but it didn’t work. Feng Bujue then realized that the small glass bulb inside was broken.

Feng Bujue sighed. He did hope that the flashlight could work, much more than the gun. He understood that this dead body was a good reminder for them. He had a gun but what had beheaded him? Apparently, even guns couldn’t kill that Bloody Corpse.

If he had the flashlight, he could be faster in searching for more weapons, but since he couldn’t see anything clear, he could only search the corpse again. After he found some keys in the pocket, he could no longer find any other useful objects.

Considering the rushing time, he knew that perhaps his teammates, who were in front of the police station, wouldn’t be hold it any longer. Feng Bujue didn’t have more choices. He had to get out of the lobby now. Even if this pistol couldn’t kill the Bloody

Corpse, it was still a far-range weapon. This dead cop had used the gun, but he couldn't harm the Bloody Corpse; however, when Feng Bujue joined his teammates, they could use a knife, a shield, a wrench and a gun to cooperate on dealing with that mob on a various attack range.

Outside the police station, Longao Min couldn't hold it anymore.

However, his defending technique was good enough as he could stop the claw of the Bloody Corpse whenever it tried to hit him. However, within just three minutes, his Survival Value had decreased from a full bar to 64%. This Bloody Corpse was formidable!

Right now, Longao Min was attacking the mob while backing off. He didn't get hit much. Even if he got hit, the attack all fell on his shield. However, his [Ultron's Fragment]'s attribute was 'Refraction', which would only be enhanced with light. This shield wasn't suitable for close combat as it couldn't reduce the hitting effects. When the Bloody Corpse struck its claw on the shield, the shield could help Longao Min to not be pushed away as it could dissolve a part of the power from the attack. However, Longao Min could only depend on his Survival Value to confront the remaining attack power.

This Bloody Corpse had a low intelligence. It was only designed to use its big hands to slap the players; it wouldn't use its feet or legs. The mob's attack was simple, and that was something worth celebrating for, otherwise, even if they had had five Longao Min here, they would have been over soon. Moreover, the Bloody

Corpse would attack only one target. No matter how annoying Wang Tanzhi was to it after it got cut, it just swung its hand to shoo Wang Tanzhi away or even ignored him.

This gave Wang Tanzhi more courage and gradually became bolder, waiting for more chances to attack it. Of course, his attacks were feeble. He was lucky that his [Fruit Knife] didn't break when he had used it to stab the mob.

Longao Min also used everything to endure. He had used the wrench to hit the Bloody Corpse several times, however, he had just hit the mob on the head once. Although the effect was better than that of Wang Tanzhi's attack, which he used his knife to rub the mob, Longao Min didn't have many chances to attack it. Most of the time Longao Min could only dodge and back off.

When Feng Bujue had handed the pipe wrench to Longao Min, the first thought that had popped up in his mind wasn't that Longao Min would take his weapon, but... only Longao Min was tall enough to use the wrench and hit the mob's head. Although Wang Tanzhi and himself were around 180 centimeters tall, if they wanted to attack the mob with this short wrench, they would have to jump up constantly to reach the 2 meters tall monster.

Longao Min was trying his best, but the mob was still attacking him. It would be very hard to hit it on the head. Moreover, Feng Bujue, before he left, had said that he would soon find a weapon and turn back to help them. Longao Min decided to trust him. Thus, he was trying to delay it more.

BANG!

The sound of a gunshot! Feng Bujue was back!

Everybody exhaled in relief. It seemed like if he could get back, they would have a solution. Perhaps they all forgot that Feng Bujue was just a level five player.

When Feng Bujue had pulled the trigger, he had unlocked another Specialty. This was the third Specialty he had unlocked in this scenario. That's why the 'Multiplayer Survival Mode' is different from the other modes. There are more chances for players to thrive. The scenario, with more elements of the game, would be developed further, giving low-level players space to grow. Just playing the 'Multiplayer Survival Mode' once, even if they couldn't pass, they would still get a big harvest.

At this moment, Feng Bujue had unlocked the Common, Weapon, Investigation, Fighting and Shooting Specialties. They were all graded F now. He now only had 'Curing' that wasn't still unlocked yet.

"ROAR—" The Bloody Corpse faced the sky and howled. It seemed that the shot had damaged it badly. The mob then turned its head, changing its target.

Feng Bujue had shot the Bloody Corpse in its back. He had been well prepared before shooting. Holding the gun with both hands, his eyes, the gun, and the target were on the same line. He understood well that he wasn't a member of a special force in reality. Making a headshot at the first time using the gun, if he

could do that, he would then change his name to Longao Min! Thus, he had chosen the mob's back, a bigger target, to aim for, and shoot.

This was just a game, anyway. The system had adjusted the features of the modern technical weapons so as it wouldn't trouble the players much when using it. Then, Feng Bujue was successful on his very first shot, hitting the mob on the right side of its back. After he had shot it once, Feng Bujue understood the remarks in the weapon's properties. Indeed, not everybody who hadn't been trained could do the shooting. For example, women and children might know the Desert Eagle, but if no one tells you that it'd be better to stretch the arms out when shooting in order to transmit the recoil force to your shoulder, well, you may break your wrist after just one shot. Another example is in movies about gangsters and the mafia, you always see the bad guy raise the gun, aim for a target which is higher than his sight, pointing to someone's head. It looks cool, I know, but this cool, yet stupid stance could let the cartridge jolt in his eyes.

The reaction force from the M1911A1 pistol in Feng Bujue's hands wasn't weak at all. After just one shot, he felt his arms were numb. Fortunately, his shooting stance was not much strange, and his arms were strong enough. With the experience from the first shot, the next ones would be easier. He had some concepts on checking the range, his angle, and the success rate now. However, facing the Bloody Corpse, who was storming towards him, he just backed off and didn't say a word.

The Bloody Corpse had just turned its head around and Longao Min immediately felt more relieved. Since the beginning, he understood that the sullen mob wouldn't easily change its target.

As it was focusing on Feng Bujue now, when he attacked it, it wouldn't bat an eye.

The fire of anger had finally burst out in Longao Min's mind. He jumped up, swung the pipe wrench, violently hitting the Bloody Corpse on its nape. They all heard a funny 'puff'. It was the sound of the metal bar breaking a hole in the skull. The Bloody Corpse's nape was pounded, and there appeared an ugly wound as its skull had a narrow slit cracked open.

However, it didn't slow down or stop the mob's action but instead made the mob more furious. Its speed instantly increased, turning and swinging its claw at Longao Min. Longao Min didn't have time to use the shield to stop the attack; he then got hit by the waist and blown away as he spat out a mouthful of blood.

Longao Min received an attack altogether and was blown away for over 10 meters. His Survival Value instantly declined to 12%. Moreover, he couldn't stand up now. The only fortunate thing was that he had been close to the mob as it couldn't hit him with its claw but only with its arm, so he didn't have an open wound. If not, Longao Min's status would have been 'Bleeding' by now.

The Bloody Corpse was covering the wound on its nape with both hands and screeching. A few seconds later, it stared at Longao Min ferociously, roaring at his face just like a beast trying to threaten its preys. It seemed that the pipe wrench had given it a positive wound, making the little BOSS feel threatened.

Lonely and Lonesome saw their Long-Ge falling down on the ground and immediately understood that the situation wasn't good

now. They ran towards Longao Min to lift him up, in hopes that they could bring him out of the Bloody Corpse's attack range. How could the Bloody Corpse let them go that easy? It instantly headed towards the three of them, who were walking slowly on the street.

At this moment, no one had expected a miracle. A silhouette, as fast as strong wind and lightning, dashed towards the Bloody Corpse from one side, agilely climbed on its back, then balanced himself on a kneeling position on the mob’s shoulders.

It could be said that Wang Tanzhi, well, it would be nothing when he kept silent, but once he took action, even the fast monster couldn’t react timely. He then jabbed his knife into the wound that Longao Min had opened with his wrench. The knife pierced through the skull, stirring in the sticky dough of substances inside the mob’s head.

Desert Eagle: The IMI Desert Eagle is a semi-automatic handgun notable for chambering the largest centerfire cartridge of any magazine fed, self-loading pistol. It has a unique design with a triangular barrel and large muzzle.

Chapter 24: First Multiplayer Scenario (8)

No one thought that this unfortunate Bloody Corpse with such severe wounds could remain standing still. It rose one of its arm to grab Wang Tanzhi.

At this moment, everybody who was present here all had the same two thoughts. First, the thing inside that mob's head was actually dough. Second, that Wang Tanzhi would be over!

Pang!

Another shot resounded.

Feng Bujue's actions and thoughts were both quick enough. Moreover, he was always calm and effective. At this moment, he was standing two meters away from the Bloody Corpse, aiming his gun at the head of the mob and shot. Due to the short distance, the pellet had pierced through the Bloody Corpse's head. An unknown liquid substance spewed out from the skull together with the bullet.

Finally, the Bloody Corpse slowed down. Wang Tanzhi took that chance to get rid of its grip and jumped off its shoulder.

Feng Bujue walked to the front of the Bloody Corpse, then aimed for its glabella. "Very thoughtful. Attacking its nape seems useless." He shot another bullet when he hadn't even finished his talk. The bullet had shot right in the middle of the mob's forehead. This time, the mob didn't even cry and immediately lost all reactions.

"Yeah, I got it. This mob is accustomed to stare at the target which could damage it the most, so it is easy to get hit from behind. Although the head is truly its weak point, the system had designed its dead spot in the front of the head; it was also given a powerful strength and high HP," while Feng Bujue was speaking, the Bloody Corpse collapsed. In fact, killing the mobs wasn't important to him; knowing how to kill them quickly and effectively was more crucial.

Longao Min finally came by. He was still able to stand and walk, however, his countenance didn't look good. Although other people couldn't see the specific value of his Survival Value, they all knew that his situation was very bad.

The loss of Wang Tanzhi's Survival Value was insignificant compared to Longao Min's. Of course, to Wang Tanzhi's Survival Value, even if it were 90%, just one hit of the Bloody Corpse, his life would be over directly.

Right when everybody thought that they could exhale in relief after killing that little BOSS, darkness fell again and the horrible noises arose in their ears. Their Fear Value surged simultaneously. A scary thought popped up in their minds: what if the Bloody Corpse rose again and became even stronger when the darkness was over? What should they do then?

A few seconds later, the darkness vanished, just like the first time, it had come and gone quick. Feng Bujue rose his gun again, aiming for the mob on the ground. However, the Bloody Corpse didn't move an inch; it seemed to be dead already.

"Seems... I've told you three options. It should be the second one." Feng Bujue stared at the mob for five or six seconds. After he couldn't see any anomaly, he relaxed his arms. "This darkness is a natural phenomenon, and its effect is to enhance all of the 'living' mobs." He glanced at the Bloody Corpse on the ground. "I think this Bloody Corpse had evolved once. Not only this mob. When the darkness fell for the first time, I think all the mobs in this city, which haven't been killed yet, are strengthened."

Longao Min, Lonely, and Lonesome had approached Feng Bujue. Longao Min didn't say anything and just handed the [Mario's Pipe Wrench] to Feng Bujue. Feng Bujue took it; it seemed both of them didn't take it seriously.

Feng Bujue continued, "If we hadn't killed the Bloody Corpse just yet, it would have been changed again in the darkness."

"The difficulty level of this scenario is being exaggerated. If the darkness came several more times, would the whole city be full of mobs running around then?" said Wang Tanzhi.

"This is to urge us to finish the game as soon as possible. This city is enormous. The scenario didn't make many monsters, I guess. At least, it wouldn't be like in movies, which have zombies here and there. Thus, the system goes like that to disable the players from deliberately searching for items in the city," Feng Bujue said, "if we don't stick to the time, not to mention the main quest, several hours later, any random monster we meet would be as strong as a final BOSS. We'd all be doomed then."

"So what are we waiting for? We should take the time and—" Feng Bujue shook his head while Longao Min hadn't finished yet. "No matter how intensive it is, our plan will not change." He then turned to the police station. "We've killed the mob here. This sort of mob could have big rewards. Now we should search the police station for some weapons. Everybody should equip themselves some weapons. And, we have to give time for Long-Ge to recover his Survival Value."

After Feng Bujue had finished, he walked to the wall directly. He then hauled the broken flashlight from his bag and said, "I have a skill that could make broken items work for three minutes, but it needs 100 points of Stamina Value. Previously, I was hurrying to get back here and help you guys; I didn't search further. Stamina Value shouldn't be wasted before the fight. Thus, I didn't use this skill.

"Considering that the light would be limited, I suggest that I'm the only one going there. If I find something better for lighting, I will come back to you guys, and then we can all go together and search the place."

He turned around and said, "Of course, it's okay if you want to go with me. However, you could only follow me and could only see wherever it is that my flashlight is shining on."

"No need. We'll wait here. Do we need to be afraid that you would take all the items?" Longao Min smiled generously, then sat down on the ground. "It's good that I can have more time to rest and recover my Stamina Value."

Little Lonely Boy and Little Lonely Girl didn't have any opinions. They had played the 'Multiplayer Survival Mode' twice, but high-level players hadn't protected them or cared about them, let alone give them items. Now, this 'Feng-Ge' wanted to search the police station to find some equipment for them, why should they be bothered?

Feng Bujue exchanged glances with the other members of the party, then nodded, getting through the hole to enter the place. This time, he got a flashlight on his hand. After taking several steps, he used the [Perfunctory Maintenance]. When his Stamina Value had decreased 100 points, a matrix of 2D digits appeared and covered the flashlight. When he took the flashlight again, it had been changed to intact now.

[Name: Flashlight]

[Type: Tools]

[Quality: Normal]

[Function: Lighting]

[Being able to be brought out of the scenario: Yes]

[Remarks: It needs two pieces of D battery to work]

Although this item could be brought out of the scenario, it wasn't that useful. Because when Feng Bujue's skill was over, the quality

of the item would return to ‘Broken’, and it wouldn’t work anymore. At the same time, it wasn’t an item that was related to the plot; it wouldn’t become a piece of Jigsaw Puzzle Card.

With the source of light in his hand, Feng Bujue walked forward, and his searching became more effective because he eventually found a very crucial object.

Chapter 25: First Multiplayer Scenario (9)

It was just one minute, and the people waiting outside could already see the light inside the police station.

They looked at each other, and after 10 seconds, Feng Bujue returned from the hole in the wall. "I found the switch of the backup power. This police station seems to have an independent power generator."

This was absolutely good news. The five of them then went through the hole on the wall one by one to enter the police station.

When the light was finally lit up, the interior was horribly visible. Besides the ceiling which didn't have many damages, basically, all movable things such as desks, chair, couch, computer, documents, even a water dispenser, etc., didn't stay where they should. There were numerous pieces of broken things, and around 10 doorframes were smashed. Many objects were blocking the main doors, that's why they couldn't open it; even if they have a key, it would still be useless.

On the ground floor, there were three corpses. Feng Bujue had found the first corpse, which was nearest to the entrance. Deep inside the lobby, they found other two corpses in uniform. They were all Caucasian males. The second dead body was a fat guy with a beer belly. There was a cut on his tummy, where a part of his intestine was drawn out of his body. Well, how long was it, let's imagine like this: it was enough to hang someone. The third corpse was a medium-sized male with a deep cut on his left shoulder, crossing the collarbone to his left chest. The heart in his rib cage

was missing.

This game offered a high performance on scene settings to make players want to vomit. However, the system would inhibit players from puking. It could do it mainly because of the nervous system connection. The system would reduce the senses of smell and taste to not give the players the butterfly feeling in their stomachs.

It was quite okay for Wang Tanzhi. In reality, he had operated on many corpses. Of course, that practice and courage weren't related at all. It was like his habit now: if the body didn't move, no matter whether it had the chest or the stomach open, he wouldn't care. However, the other things like ghosts, monsters or even the darkness, he feared them all. When he was watching horror movies or playing thriller games, his reactions were not much different from that of girls.

Hey, this is just a digression, but in fact, when girls watch horror movies, their reactions are a little bit exaggerated, but it doesn't mean they are timid. It is totally a trap. It is possible that sometimes, they would feel scared, but horror movies are another thing. For example, if a couple is watching movies together, the guy will show a cool face while the girl often shows that she is scared out of her wits. One would smile and mock the other while the other would sometimes scream out at the jump scares. This happens everyday, in which, 80% of men would pretend to be brave, and the same number of women would pretend to be cute. As a matter of fact, both of them almost have the same level of easy or hard to get scared, not much different.

However, I have to say that if a man doesn't pretend to be brave,

he won’t be cute at all; and vice versa, if a girl doesn’t pretend to be cute, she will be too brave (in their partner’s point of view). This world runs that way; please continue to work hard.

Now we should get back to the story and those three dead bodies. Feng Bujue had checked the first one; of course, there was nothing for them to discover on that corpse. The one who got his chest opened had a police baton and a pair of handcuffs. The handcuffs were broken, and they couldn’t find the key on the corpse.

Feng Bujue handed the baton to Lonely. Although it was an item of normal quality, it didn’t have any requirements to be equipped. Moreover, no matter how good or bad it was, it was a true weapon, which satisfied the unarmed Lonely Boy a lot.

The third corpse lay in a smaller room that looked like a maintenance room where cleaning ladies put their tools. However, it didn’t have anything but a bare pair of hands. At the time, Feng Bujue had an intention of stripping off the dead cop to see if he had three moles or any tattoos on his feet, Wang Tanzhi found a piece of paper in his shirt pocket.

This was obviously a clue that they couldn’t miss.

[Name: A note with written numbers]

[Type: Related to the plot]

[Quality: Normal]

[Functions: Unknown]

[Being able to be brought out of the scenario: Yes]

[Remarks: 69185]

Besides the five Arabic numeral digits, there was nothing else on the note. Feng Bujue studied that stuff for a few seconds then threw it away.

"Hey! Jue-Ge, is it ok if you throw it away?" Wang Tanzhi said.

Feng Bujue took the chain of keys he had previously found from his bag, then eyed them closely. "69185... 69185... Found it." He picked the last key which had those five digits carved on it, unchained it from the keychain and flung the others away, leaving only one left, "Yeah... Correct, this is it."

When he held the lone key in his hand, the item menu popped up.

[Name: The Key of Fire]

[Type: Related to the plot]

[Quality: Good]

[Functions: work with the seal of fire]

[Being able to be brought out of the scenario: No]

[Remarks: This is a magic key, one of the five keys that can open the Demonic Gateway]

"This is supposed to be an item needed for the main quest," Feng Bujue said, "Even if we didn't come here, when we reach the Demonic Gateway, there should be a side quest to lead us here."

"Excellent! Doesn't it help us save time now?" Wang Tanzhi said.

"Time..." Feng Bujue said, "Hm... doesn't matter. The remarks of this item said that there are five keys in total. With our moves, I guess when we reach the Demonic Gateway, the next main quest would be to find the five keys, then we have to open or close the gateway."

Longao Min emerged from the other side of the corridor. "The access to the second floor was destroyed. Seems we can't get up there."

"As I thought," Feng Bujue handed him the key to see the item's properties, "if we want to find items, we're supposed to stay at the ground level."

Lonely and Lonesome had found something. In a messy room full of debris, they found a first aid kit.

After they had opened the box, they found a bandage roll and two bottles of transparent liquid. They were all consumable. The bandage could be used to stop the bleeding, and the other two bottles were the standard recovery medicine provided by the Thriller Paradise.

[Name: Survival Value Supplement (large) x 2 bottles]

[Type: Consumables]

[Quality: Normal]

[Effects: Recover 100% of the player's Survival Value]

[Being able to be brought out of the scenario: Yes]

[Remarks: it could only be piled up to five layers max. For consecutive use, the effect would be reduced after every use.]

Feng Bujue got it right when he saw the remark. The limitation on piling up was to limit the number of the bottles that the players would carry along with them. Since the bag had only 10 slots, even if it could be enlarged later, they should spare room for other items. The reduced effect of consecutive use was to not let the players depend on this recovery item while playing the game.

"Cool. Very good. If a bottle is 100%," Feng Bujue hauled his [Single-use Syringe] and handed it to Wang Tanzhi and said, "Doc, I'll leave it to you."

Wang Tanzhi was a smart guy; he understood what Feng Bujue had implied right away. He then took a bottle of Supplement, extracted about four-fifth of the volume of the liquid and then gestured Longao Min to roll up his sleeve.

When Doctor Wang was giving him an injection, Longao Min handed back the key to Feng Bujue then asked, "What do these numbers 69185 mean?"

Feng Bujue answered, "Low-level puzzle. It's just the order of the Alphabet. 6F, 9I, 18R, 5E, FIRE."

Although the explanation was simple, Longao Min felt that he possibly would not be able to guess the answer.

Wang Tanzhi completed the injection skillfully. The amount he had extracted was somehow precise. This injection gave Longao Min 83% of his Survival Value. Now it was 95%.

There was only 17% in the bottle. Wang Tanzhi asked Lonely and Lonesome if their Survival Value was damaged. They all signaled him that they were still full of energy. Wang Tanzhi then bluntly picked up the bottle and took a swig, recovering his Survival Value to 100%.

Perhaps someone would ask why they didn't take turns in sipping the bottle? Well, the reason is, if a player conducts 'drinking gesture', the item would disappear right away.

The Supplement was just a normal 'Blood Vial', which would be a very popular item in Shops later on. The way it was used in the scenario was different from reality. It was totally a system default settings. When players conducted the drinking gesture, putting it near their mouths, it would be considered that they had drunk it empty. However, they couldn't feel the liquid pouring down their throats, and the bottle had already disappeared. This item was supposed to be 'used', not to ease their thirst or make them feel full. Thus, the system had designed the way it was to be used like that.

That [Single-use Syringe] was a loophole that only Feng Bujue who had learned the game's introduction by heart could think about. At this moment, Wang Tanzhi's and Longao Min's thoughts were not completely recovered as they just only followed Feng Bujue's thoughts and acted. Later when they had finished the scenario, they had finally read the introduction of the Supplement to get the reason.

According to the system's judgment, if it weren't considered BUG, Wang Tanzhi would receive some points of Skill Value. Since the [Single-use Syringe] was a consumable item, it meant the player had used one item to split up another item. One in, one out. Loss and gain. It wasn't to create something from nothing.

"One police baton, one shotgun, one item related to the quest,

two Blood Vials and an item to solve the ‘Bleeding’ state," Feng Bujue concluded, "normally, since we’ve taken the main quest and killed the Bloody Corpse, we would possibly be ‘Bleeding’ and drain our Survival Value. The Supplement for Survival Value would be essential. The item related to the plot doesn’t mention anything. Two weapons for killing such mobs, it’s a little bit meager."

Feng Bujue cocked his head, folded his left arm on his chest while his right elbow rested on his left arm; he was patting his forehead with two fingers. "I was so full of hope in finding the army weapon storage or a bunch of confiscated drugs."

"Hey! What are you simmering for? Virtual drug experience and pornographic services are all prohibited!" said Wang Tanzhi.

"Yes!" Feng Bujue’s eyes were shining, "That fat guy’s intestine has even been dragged out, why is his belly still that big? Something should be in there!"

Chapter 26: First Multiplayer Scenario (10)

"Jue-Ge, you are so disgusting..." said Wang Tanzhi.

"So, want to puke?" Feng Bujue was asking him while running to the corpse.

"Both of your thoughts and actions are worth puking!" Wang Tanzhi cried, "You can't mess around just because you thought that the system hadn't rewarded you enough!"

"Messing?" Feng Bujue said, "If there are sh!t and stuff, I'm messed up." He was squatting next to the second corpse. "If there's nothing inside, I'm proven to be wrong, not messing. But if there's something..." Upon his words, Feng Bujue had already poked his hand into that cop's opened tummy through the horrible cut, searching attentively and deliberately.

"Wang-Ge, tell me secretly, what does Feng-Ge do exactly?" Longao Min was bewildered; seeing his teammate's strange deeds, his Fear Value was fluctuating.

"Novelist..." Wang Tanzhi answered him with a dull expression.

"Is a novelist that frightening?" Little Lonesome Girl interfered as she overheard their talk.

"Apparently, he doesn't conform to the majority," Wang Tanzhi added.

"Haaa...!" Feng Bujue suddenly laughed, making the other four startle in fear.

"LOOK!" Feng Bujue screamed contentedly; there was something in his rising hand. He had found an item in that cop’s bloody stomach. It was even a good one.

[Name: The Eye of Hatred]

[Type: Defensive item]

[Quality: Excellent]

[Defensive power: None]

[Attribute: None]

[Effects: can see the monster's resentful target instantly]

[Equipment Requirements: Player at level 20 and under. Cannot be traded after picking up]

[Being able to be brought out of the scenario: Yes]

[Remarks: You’ve found this item. Apparently, it belongs to you. These goggles were made by a Necromancer. Since he had caused

much resentment, he made this to see the murderous intentions from other people. Too bad, this stuff could only see one target at a time. When he was still alive, he had carved a line on this goggle, which is ‘When you look at me, I’m also looking at you!’]

This item looked exactly like what the pilots were wearing in World War II. The only problem was, it was taken out from a dead body’s tummy. Really disgusting.

"I told you. The clues are obvious in this police station. There isn’t even half a shadow in this city, but there’re corpses here. The other two corpses have items. It should have something then. If we could only find a baton on him, the system didn’t need to arrange such an impressive bloody dead cop; instead, it would directly hide the baton somewhere in this fricking station."

"Tough. You are really dangerous," Wang Tanzhi said, "time is soaring, so we should go now. Finding items and recovering are going well. You’ve also scared our teammates."

After they had left the police station, the five of them continued walking on the street. Searching the police station had helped them soon to finish the required steps in the quest. In addition, they acquired some useful items. Their spirits were now boosting up, however, they gradually figured out Feng Bujue’s weird features, which had even scared them much more than what the game had done to them.

Even if the game was so frightening, players could still break it, because they all knew that everything was fake. However, if Feng Bujue’s behavior were developed or escalated, it would be hard to

imagine how scary he was in reality.

"Look, ahead of us!" After walking for roughly 10 minutes, Longao Min stopped and pointed forward.

They all looked ahead to see a massive opened square with stone ground. A colossal gateway stood amid the square, which was about 10 meters tall and four meters wide. The gateway had one side open, and the other side was covered with a strange dark mist.

When the five of them were approaching the gateway, the system’s notification arose. "Current quest, completed. Renew main quest!"

They opened the menu to take a look. The quest [Find the Demonic Gateway] had a checkmark next to it and there were two more quests below, namely [Find the Key of Fire at the Police Station, 9th Street, in the East of the City] and [Find the Key of Wood at the Mall, 15th Street, in the South of the city]. There was a checkmark on the right of the completed quests.

After Feng Bujue had skimmed over his quest menu, he walked towards the gate quickly, admirably beholding the gate for a few seconds then said, "That’s why. It doesn't seem extremely fraudulent. Three among the five magic formations are glowing. It means that we don’t need to find the Metal, Water and Earth Keys. They are already there, maintaining the gate."

Wang Tanzhi and the other people also approached the gate, looking at what Feng Bujue had just mentioned. The gateway was

filled with dark mist, which gave people a feeling that no sort of light could penetrate that darkness. There were five locations with five different colored magic formations that were engraved on the frame of the gate. They were arrayed to form a pentagram. The formations were drawn with obscure divine patterns, and three of them were now shining.

Feng Bujue took out the Key of Fire, put it on his palm, and came closer to the gate. After a few seconds of waiting, there was no reaction. He put the key away then said, "Yeah. I guess we have to collect the other two keys to renew the quest. Then we will know how to recover the seal." He paused for a while before continuing, "We shouldn't delay. The first and the second time that the darkness fell were roughly 30 minutes apart. It's been 18 minutes since the second darkness had fallen. If the period is similar, we'd better get to that Mall within 12 minutes. Moreover, we have to kill the mobs there; if not..."

As having listened to him, Longao Min immediately took the lead and stormed out, "Quick! Follow me!"Although he didn't think that much, he could still guess something from the clues. If they met the strengthened mobs again, the first one who would storm over and die would be him for sure. The Bloody Corpse had scared him; now, he wasn't willing to take the bento again.

The group of five under Long-Ge's lead was running slowly towards the south of the city. There was a city map at the square, where the Demonic Gateway stood, with details on directions and names of the streets or other landmarks. Longao Min soon found the location of the 15th Street in the South of the city without Feng Bujue's help.

They had run one kilometer in five minutes to reach the entrance of the mall. This distance wasn't too long, and normally, they could achieve this in real physical activities. However, they had to gasp for breath two minutes after that in order to be able to run again.

"They have light there." Apparently, Longao Min could do a marathon in reality; this one-kilometer distance was just a warm-up to him.

Here, we have to talk about a new concept—'Invisible attributes'.

This concept happens all the time. Even in the real world or the visual world, there's something that couldn't be fully quantified. Take Longao Min as an example: he was a strong man in reality. When he and another player finished the same activity, their consumption would be different. In comparison to the Lonesome Girl, the Stamina Value Longao Min had consumed was less than that of the Lonesome Girl. Even though it was just a difference of 10 points, this small disparity still existed to the later stage of the game.

In other words, if they had the same highest Stamina Value and using the same speed to run until they had used up their energy, Longao Min could run farther than Lonesome. This is the difference between their 'Invisible attributes'.

Another example was when comparing a player who knew how to shoot a gun in reality and another one who didn't know, and both of them had their 'Shooting Specialty' upgraded to Grade A (Specialty Grade A: Excellent. Could be able to understand the

skills thoroughly. At this level, the success rate of a skill could be 100%) shooting the same target, the one who used to use guns in reality would have a higher accuracy. Of course, players couldn't figure out this point; only the system knew the particular differences between them.

The longer players had played, the more powerful they would become. At level 30 and higher, they were closer to the kind of men in 'The Matrix' with extreme martial arts levels, punching like the wind. At that time, the invisible attributes would be even more difficult to be recognized. Thus, the next definition for it at that time should be 'Talent'. Talent would then be a resource that gave players some certain benefits.

"It's the same with the police station. Seems the related places of the quest would be different from time to time. There're some places that don't have light or corpses," Feng Bujue said.

"What to do next? Shall we wait for the mobs to attack us?" asked Wang Tanzhi.

"How could the system be that boring using the same trick at each place?" Feng Bujue answered him, "Get in, don't expect that there would be another Bloody Corpse punching the wall and coming to you. There will absolutely be another kind of monster inside..."

He took the lead to the entrance. There were two big automatic movable glass doors. Feng Bujue swaggeringly entered the mall through the open doors.

This mall covered an enormous area. Visually checking, it was situated on a few arcs. The light was shining inside, while the other stuff like the escalators, elevators, even the vending machines, etc., all electric devices were working normally. However, some shelves had been damaged to a certain degree.

The main building had five floors and two booths of transparent elevators that could go up and down. Each floor had escalators; even the fire detection system still looked intact. It should be the stairs inside.

From the main entrance, it was an endless supermarket, which had around 30 checkout counters neatly arranged in one line. Each floor had different sorts of goods, including costumes, food, and drinks, KTV, billiard rooms, etc. If they had had enough time but didn't search this place thoroughly, those players should have apologized to themselves.

Feng Bujue didn't say a word; he just walked to the map at the main gate and quickly skimmed through the introduction. Since this was a huge mall, which almost had everything, it was such a distraction.

"Where could the Key of Wood be? The shops? The toy stores?" Lonely was also rushing in giving opinions.

If this party had five Feng Bujues, they would have split off to each floor. However, the problem was, this party only had one Feng Bujue, and there was only one Feng Bujue in this world;

splitting now wasn’t a good idea. Not to mention the biggest harvest they could have missed, it would somehow be dangerous.

At the moment when Feng Bujue was thinking about a plan, suddenly, they all felt that the ground underneath them was shaking. Something was happening!

BANG! —— BANG! —— BANG! ——

The banging sound came from the underground about 10 meters away from them. A pit which looked like a volcano gradually appeared. Tiles were broken, and shelves were sliding away. After seven or eight more impacts, finally, a monster came up from the ground, emerging in their visions.

"I bet five bucks that we could find the key if we kill it," Feng Bujue looked at that ‘giant tree’ and said.

Half of the body of that monster was still buried in the ground. A burned tree, which was over two meters in diameter, emerged from the pit. That tree didn’t have a single leaf. There were branches that looked like shriveled claws attached to the trunk. The tree also had facial features. Well, it was also a wooden-head.

Longao Min wasn’t in the mood to joke around, and he frankly said, "I think this guy cannot move. Although it has hands, but their working radius is not too large. We just need to come closer to it and avoid the mouth, and then get behind it. It is the blind point of that mob’s attacking range."

While listening to him, Feng Bujue deliberately hauled the [Eye of Hatred] from his bag and put it on. The item, after being stored in the bag, when taken it out, even if it had been covered with rotten flesh or blood, it would be recovered as a new one. Thus, the goggles Feng Bujue was wearing now didn't have strange things attached to it. However, people were still thinking of something else when seeing him wear it.

"Alright, let me take a look. His target now is..." Feng Bujue's countenance changed while he was still talking. He then lifted his head up, turning around to look at a section of the handrail on the fifth floor.

It was a dark spot, in which a shadow with human shape was sitting. At the moment, Feng Bujue and everybody looked up to see, it seemed to have realized that they had finally spotted it out; it then spread out a pair of bat wings and descended to the ground with a fast pace.

"What is going on?! Batman?!" said Wang Tanzhi.

"Personally, I think it's some sort of demon... watch out!" Feng Bujue shouted, then he became the first one who laid down, covering his head with both of his arms.

Right then, Feng Bujue saw that the mob's target wasn't anyone of them, but the black Monstrous Tree that came out from the ground.

Indeed, the Demon abruptly changed its direction when it was

about to touch the ground, making a curve, and then speeding up again towards the Monstrous Tree. The Monstrous Tree opened its wide mouth and made some low roars like the deep sound coming out from a horn.

The roar was like some kind of substance that could rise up a gale. The five of them were laying flat on the ground, covering their ears instinctively. However, this roar was nothing to the Demon. The Demon also opened its mouth, showing its fangs, and continued flying forward while howling loudly.

This was a gloomy yet sharp, and as penetrating as the fingernails scratching on glass sound, which made people's organs shiver. These two monsters, one had the bass male voice, and the other had the soprano female voice, were harmonizing with each other. However, it didn't leave people enjoying the melody in peace; instead, it brought an awfully annoying torturous sound.

Bento: Japanese lunchbox. It's an Internet slang of being retired or forced to quit when people have to receive 'bento' and rest.

Chapter 27: First Multiplayer Scenario (11)

Those two monsters had different kinds of powers. Their screams were boycotting, blending and separating each other at the same time. Invisible voices could cause visible damages.

The Demon’s body was torn apart, just like it was being devoured by piranhas. Flesh and bones gradually emerged under the ash-grey skin. The Demon’s flesh was then stripped off, leaving only the skeleton falling broken on the ground.

Immediately, there were numerous bites appearing on the trunk of the Monstrous Tree, expanding rapidly to its branches. Those bites were like wounds that would never be healed, continuously deepening the damages on the Monstrous Tree.

Seeing the situation, it seemed like it would come to an end in which both of the monsters would die together; however, the darkness fell right at this moment.

The visions of the five of them were suddenly darkened. The darkness seemed like it wanted to swallow everything as it was enveloping the surroundings both indoor and outdoor. Even if the light was right in front of them, it didn’t avail them at all.

At this moment, those annoying noises didn’t echo in their ears; however, apparently, it wasn't related to the fact that they were using their hands covering their ears. Because just a few seconds later, they all heard a low but clear voice arose in their ears.

"You will pay a lot for meddling in the inferior God's business..."

When the voice finished, the darkness was lifted. Their surroundings instantly reinstated its brightness. They stood up, looking at the shriveled tree to see what it would transform to eventually.

Feng Bujue was the first one who recognized an abnormality. That tree didn't look stronger, quite the contrary, the wounds on its trunk were getting more intensive as its branches were falling apart, turning into ashes.

"You are the one who said something about the inferior God?" Feng Bujue stepped forwards to talk to the Monstrous Tree.

The other four didn't even have time to react as the Monstrous Tree had opened its mouth replying to him, "Human... Find the keys. Restore the seal."

"We've already found the Key of Fire," Feng Bujue said, "what's going on with this city? Who has caused this? Where is the Key of Wood?" He asked three questions continuously.

"Satsuma Diehl... one of the servants of the 'Lord of the Time'. He had betrayed the Master, so his godly power was taken away. He himself was exiled to the endless stream of Time..." the Monstrous Tree's twigs were almost turning into ash; now, the tree's trunk started to sprinkle. "Such a centipede, dead but not stiff. Satsuma Diehl didn't give in. He had used all his remaining power to bring this city with him, making it his shelter. It is not a

part of the stream of Time anymore. It’s a puddle, independently separated from the stream of Time." The bark face of the Monstrous Tree started to be peeled off piece by piece. "To avoid the Lord of the Time’s punishment, he has summoned the Demonic Gateway. Once the seal on the gate is broken, the city and the Demon Realm would be connected. This place would then become the territory of the demons. The Lord of the Time won’t have any jurisdiction over them.

"A part of mankind had made an agreement with Satsuma Diehl, in which they would help him to open the seal on the gateway, and he would save their lives in return. However, at the first glimpse when the demons had flooded out from the door, Satsuma Diehl immediately ignored the mankind. Right before the Demons started to take his food, he had greedily and entirely swallowed all the mankind in the city, putting them into the darkness."

"A few survivors had brought the two keys with them and escaped from the Demonic Gateway." When the Monstrous Tree came to this part, its body almost had been all scattered away, but it was still persistent to continue, "Satsuma Diehl alone couldn’t touch the keys or the seal. He also couldn’t devour humans who are near to these two things, but the demons could. Thus, he had another agreement with the demons. Every time the ‘Cycle’ ends, he would empower the demons through the darkness with one condition, of which the demons had to kill all living human beings in this city to ensure that no one could restore the seal again..."

"Where is the Key of Wood?" Feng Bujue asked again. He had a bad premonition now. With such a common situation, the ending result could be that when the mob with the characteristics of an NPC could die as it started to talk about the most important part.

"The man who held the Key of Wood died underground." The Monstrous Tree answered, "I've made the tunnel clear. When I die, you guys can go down there." The mob's mouth finally turned into dust, scattering away. A few seconds later, the tree trunk and the long roots underground had all been broken down into black dust in just a blink.

The Monstrous Tree was dead, but it had broken the ground, making a deep pit that formed a tunnel leading to the underground.

"Current Quest has been changed. Main Quest is updated."

After the notification had arisen, the quest in their Quest Menu had become: [Enter the tunnel, find the Key of Wood].

Feng Bujue turned around to look at his teammates. "We will go to the daily necessity aisles to see if we can find some flashlights before we go down there."

The other people, after having listened to a long narration of the plot, were still in daze, standing dumbfounded at the spot. A few seconds later, Wang Tanzhi was the first one who spoke up, "Ouch... Jue-Ge, what is going on? Could you interpret it?"

Feng Bujue was already heading to the floor that sold household appliances. "Seeing that deadly fight and the voice in the darkness, I realized that the tree and the other mobs aren't from the same side." The other four were walking behind him while listening to

his explanation. "It seemed to die out at any minute, so I had to take the time and asked it three questions. It finished the NPC's duty and gave us an excellent fighting performance. After that, it had given us the content of the plots, some reminders, and also opened a tunnel, it then woefully and majestically received the bento."

He came to a fallen shelf and casually picked up a broken box. "According to the tree, only the ones who hold the key or near the Demonic Gates wouldn't disappear like the other citizens of this city. It explained the situation inside the police station; also, it hinted that the Key of Wood is not in this mall, where no dead body could be found.

Ah, besides, I think we are an exception. Perhaps, we are players, so we don't belong to the term 'Human beings" in this dimension. If not, according to the plot, Satsuma Diehl would have already killed us all."

Feng Bujue paused for a second then continued, "About the current situation, it's clear enough. In this scenario, after 30 minutes, the big Boss will strengthen all the living mobs in the city through the darkness. Possibly, he will not show himself, or maybe he doesn't even have a real body. However, those demons could threaten us at any minute.

"The BOSS's purpose is to kill all humans who could use the keys. At that time, this dimension and the Demon Realm would be interlinked forever. He just needs to hide in this place and the Lord of the Time would never be able to hunt him down.

Nevertheless, the way we would use to pass this round is to find the two keys, return to the Demonic Gateway, and restore the seal. When we succeed, this dimension will not be connected with the Demon Realm anymore. Then, the badass Lord of the Time could come here and tear that Satsuma Diehl into pieces."

"I've heard of this worldview for the first time..." Wang Tanzhi said.

Feng Bujue finally found some intact flashlights, but they didn't have any batteries. "We can use these. Everyone takes two. We will find the batteries later. Better to be prepared," he continued, "ah, I saw the bats, golf sticks, hockey sticks at the Sports Section. Those things wouldn't have any requirements to equip; each of us should take one."

And they went like that to arm themselves. Now, each of them had at least one normal quality cold weapon. Lonesome had also found some western chef knives at the Kitchen Utensils aisles, which were much longer than Wang Tanzhi's [Fruit Knife]. Everybody took one piece. Wang Tanzhi finally had a chance to throw the fruit knife he had gotten from the New Player Tutorial away.

Only Longao Min didn't take the long western chef knife, but he chose a Chinese cleaver. Moreover, it was a special heavy knife used to chop bones. He felt that this hefty weapon had suited his hand better.

It took them 10 minutes to get everything done. considering the possibility of mobs existing underground and the remaining time

before the next darkness falling, they didn't delay further and followed Longao Min on entering the tunnel.

When they had just entered the ground, the space was narrow, and there was only sticky mud under their feet. The road was sloping down without any light. After a while, they got to a wider sewer of the underground drainage, which was big enough, so they could stand upright. It seemed that the Monstrous Tree had just cleared a part of the ground under the mall and connected it to the drainage system. The next part would lead to the one who was holding the Key of Wood. If it were exactly like what the tree had reminded them, the one who held the key had died in this sewer, which meant the possibility of having a mob here was pretty high.

The bronze sewer gave people a strange pressure. The space around them was vaguely shrinking. Of course, it was just illusions. The most intimidating things here were the disgusting smell and the wastewater flowing under their feet together with floating objects. Geez, those things, people couldn't bear to look at. Since they'd gotten into the tunnel, the Little Lonesome Girl had become grimaced constantly. She was pointing her flashlight forward and just ignoring the things under her feet, following Little Lonely Boy.

Longao Min was holding the shield in one hand and the baseball bat in his other hand, walking ahead. If there were any mobs springing up, he would definitely greet it with madly pounding the bat to smash it, and then using the knife to chop it. Feng Bujue and Wang Tanzhi were walking in the middle of the formation to back him up at any time.

There was only one way in this sewer since the way on their left was blocked, leaving some small leaks where water was flowing through, and the other smaller pipes were attached to the wall. Thus, it would be rare that they would be ambushed from behind. Lonely and Lonesome would be safe following them at the last position of the formation.

They had been walking for about five or six minutes.

"Look!" Longao Min suddenly stopped and said, "The corpse is over there."

Feng Bujue craned his neck so as his vision could be higher than Longao Min’s shoulder. He then saw the end of the sewer was just dozens of meters ahead. A steel culvert had blocked the way, while wastewater continued to stream through the grille. The flashlight was shining on a dead body lying in that remote area.

Chapter 28: First Multiplayer Scenario (12)

"Yeah, based on our current experience, whenever we found something, it would trigger a monster or some event..." Feng Bujue had just finished half of his speech and the ‘dead body’ in front of them got up all of a sudden. At the same time, an eccentric laughter drilled through their ears.

The corpse slowly lifted up its head. The flashlight was shining right on its face, but still, there was a dark mist covering it. However, they could vaguely see its facial features with a dark green lead skin color.

"It’s not dead yet?" Longao Min said with a low tone.

"Not dead yet?" Feng Bujue leaned over and passed over Longao Min, walking towards that unreal walking dead badass. "Then it’s easy to explain. That lustful laughter was the overjoyed greeting that this survivor performed in knowing that he was found." Feng Bujue was wearing the goggles, and he knew the target of the mob was now he himself.

As the mob saw Feng Bujue was approaching quickly; it immediately performed the second response.

"Ahhhh... ——" Lonesome suddenly screamed from behind.

Not only her, Lonely was also freaked out, crying. Wang Tanzhi’s scream was stuck in his throat, couldn’t be released. He was so scared that his face turned paled and his heart was paused for a few

seconds. Longao Min's appearance was normal, but the hair on his nape was rising up as he was trying to inhale to calm down.

Numerous decayed arms jutted out from the wall of the sewer while the whining and crying and sobbing sounds were flooding the drainage immediately.

Lonesome was so frightened; she continuously backed off, closing her eyes, swinging the golf stick in her hand aimlessly. Lonely wanted to hold her as he almost got hit several times.

Wang Tanzhi was so scared that he was dumbstruck with his eyes wide open. In fact, he didn't dare to move, and his hand, which was gripping the small knife, was shivering and soaking wet with sweat.

A few seconds later, Longao Min shouted, "It's all illusions! Don't panic!" He still had his reasoning ability with him as he had immediately recognized that those arms were all illusions since he had seen some arms sticking out from the ground and going through his calves, but he didn't feel anything strange.

"Even if they are real, they can't touch us!" Longao Min shouted again.

Lonesome was calmer. Lonely had caught her and was consoling her with a soft tone. Although he had goosebumps all over his body, seeing his girlfriend panicking like that, he had become more conscious. He had told himself several times that it was just a game. No matter how terrifying the horror scenes were, they were

all faked.

10 more meters from them, Feng Bujue was walking deliberately to the mob just like he was sightseeing. Those horrible images and sounds seemed to not affect him a bit. In fact, he didn’t blink even once. Feng Bujue was holding the bat in his hands, moving his wrists to warm-up just like he was about to hit the ball.

Seeing that the opponent didn’t buy it, the mob then carried out its third response.

The male dirty dead body instantly transformed into a beautiful woman, who looked a little bit older than her 20s, wearing a short black skirt. Her black hair was flowing on her shoulders. Her snow-white skin was glowing, while half of her soft shining bosom was exposed. Her jade-like slender thighs were faintly discernible under the hem of her short skirt, and her charming eyebrows were flattering her flirtatious expressions.

Seeing that, Feng Bujue was floundered for one second, then he put the bat into his bag.

His male fellows behind him all threw him a despising look in seeing that. However, they all understood him.

"Almost forgot it." Feng Bujue put the bat away and hauled the wrench out of his bag. "If it is in the human form, using this weapon that had been added with some special effects to attack, I can earn more Skill Value." After he leisurely said that, he comfortably swung the wrench, hitting the mob on the head.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The pipe wrench pounded on the mob's head; black blood splattered here and there which could startle people. At the first glimpse when Feng Bujue had hit the mob, it instantly turned back to the faint green-colored corpse, and the illusions were all gone when the mob got hurt.

The other four were standing behind him, watching the scene of Feng Bujue performing his high effective, determined valor in attacking the monster heartlessly. Three of them had their Fear Value fluctuated without being able to calm it down since their minds were wandering with thoughts, mostly about whether the name 'Feng Bujue' had some other deep meanings.

After the corpse's head was completely smashed, Feng Bujue poked his hand into the dead body's shirt pocket to search. He then took out the Key of Wood, which looked almost the same with the Key of Fire.

[Current Quest completed. Main Quest updated]

After he had taken the key, a checkmark appeared next to the quest in the menu. New quests appeared, including: [Return to the Demonic Gateway and restore the seal]

"I got it. Move," Feng Bujue turned around and said.

"Hey... Feng-Ge," Longao Min asked, "How did you know that that mob couldn’t bear a strike?"

"I got it when it had just stood up," Feng Bujue answered, "and, when those arms appeared, I had it confirmed. This sort of monsters is to test the players’ Fear Value. If the team didn't approach the mob because they were panicked, the illusions would be promoted. Although it wouldn’t be enough to force them to cut the nervous connection, the calculation at the end would still be very awful." He paused for a while before continuing, "When it transformed into that hot chick, it meant the monster had run out of tricks. It could only transform into something attractive to lengthen the time." He suddenly caressed his chin then continued, "Wait, how did the system know my sexual orientation? What if I were gay or bisexual? What would it become then?"

Little Lonely Boy said, "You’ve used your ID to login the forum. Maybe this information is required?"

"Since the company has my data, the system then ‘knows it all’..." Feng Bujue mused then said, "Alright, we should stick to the time. We’ll come back there and discuss later."

On the way back, they all tried their best to speed up as they vaguely felt that this scenario wouldn’t end easily like that. Although the last BOSS Satsuma Diehl wouldn’t show himself at the end, there would be some powerful Demon playing the role of the Big BOSS.

At this moment, it was impossible to get to the gateway before the darkness fell again, but at least, they had to make sure that the

Big BOSS wouldn't be strengthened during the next time the darkness fell.

Indeed, the darkness had fallen when they were half way back to the square. This was the fourth time since they had entered this scenario. They had been hanging in this scenario for two hours and 10 minutes more or less.

During the fourth time the darkness had fallen, they didn't hear any noise. No breathing, no whispering, no laughing. Feng Bujue thought this wasn't a good sign. In such an intimidating game, events that would break the rules would always show that the situation was being developed in a very bad way.

Three minutes after the darkness was lifted up, they arrived at the square. At this moment, even Longao Min had to gasp. Throughout two hours of fighting, running and moving things, they all had consumed much of their Stamina Value.

Lonely and Lonesome had burned up 400 points of their Stamina Value. They were at level seven and six respectively. They had around 200 points of the Stamina Value left to use now, including the time they had cooled down to restore some points. Longao Min had spent the most. When he encountered the Odd Infant, the [Colliding Lightning] alone had cost him 300 points of Stamina Value; plus the amount he had used when defending the Bloody Corpse, his total consumption was over 700 points. In fact, it was considered less because of the invisible attributes. He had consumed less Stamina Value than the other people when running. It was the same with that of fighting, and he also had his Stamina Value recovered. Now, he had 289/1000 available to be used.

It was opposite to the said three persons, Feng Bujue and Wang Tanzhi were both at level five. Under the intensive situation of the fights they had been engaging in, it was a miracle that they still had roughly 10 points of Stamina Value left.

"The quest is updated. Perhaps we could use the keys now." Wang Tanzhi opened his mouth and gasped for breath.

Feng Bujue stepped in front of the other people, facing the gateway. He took out the two keys and approached the gate. After 10 seconds, nothing had happened.

"It’s not correct," Longao Min spoke up in seeing that, "why is there no any reaction?"

"Nope. I think something has happened." Feng Bujue swept his eyes further. "Look."

This square was spacious and they could see around hundreds of meters further from the center. Currently, thousands of mobs were flooding over from every single street of the city. They looked bizarre, but basically, they would be divided into two groups: the furiously ferocious ones and the gloomily sinister ones.

Those groups of monsters were moving very slowly. No doubt that their appearances were just to create a hopeless ambiance to players. The slower the approach was, the more frightened players would be.

"How could it be? What did we do wrong?" Little Lonely Boy was disorderly confused; he involuntarily pitched up his voice, "No doubt that it’s a deadly situation, isn’t it?"

Feng Bujue also understood that the current situation had been developed in an unexpected way. He said, "Satsuma Diehl has no way to approach the keys or the seal on the gate. He also can’t show himself and kill us. Those demons do not wish to approach this place. They aren’t afraid of the keys, but the gateway, or the areas where the couplet was written on the frame to be exact. That’s why this massive square doesn’t have any mobs." He wanted to use his speech to calm the situation, "Recently, they are trying to approach here. We should stay near to the gate as close as possible and watch the situation."

"If they are not afraid of the Demonic Gateway and storm to us, what should we do?" asked Longao Min.

"Then we will jump into the door,"said Feng Bujue

"Jue-Ge, It is... it is the Demon Realm! There would be more monsters, what should we do?" said Wang Tanzhi.

"Not sure, I think behind the door is a kind of prison. Now, all the prisoners have escaped, so it is useless now. And, what’s the difference if we die here or there?" Feng Bujue answered, "Well, at most, we will return to the login space."

The five of them quickly came to the gate, having their backs

onto the Demonic Gateway. Feng Bujue was thinking about how to reason this scenario out. The thing that caught his attention was the narration of the Monstrous Tree regarding the ‘Cycle’ and the city was taken out from the time loop. How does the ‘Cycle’ happen after all? Perhaps solving this puzzle could help him figure out the rules or the weakness of Satsuma Diehl, or even the way to restore the seal...

Many clues in his mind were intertwining, deducing, but Feng Bujue’s wasn’t left with much time. He then tried to arrange his flow of thoughts. "Separated from stream of time... puddle... darkness falls every 30 minutes... whispers disappeared in the dark..."

Chapter 29: First Multiplayer Scenario (13)

The surrounding was packed with an army of monsters. Although they could see the edge of the square, breaking out from this dense crowd was impracticable. If they were a group of five players at level 30, they might consider the possibility of escaping from this barricade of hundreds of mobs. Well, being a party whose average level was 6.6, they didn't need to think about that stupid plan.

"Feng-Ge... They're approaching..." Longao Min reminded Feng Bujue, who seemed to sink into his thoughts now.

"Nothing. Let me think for a minute." Feng Bujue said, "In this case, retreating inside the gateway is the last option that the system offered us. There must be a tough BOSS behind the door. When we finish the BOSS, we will finish the scenario. The system would go like, 'Although Players could escape from the dimension, Satsuma Diehl has occupied the city forever'."

"Alright. I don't want to die at the end. If we really have to storm forward, we should back off to the gateway," Longao Min said.

Feng Bujue nodded then determinedly sat down cross-legged, each of his hand was holding a key. It seemed that the approaching waves of the monsters didn't pressure him. He rested his elbows on his thighs while his head cocked; two fingers were patting on his forehead gently. A few seconds later, his fingers slowly slid on his nose bridge as he lifted his head, looking up to the ambiguous sky with the dim moonlight. His eyes suddenly brightened up, just like he had something popping up in his mind.

"Did you remember when we've just entered the scenario, the plot's narration had mentioned something?" Feng Bujue spoke up.

As Wang Tanzhi was looking at the crowd of the mob, which was not more than one hundred meters away from them, his breathing was getting disorderly.

"Didn't it talk about this is a city at night, and we are the last survivors?" Feng Bujue was trying to remember and talking at the same time, "The second part said that 'until one night, the sun sets and never rises again. Dark clouds are looming with ambiguous moonlight shining on this lonely city'." He didn't miss a word.

"So what?" Longao Min asked.

"These words didn't say that the time of the event is at night," Feng Bujue said, "It mentioned the 'Cycle'," he suddenly asked, "up to now, have you ever seen clocks or any devices that we could use to estimate time?"

The other four were really confused at this moment. They could see the monsters were coming closer and closer as their appearances became more real and scary. How could they be calm enough to remember these minor details? Lonely only wished to return; he said, "Who remembered it! Is it related to the current situation?!"

Feng Bujue said, "This is the rule behind the scene. I know what the 'Cycle' is and what that darkness means," he continued, "if we

considered the time of this fictional world as a straight line with infinite ends and these ends could never be seen or found.

"Thus, when Satsuma Diehl had stolen this city, the time of it then became a line with two defined ends, which was around 30 minutes long." He stood up and made some gestures. "He then bent this line, connected the two ends, forming a circle. This city is going permanently on that circle," he pointed at the coming waves of mobs, "those mobs and us don't belong to this city. We are inside the circle, not on that line. That's why Satsuma Diehl's power couldn't devour us. He could only affect things that are moving on the line."

Lonely goggled at Feng Bujue with his surprised face. "Dage! My true brother! I don't study science! This math stuff, 30% you have to be gifted, 70%comes from hard-work, and the 90% is destiny!"

"I'm not teaching Geometry. I just used the shape to explain the concept." Feng Bujue deliberately explained.

"Feng-Ge, ah no, Jue-Ge! You don't need to tell us. It's okay if only you can understand those things. Now please tell us, besides getting into that gate, do we have any other choices?" Longao Min had started to call Feng Bujue brother, but he was four years older than him!

"In fact, restoring the seal doesn't require any special gestures," Feng Bujue said then took the two keys, but his moves didn't change a bit compared to last time.

"Hey! We are just waiting here, aren't we?" Wang Tanzhi cried. The mobs were pretty close to them now, just dozens of meters away.

"This is sort of testing our valor to see if we dare to stand here until the last second." Feng Bujue was still able to laugh. "Ha, ha. This system is so into generating the scenes of which players have to find the exit in the death at the last moment."

"Where to hide to survive!? You are just holding the keys!" Lonely Boy screamed.

"When we were at the police station, I said the puzzle of the Key of Fire was too simple. I'll take it back." Feng Bujue's thought then jumped to that scene. "69185 is also another reminder for us. Combining it with 'Time', we'll have the answer."

"Hey Jue-Ge, now I say—" Longao Min hadn't finished yet and Feng Bujue had intervened, "The minute hand moves clockwise from 6 to 9, it is 15 minutes; then from 9 to 1, another 20 minutes, and then from 1 to 8, which is 35 minutes; and finally from 8 to 5, 45 minutes." He was still holding the keys in front of him. "The primary condition is that the time doesn't go reversely and the minute hand didn't go in a wrong way. After it passed the sequence 69185, the time is around 115 minutes. And since we've entered the scenario, it's been..." Seeing the mobs with sharps claws and wide mouths were about to reach them, Feng Bujue was still calm enough to finish his talk, "If I calculate correct, this time, it's..."

The halo from the keys intervened his utterance, bursting up to the sky, lighting up the dim, gloomy night. The two keys flew one

round above them then descended, inlaying themselves into the missing location of the formation. Godly light glowed on the formation as the Fire and the Wood formations were restored. The pentagram appeared again and the gateway started to close.

Those mobs were strangely freaking out, heartbreakingly screeching and dismissing themselves immediately. It was like they had encountered a tremendous attack, scattering away from this square.

"What, what happened?" Longao Min had already raised his shield, ready to face any attack. He never thought that the situation could change in such a short time.

Little Tan, Lonely and Lonesome were completely in the state of having a short circuit in their brains right now. They had been hopeless with the pressure from the coming wave, and Feng Bujue's calmness had provoked them. However, they didn't know what to say at this moment. Well, it's hard to blame them then. It's like the overjoy of being resurrected, which would normally burst out in the next morning.

"At the 159th minute, put the keys to the door, and the seal will be restored. Nothing more." Feng Bujue said, "About the monsters, it's simple. The system has designed like that to see if we have to enter the gate at the last moment or not. Those mobs were moving very slow just to intensify the dramatic effect when the seal is activated."

"If we've collected the two keys and come to the Demonic Gateway, it will flag the crowd of mobs to approach us." Wang

Tanzhi said, "So what if we came later or sooner than expected?"

"It would be tough to collect the two keys and return to this place earlier. The scenario is generated based on the average capacity of the party. When we've finished, it would be only several minutes left. Don't forget that we found other quests when searching the police station. It took time when we were traveling across the city too. Later when we were at the Mall, we did delay for a while. If we pitched right to the drainage after we found the flashlight and didn't spend time searching for weapons, we might have saved a few more minutes. However, since we'd spent only one minute to deal with the illusion ghost, it could be considered a supplement." Feng Bujue continued, "In short, although we have spent and earned time, the time boundary that the system had set wouldn't be changed. If we could come here before the 115th minute, the plot would go like that.

In case we were late and missed the time to restore the seal, of course, we had to jump into the gateway."

"How about now? Did we pass this round?" Longao Min said, "Why hasn't the notification played yet?"

"Current Quest, completed. Main Quest..." At this moment, the voice of the system arose, but it didn't finish the utterance.

"Those insects from the other world, did you know what you've done?"

These words arose in their heads, intervening the system's

notification. And, it was the voice of the whisper that had spoken to them at the third time the darkness had fallen.

Feng Bujue opened his Quest Menu to see. Although the system hadn't finished the notification, the quest of 'Restoring the Seal' had a checkmark indicating it was completed. And, there was another quest under it, which read: [Survive Satsuma Diehl's attack]

"Did you see the new quest?" Feng Bujue's tone was like it wasn't a big deal.

"Is that guy visible?"said Wang Tanzhi.

"As I've assumed, Satsuma Diehl doesn't have a body. Or, according to the settings, his entity exists in a higher dimension. If he wants to appear in front of us, he has to turn into some materials available in our dimension." Feng Bujue answered him, "It's like Galactus has appeared as a despicable old uncle in his purple dress; if Satsuma Diehl wants to attack us personally, he has to come here with a real body that can assault us physically."

"Speak human language please," Wang Tanzhi said.

"Look. It's like that." Feng Bujue said then pointed towards a place in the square.

The black clouds were washed away, leaving the moonlight, which was like a mist, shining on the stone ground square.

Everybody looked towards the direction he had pointed to see a pit around five meters in diameter, which was filled with dense and dark shadow. It looked like an abyss that could even swallow the light.

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A few seconds later, a shadow stood up from the ground. It was a human-shaped figure about two meters tall. The body of the shadow was as if it was wrapped and locked in darkness, pretty much a solid ‘Shadow’. However, apparently, he was not a shadow of something under the shining light that followed the rules of optical phenomena. Indeed, he was a real object standing in a three-dimensional space.

"Hm, the comparison of ‘the puddle outside the stream of Time’." Feng Bujue automatically ignored Satsuma Diehl’s vapid debut, and instead deliberately continued his topic, "It should be the whirlpool in the galaxy to be more exact.

However, Einstein said that time and space are just illusions of people’s cognition and they are just the parameters that describe movements of the objects. But in this magical world, we can consider them as real objects. They are the objects that require to be maintained at any minute. Just like the river has to flow all the time; if the water doesn’t move, it can’t be called a river.

Take this point as the basis, if Satsuma Diehl has pulled off this space, he also had to bring along a part of ‘Time’. If not, everything in this space would be motionless, including him. However, just as he could take an amount of water in that river, he could only get 30 minutes, and that 30 minutes belongs to this city only. This period of 30 minutes will be an endless cycle. Every time it completes a cycle, there will be a few seconds of nothingness as a buffer. The time when the darkness has fallen is at the connection point of the line to make the circle, which is also the buffer point. When it travels through the buffer point, a new cycle begins.

The shadow of Satsuma Diehl started to move. A dark, round circle was moving along under his feet, coming towards the group of five.

"Jue-Ge, any advice?" Wang Tanzhi didn’t dare to act carelessly, taking time to ask for advice.

Other people were also waiting for Feng Bujue to speak up.

"Maybe we don’t need to do anything special," Feng Bujue said, "the plot is now developed to a stage that the difficulty level wouldn’t be higher than that of jumping into the gateway." He continued, "Don’t intervene me, I’m not finished yet. From those details, the darkness falling is just a phenomenon when they travel through the connection point. It isn’t Satsuma Diehl’s deed.

"But why is it that after the darkness has fallen, the mobs will become stronger? There’s only one answer. The buffer time doesn’t belong to the cycle time, which is the time that Satsuma Diehl could perform best. He can just take those few seconds to do something. For example, distributing his power to the demons, or devouring all the citizens in this city. Of course, before we’ve come here, he had eaten all human beings, and, we’re the people who came from the ‘other world’, so he can’t eat us."

"You mean, this Satsuma Diehl in front of us isn’t strong at all? At least it’s weaker than the BOSS we would meet if we went through the Demonic Gateway?" Longao Min asked.

"If you want examples, it is like we were a colony of ant staying inside a balloon, and Satsuma was standing outside the balloon, as big as a powerful human being. The dimensions inside and outside the balloon are different, and he could never cross over. He couldn’t tear off the balloon. What we are looking at now is just his finger poking at the balloon from outside." Feng Bujue caressed his chin. "But I think that, even so, his capacity wouldn’t be as weak as you said. At least, it would still be very easy for him to kill us."

"Hey! Still, you are comfortably babbling that much! Run!" Little Lonely Boy grabbed Little Lonesome Girl, turning around in an attempt to run away.

Just after a few steps, they heard the system’s notification arise.

"Breaking worldview, player Feng Bujue received 240 points of Skill Value. The party can now open the menu to see the rules of the scenario in this worldview."

"If I didn’t timely ‘say’ it, how could I take the Skill Value?" Feng Bujue said, "To break the worldview, you have to say it out, so as the system would assess your words."

Satsuma Diehl in his human shadow form was about 10 meters away from Feng Bujue. Feng Bujue didn’t have any intention of running away. "Besides, I told you. We don’t need to do anything special. If the Demonic Gateway is closed now..."

The shadow suddenly sped up, abruptly enlarged its body several times, turning into a giant black claw, snatching towards Feng

Bujue.

But at the last moment, that giant hand was paused in the middle of the air, not even moving an inch.

"Well, according to his name," Feng Bujue cocked his head, walked towards that black body, "'The Lord of Time' would never be a late badass."

Soon, the shadow of Satsuma Diehl started to shrink violently, just like there was a strong force, hiding in the dark of the opposite dimension, pulling him into it.

"There'll be a day... You... will... pay... a big... price... It's... not... too... long."

"Ah, not good. Generally, when the bad guy says this dramatic line, he would soon appear again," Feng Bujue smilingly said.

The shadow, which looked like a part of the dark emerging from the ground, was like a beast falling into a puddle of mud and struggling there for a while before being completely dragged away. The round shadow on the ground was getting smaller and smaller. After 10 seconds, it vanished altogether.

"Travelers from the other world, thank you for your good deeds. After purifying this place, I will put it back to the stream, making it run again in the stream of time."

A voice that was different from Satsuma Diehl’s arose in their heads. It was very typical; similarly, half of the games that had a wise old man character would use this tone of voice.

"You’ve received the gifts from ‘Lord of the Time’, please check it in your rewards," The system’s voice resounded immediately.

"Current Quest completed. Main Quest completed."

"You’ve finished the scenario. Automatic teleportation in 180 seconds."

The standby time before teleportation was relatively longer in ‘Multiplayer Mode’. It seemed that the system had considered the possibility in which players would need more time to discuss.

Wang Tanzhi was sitting on the ground now as his tense nerves were gradually ceasing and the Fear Value had eventually dropped to the bottom.

Lonely and Lonesome sighed in relief. This was the first time they had survived until the scenario was completed. This feeling was so good!

Longao Min’s expression could be considered calm. He retrieved the shield and weapons, taking the one minute left to talk to Feng Bujue, "Feng-Ge," Oh, he addressed him as ‘Feng-Ge’ now, "I have something I couldn’t make clear. "

Feng Bujue asked, "What is that?"

"It’s about the time." Longao Min said, "As you said, since we’ve entered the scenario, we have never seen any clocks or other devices to measure the time. How could you know the duration between the two times that the darkness had fallen? I remembered that when we’ve reached the Demonic Gateway, you said ‘about 30 minutes’."

"Because I’ve always kept the time," Feng Bujue answered, "since we’ve entered this scenario, I immediately noticed something strange. Why was there no digital clock in the station? Then, when we got to the ground, I still didn’t see anything to check the time. At the first time the darkness fell, I have started to count the time. When we were at the police station, the darkness fell the second time; I had estimated it was about 30 minutes."

"Yeah, I want to ask that there was no clock, how could you measure the time?" Longao Min asked.

"I counted it." Feng Bujue answered, "I counted in my mind, up to number 300, it is five minutes. When I didn’t move, I checked my pulse instead. Didn’t you notice that almost all of the free time I’d put my right hand on my left hand? It’s the timer within the body. At that state, my pulse beats 77 times per minute." He knew the pace of his pulse well. It was because during the short time he had spent in the hospital, he had undergone countless tests; thus, to his body stats, he knew them all. "Counting your pulses to check time is more precise than counting the numbers in your mind. Moreover, you don’t need to control the speed. It’s an alternatively lazy way to ease your mind focus and the difference wouldn’t be

too much. If you don’t believe me, you can spend 30 minutes or an hour to try it at home. You could be distracted, in fact, this is just an exercise to test your patience."

"No need. I understood. Thanks for your guide." Not only Longao Min, but also Lonely and Lonesome, after having listened to his explanation, they all started to eye him with the look that people had used to behold a monster.

Wang Tanzhi got used to it. Being his friend for years, there was nothing strange that Wang Tanzhi had never seen in him. If there were someone telling him that the aliens were invading the Earth, 80% was the chance that he would doubt the information; however, if somebody told him that Feng Bujue was an alien, perhaps he would believe it.

"No need to talk more. Folks, we are about to be teleported. Well, goodbye," said Feng Bujue.

Lonely and Lonesome said thanks to them and turned into two flows of white light, getting out of the scenario.

Longao Min didn’t teleport immediately, waiting for the other two to completely disappear, then spoke up, "Feng-Ge, Wang-Ge, we should be friends, okay?"

He made this request, but it didn’t mean that he wanted to hold someone’s thighs. Well, it’s too early to hold someone’s thighs at this stage. Today was the first day of the Closed Beta version, regardless of the professional players, ordinary players or gamers,

their levels wouldn’t be much different. However, although Feng Bujue looked like a potential hotshot, it would be hard to tell if he was online all the time.

Longao Min wanted to befriend them mostly because Feng Bujue hadn’t hesitated giving him a good item. Although the item wasn’t much valuable, early this year, trusting strangers unconditionally was very rare. Just with that gesture, they should be friends.

About Wang Tanzhi, well, he was with Feng Bujue; of course, Longao Min couldn’t add only Feng Bujue! Moreover, from the fight with the Bloody Corpse, this young man was a little bit chicken, but his moves weren’t too bad. Even if he couldn’t become a hotshot later, he wouldn’t be a burden.

"Sure. We should talk when we get back to the login space. We should check the rewards now," said Feng Bujue.

They said goodbye to each other then teleported separately.

After all of them had left, the Demonic Gateway suddenly shook. Vaguely, it was like there was something trying to bang the door, which was made from magic, from the other side.

White halo flashed, and Feng Bujue arrived at his login space. The system’s notifications constantly prompted.

[You’ve reached level 11. Stamina Value has rose up to 1100/1100]

[The Title System is unlocked. You received the title – Mad Cold-blooded Headshot]

Then, he shifted his eyes to the screen. Of course, his screen was now displaying the results of his calculation after finishing the scenario.

Chapter 31: Intermission (6)

[Scenario completed. Calculating for rewards...]

[EXP: 1500]

[Game Coins: 15000]

[Received items: the Eye of Hatred, M1911A1 Pistol, western chef knife, baseball bat, and flashlight x 2 pcs]

[Completed/Received Quests: 5/5]

[Special rewards: A gift from the Lord of the Time. Please check later]

[Special [Hidden Quests] completed: 0]

[Worldview Unlocked: Time loop]

[Fear Value Surged: 0 time]

[Highest Fear Value: 0%]

[Average of Fear Value: 5%]

[Your Fear Rating: The whole sack of guts. Bonus for ranking first, please select later]

[Received Skill Value: 300]

[EXP added by Skill Value: 3000]

[Game coins added by Skill Value: 30000]

[Rewards for completing the scenario: increasing 80% of EXP: 1200]

[Calculation completed. Please continue]

(By the way, I'll take this calculation for examples to clarify something. There are batteries inside the flashlights. Also, there are bullets loaded in the shotgun. Those small toys are excellent consumable items. Since they are carried inside other items, they will not occupy slots in the bag. And, the pipe wrench is not collected from this scenario, that's why it isn't included in the final calculation. Every item like that will not appear in the calculation menu.)

"The rewards for breaking worldview is exaggerating," Feng Bujue thought, "Besides 240 rewarded points from that, I could only earn 60 points for the whole scenario."

"Jue-Ge, jackpot!" Wang Tanzhi was stirring up as he talked in the team channel, "I've been leveled up straight to level 10! I

earned 20,000 coins!"

As Feng Bujue heard him talking, he instinctively guessed that the Skill Value Little Tan had received for this round was over 60 but lower than 150. He answered, "I see. The list of our team does show our levels." He also saw Longao Min’s friend request. He touched the screen to accept the request and added, "Don’t forget to accept Long-Ge’s friend request."

"Yeah. I’ve accepted it," Wang Tanzhi said, "Add him to our team."

After some simple operations, Longao Min’s voice arose in their channel, "Oh, you guys have leveled up quickly. Feng-Ge is at level 11 now." Feng Bujue and him were now at the same level, which was 11.

Someone would definitely ask, why did this happen? Take a look at Feng Bujue’s character’s stats and we shall discuss.

Screen name: Feng Bujue.

Level: 11

EXP: 1350/11000.

Skill Value: 430

Game Coins: 51500.

Specialties: Common F, Weapon F, Investigating F, Fighting F, Shooting F.

Bag: 7/10, including Mario's Pipe Wrench, the Eye of Hatred, Western Chef Knife, Baseball Bat, Flashlight x 2 pcs, and M1911A1 shotgun

Login Space's slots: 1/30: Jigsaw Puzzle Card: Monkey.

Yeah, we are looking at his EXP value. It's true that from level 11 to level 12, the required EXP was 11000, rather than 1100.

In Thriller Paradise, the EXP required to level up followed the ladder style, in which, from level 1 to level 2, the required point was 100, then, from level 2 to level 3, it required 200 more. Thus, from level 10 to level 11, players would need 1000 EXP. Players at level 11 onwards would see the big leaps that could have their tongues tied.

Besides 1500 EXP rewarded for completing the scenario and 1200 points from the bonus, Longao Min received 170 points for Skill Value (Skill Value gained from fighting would be precise to single digits). After the calculation for rewards, he also had four or five thousand more of EXP; however, when he reached level 11, he was startled seeing that there was seven or eight thousand more of EXP required to reach level 12.

The two of them had exchanged the information for a while then discussed with Wang Tanzhi regarding the EXP required after level 11. Suddenly, Longao Min happened to remember something and asked them, "Hey, what are your titles?"

Feng Bujue incidentally answered, "Mad Cold-blooded Headshot."

"Ouch..."

The other two couldn't deny as they were all speechless for a while.

A few seconds later, Wang Tanzhi laughed and commented, "Indeed, this system's very reasonable. Basically, in our previous scenario, you all took the lead to attack the mobs. Moreover, your performance was so cold-blooded."

"How about your title? 'The Scream of the Second Generation Rich Kid'?" Feng Bujue snapped back.

"How could the game have such a title!"

"Oh yeah. It's true. The second generation rich kid is a tribe, not a class," Feng Bujue added.

"My title is [The Flustered Ambusher]." Wang Tanzhi didn't want to talk nonsense with him anymore and hurried to spit his title out.

Feng Bujue mused, "Yeah. It accurately describes your bewildering mental status that keeps you from the standard attacking method, which is to hit someone in the face. The system pokes you sharply this time."

"Is it a needle? It should be a saber! Strangers would despise my title!" Wang Tanzhi said.

"Not much different. Strangers would despise you when they see your title, or, they would start to despise you at your first hopeless but vapid scream," said Feng Bujue.

"Ha, ha..." Longao Min laughed, trying to settle the matter. "Well, indeed, Wang-Ge doesn't need to worry much. The title will change after each time you completed a scenario. My title has been changed currently. It's [the Squad Defender] now."

The three of them then talked for a while before Longao Min expressed that he had been online for quite a long time and that he was about to log out and take a rest. Early tomorrow, he would log in using sleep mode. Wang Tanzhi couldn't play anymore, and he wouldn't be online this evening. Including the New Player Tutorial, he had played four scenarios successively. If he continued, it would be self-torture. Feng Bujue also said that he would log out after taking the rewards. It wasn't that he felt tired, but he just wanted to control his level.

In Closed Beta, players could only reach level 20 max. To non-professional players, they shouldn't be rushing in leveling up.

When 10% of the players who participated had reached level 20, the Closed Beta would end immediately. Then, the game developers would do some final touches to finish the whole system, upgrading it to the official version, which was the Open Beta version.

Thriller Paradise had soon attracted the majority of game studios to form unions. As I've mentioned, in the afternoon of the first day the Closed Beta was released, Feng Bujue could find a few players at level 10 introducing their fighting experience. Apparently, those were the members of the professional studios. They were all professional gamers as they played with strategies and plans. For this game, they would have two groups. One would play the sleep mode from 8 A.M, and the other would struggle with the non-sleep mode; then, they would shift the playing modes at night.

According to the related laws in 2055, the cabin of online games would have strict limitations on players. The nervous system connection in non-sleep mode would never exceed over 10 hours, and the time in sleep mode had the ratio of 1:10. The real time they had connected with the system must absolutely not surpass eight hours while the recommended time was under four hours. In case players had exceeded the time limitation of the two playing modes, they would be forced to quit the connection, and they had to wait for another 24 hours before they could be able to log in again.

In other words, one player could endure eighteen hours of their nervous system being connected with the game, in which, the non-sleep mode would take 10 hours, and the sleep mode would have eight hours. This was the extreme limit. Even if the players changed their cabin, the system wouldn't accept their ID. This was recognized by laws, mostly in concern of players' health. At the

dawn of the nervous system connection games generation, besides the little time for eating or visiting WC, players had always maintained the connection. Basically, they all had ended up encountering sudden death or permanent damage to their brains. Of course, they couldn't blame the games or the cabin. Half a century ago was the golden time of the fourth generation computing technique, sudden death happened all the time in cyber café, who should they blame for this?

After saying goodbye to Little Tan and Long-Ge, and also disbanding the team, Feng Bujue immediately opened the elevator booth and entered the space where he would receive his bonus.

There were still two glass columns in the room. The glass column on the left already had something floating in there. Definitely, it must be the gift from the Lord of the Time. If he hadn't restored the seal on the Demonic Gateway, this bonus would have never existed.

Feng Bujue had put one of the two flashlights in his bag at the login space. Now, his bag slots were 6/10, and then, he came to take that item. As he had glared at his menu, his new title had given him a special ability, which was showed on the Skill Bar, but it didn't belong to the Skill Bar.

[Name: Cerebral Concussion]

[Ability Type: Passive]

[Effects: when using blunt weapons in attacking the head, it can

stun the target for two seconds.]

[Remark: It's okay if one strike can't explode it; add some more strength, it's just a head.]

The ability granted from the title wasn't bad. Anyway, it was a passive ability, which didn't necessarily require to consume Stamina Value. When facing low levels mobs, it would be very useful combining with the [Mario's Pipe Wrench]. However, if he encountered a strong monster or non-human monster, or ghosts without a real body, or other types of BOSS, Feng Bujue wouldn't have any chances to use his rudimentary weapons to hit them on the head.

Feng Bujue quickly came to the first glass column, which now had a small glass bottle floating inside. That glass bottle was half-filled with sand.

[Name: Largo Quicksand]

[Type: Consumable]

[Quality: Excellent]

[Special Effects: When breaking the bottle, all the mobs within the radius of 100 meters would be slowed down 10 times from their normal speed within one minute.]

[Remarks: This bottle contains some shoddy dust of time. If you

are converged by a group of monster, perhaps this bottle of dust could help you escape.]

"This is a valuable strategy consumable item. Guess Little Tan and Long-Ge also have one," Feng Bujue mumbled as he walked to the second glass column.

[Please select your bonus: One, a random item that relatively suits your level. Two, 50000 coins (the upper limit). Three, 4400 EXP.]

At level 11, the bonus for his Fear Rating, which was ‘the whole sack of guts’, included three options. Let alone the 50,000 game coins max and the item, ‘40% of current required EXP to level up’ was extremely cool.

Theoretically, as long as Feng Bujue’s illness hadn’t finished him yet, at any level, if he could be lucky enough to survive two scenarios, he would level up easily with the rewarded EXP.

Thus, because of that, Feng Bujue would definitely not choose EXP. Actually, he was worrying that his permanently motionless Fear Value would make the game producers put an eye on him, thinking that he was using Bots, etc. Well, he should keep himself in secret as long as possible. Anyway, he didn’t want to level up too fast.

Then, he selected the option, which offered the item again. Although he didn’t lack weapons at this moment, well, for close or long range, he had them all, he still didn’t have any defensive item.

Now, he was in hope to receive a trustful defensive item.

Terms to describe children of entrepreneurs who became wealthy under Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms in the 1980s.

Chapter 32: Intermission (7)

After he had selected the option, the light had started to materialize inside the glass column. Eventually, a pair of old-fashioned football boots appeared.

[Name: The Dance of the Knight]

[Type: Defensive]

[Quality: Excellent]

[Defending power: Feeble]

[Attributes: None]

[Effects: increase the running speed to the max; reduce the Stamina Value consumption when running away or running for a long time.]

[Remark: This pair of football boots belonged to an unprecedented winger, a pioneer of the European League in its beginning time, the excellent master of football. During his career that spanned for 30 years, he had never received any red cards or yellow cards. Another athlete, who was addressed as the 'King of Football', used to comment on him, 'He's the one who has taught us how to play football.']

"This is not bad. Moreover, it doesn't have equipment conditions," Feng Bujue muttered, "even if I have better footwear defensive items, these things can be sold at good price later."

When he directly put on the shoes, the system notification arose: "The position of the item can be considered 'Outfit settings'. You can customize the appearance in your menu interface."

Feng Bujue checked it out. This setting gave players options to choose how their item could be seen, which was the football boots or just a normal pair of shoes. Later, when the Shops system opened, there would be numerous outfits to be sold. At that time, there would be many players who didn't want to show off their equipment but their trendy, fancy costumes from top to toe, which could be bought with RMB.

However, there was no Shop in Closed Beta stage, and quite the contrary, there were many players who chose to show off their equipment. This was the disturbance of their vanities. People tend to feel better when displaying something that others don't have since the others' jealousy satisfies them.

After he was done with the stuff at the login space, Feng Bujue disconnected his nervous system connection.

When he got off the cabin, two hours had already passed by. Night had fallen, and the wind was howling outside his windows. The city night sky didn't have any stars. Of course, Feng Bujue rarely did gaze at those stars.

To young people in this big city, regardless if they had to wake up earlier on Mondays, they would seldom go to bed before midnight. They would rather doze off on the packed subway or the crowded buses than sacrifice their free time after work. Feng Bujue was the typical example of the sort of person who worked at night and slept during the daytime. Everyday, he got up at noon and went to sleep at 4 A.M. He admitted that everyday, the very early dawn was the time when he had the best aspirations and ideas.

However, today, even if it was still two or three hours more before midnight, Feng Bujue suddenly had the desire to write. He then neatly made a pot of coffee, sat down in front of his computer, and started to type.

His pen name was 'Bujue', and the novel he was writing for the magazine called 'The Second-rate Detective and a Cat'. Actually, he had wanted to compose a story about a 'first-rate detective', but early this year, if you want to sell your novel, you have to have some tricks. It was similar to some manga comic books, which had beautiful chicks to attract readers—the novel industry had to follow the rules of the market. No matter how many years had passed by, curiosity and mentality of chasing after women were always the breakthrough feature.

At the time when Feng Bujue was penniless, he had the thought of writing some cheap romance novels. Being a 'badass self-proclaimed artist', he found it easy to sympathize with someone like Millet (a French painter, who had to exchange his paintings for boots and bed. To meet the sense of the bourgeoisie som, he even drew some erotic works), or Tiziano (all right, this guy did it as he pleased his own interests).

Shortly, Feng Bujue eventually had to accept the fact and used more tricks. That's how he could write what he wanted to write, which was detective novels. The change in the plot of 'the Second-rate Detective and a Cat' was just to adjust from one main character to two main characters. The main character of this novel was originally a smart-ass rascal, but now he was just a kind, second-rate detective. Until one day, he found out that his cat could talk, and only him could understand it. More interestingly, that cat had a reasoning ability like God.

The editor of the magazine also encouraged him by commenting that his plot was pretty good. The humorous dialogues between the detective and his cat could gradually melt the gloomy style of the detective novel genre wholly. Feng Bujue then eventually figured out that this way of writing had some advantages. One, he could delay the climax of the chapter. Two, he could collect enough of the required number of words.

Besides this on-going novel, Feng Bujue had another series mentioned before that could help him save a small amount of money when his book had been published. Currently, his book was in an on-hold state because he couldn't push out a word for almost a month. However, Feng Bujue had his inspiration tonight to continue something called the 'Nightmare Coming From Both Ends'.

...

The night had passed peacefully. Early in the morning of the day after, when the daylight hadn't been clear enough, Feng Bujue saved his work, stood up from his desk and stretched his back. He

yawned then glared at the clock. It was 4:40 AM. Feng Bujue then happened to remember that yesterday was Qingming Festival (Tomb-sweeping Day). The Dream Inc. had chosen an interesting date to release the Closed Beta of Thriller Paradise as to make it a horrifying advertising strategy for their sale of online games.

At this time, there were some food stalls that opened early in the morning outside the building. Feng Bujue still had the gloomy details of his novel jamming in his head. He decided to go out and find something to eat before he return to his home and get some sleep.

He picked up the key and some change before going downstairs. 15 minutes later, he was holding a fried salty pancake with onion and deep-fried breadstick, and was heading home.

When he returned to the neighborhood, he could see some elderlies doing exercises, or lining up in front of the door of the public hospital.

Feng Bujue rarely made contact with his neighbors. Usually, this time was the time he was in his deep slumber. To him, a new day started at noon.

"Meow~" There was a little bicolor cat with black and white locks of fur calling him from the opposite road when he was passing by.

Feng Bujue stopped walking. The cat and he both eyed each other for a few second to confirm. "Yeah, it’s true that the kitty is staring at my breakfast."

"I’m telling you," Feng Bujue walked in front of the cat, crouching down to check the neck without a collar of the stray cat, and muttered, "do you really want to try a deep-fried dough with hot oil?"

"Meow."

This stray kitten seemed to be not scared at all as its ‘meow’ was to answer him, "Yes."

"I’ve only had plain broth noodles for these past days," Feng Bujue said while breaking a small piece of pancake with onion, bringing it to the cat’s mouth, "I have used my last pennies to buy this only piece of fat."

The cat stretched its head, sniffing the food Feng Bujue was offering it; then, it took the piece of salty pancake with only one bite. The cat put out its tongue and licked its lips then ‘meowed’ again. It seemed that this wasn’t enough.

Feng Bujue broke another piece of his pancake and presented it to the cat. "Your grown-up appearance is not cute at all. Not a rare breed but dares to ask strangers for food. Win an inch, want a foot." He ridiculed the cat while instinctively taking another piece of his pancake and bringing it to the cat, "Seriously, go check the trash can, bastard!"

Talking about trash, Feng Bujue unconsciously looked up to see the three trash cans for different types of garbage standing in front

of the building. Those trashcans were round and tall, around 1.4 meters, open in the mouth and tighter at the bottom. If the kitten wanted to check the trash can, it had to wait until the trash can was full, or else, it could plunge down to the bottom and couldn't get out of there. If it were poured together with the other things to the garbage truck, it would become a dead kitten.

"Sigh..." Feng Bujue determinedly broke half of his pancake, putting it in front of the cat. "Indeed, being a stray cat is not easy. I've heard that in the winter, in our neighborhood, there was a cat hiding under a car to warm himself up. In the morning, the car owner didn't know that, so he started the car and crushed the cat." He touched the small head of the cat. There's something he wanted to tell the cat, which he couldn't say when facing a human being. "You stray cats could live up to three years in average. Me, I don't know when I will die due to my sick brain. Today's meeting, it is our fate." He put the other half of the cake into his mouth, took a bite and said while chewing, "We are now sharing a pancake. Maybe we could be brothers in the next life."

"Little Feng, is that you?" A familiar voice called out behind his back.

Feng Bujue turned around to see his landlady. This aunty's family name was Liu. She had been retired for five years. Her old partner's name was He, a retired officer. Although Aunt Liu was a hotheaded person, she was indeed a kind woman.

Aunt Liu and Feng Bujue stayed in the same building. She had three apartments. The other one in another building, she had already let someone rent it. In this building, she had two

apartments, one was where she stayed, and the other one was where Feng Bujue permanently rented.

"It’s you. I thought that I got the wrong guy," Aunt Liu was carrying a basket with her; it seemed that she had just come back from the market. "Seems the sun rose from the west today that I can meet you this early in the morning." Her eyes shifted to the cat, also changing her topic, "I’m telling you, Little Feng, Auntie tells you that you can’t feed stray cats. If you feed them once today, tomorrow, there will be five or six more coming. Do you want to bring troubles to your neighbors?"

"Oh, makes sense," Feng Bujue contemplated for a few seconds then answered, "seems there’s only one solution." He put his breakfast in one hand, and his other hand then picked up that dirty stray cat, "I’ll take it home."

Aunt Liu was dumbstruck. "Boy, you are making it on your own. Why don’t you ask me first?"

"Aunty, look. There are dogs in our building. And, cats will not get out of the house." Feng Bujue tried to make a smiley face, showing his cuteness to take what he wanted.

"You really want to adopt it?" Aunt Liu thought he had just said it casually. Suddenly, her countenance changed as she studied Feng Bujue’s face and the cat, "Ha! Don’t say anything. You guys look alike," her eyes then swept downward, "well, moreover, this cat is also a male."

Feng Bujue curled his lips. "Aunty, it’s not good when you said ‘also’. I’m a man!"

"Aunty will not discuss words with you. You are working in literature, I’m not." Aunt Liu continued, "We have to make it clear. It’s okay if you want to keep the kitten. However, your lair is messy enough. Bringing up a cat, you have to pay more attention to hygiene. There are all elders in this building. If any of them come to me and complain about the strange smell coming from your room..."

"I will cook it," Feng Bujue intervened.

"Meow!"

The kitty seemed to understand what he was saying as it cried from his arm.

"Cook your head! Even if you need to cook something, you can’t cook it." Aunt Liu then stretched her step while saying, "Come with me."

"Come where?" asked Feng Bujue.

"To the vet in our neighborhood to give it an injection." Aunt Liu said, "What if he has some infectious diseases?"

"Ouch..." Feng Bujue hesitated for a few seconds then spoke up, "Well, it’s... recently, my financial situation..."

"You rascal, do you have any minute free from the urgent financial situation?" Aunt Liu stopped him, "Alright, alright, I will let you borrow some. When you pay your rent, you should pay me back altogether." She ceased right when she'd just sped up. "Sigh, my mind. I'll go upstairs to put away my vegetables first."

...

Feng Bujue came home at 7 in the morning. He brought home not only a kitten, but also a litterbox, cat food, plastic bowls, toys, etc. They were like a small pile now.

"We shouldn't be brothers in our next lives," Feng Bujue held the kitten in front of him, "you should reincarnate to a woman, then use your body to repay me favors."

"Meow."

The kitten yawned lazily, throwing Feng Bujue a despising look.

Feng Bujue was arranging his new stuff while checking his message recordings. A voice arose, "You have a message."

A beep followed that plain voice. Then, Wang Tanzhi's voice played, "Jue-Ge, not gonna pick up the phone again? Today is a day off; I will visit your place in the afternoon and bring you some food. You'll be home anyway. Yeah, we are going with that."

Right then, the kitty jumped next to the telephone, stretched its paw to touch the buttons on the phone and sniffed it. Then, it seemed to lose its interests, plunged down to the couch and nested there.

"Looks like daddy doesn’t feel like doing anything at home," Feng Bujue mumbled, showing his irritation. In fact, he was doing nothing now.

That football player was Sir Stanley Matthews, and the one who gave the comment was Pele.

Bujue (不覺): without one’s knowing, unconsciously.

Youtiao

Chapter 33: Intermission (8)

It was 2:00 P.M when the intercom rang. Feng Bujue felt irritated and annoyed being wakened up.

He had the kitten washed up at the vet in the morning, but it took him another hour to settle down before he could finally come to bed. He didn't even take off his clothes; he just fell on the bed and slept straight away. It had been over six hours until the intercom rang.

Feng Bujue stumbled to the door with his sleepy head, picking up the phone and said, "Who's there?"

"Me," Wang Tanzhi answered, "Master Bao is coming too."

"The door doesn't open?" Feng Bujue pressed the button to unlock the door, speaking while yawning.

"Open up, open up. Wait until we get there."

One minute after their short talk, the elevator came. They walked through the corridor and rang the bell of Feng Bujue's apartment. Feng Bujue peeped through the cat's eye and opened up the door, didn't greet his friends but directly walked to the couch.

Wang Tanzhi and that 'Master Bao' came in, closed the door, brought with them pizzas and a dozen of beers, and stormed to the coffee table. Master Bao then went to Feng Bujue's kitchen to pick

up bowls and chopsticks.

"Wow! Jue-Ge, how did you get a kitten?" Wang Tanzhi soon found the small cat snoozing on the corner of the couch.

"Don’t you see the sandbox in the corner? I’m raising it." Feng Bujue was still sleepy. He opened a beer, gulped it like he was drinking mouthwash, and swallowed.

"Since when you’ve gotten the cat?" Wang Tanzhi asked him while tiptoeing to the kitten.

"This morning." Feng Bujue hiccupped then continued, "Don’t think that it’s asleep now. Cats are very alert. People will see them sleeping all day long; in fact, you will see their ears flicker when there’s just a light breeze enough to sway a blade of glass. This shows—"

When Little Tan was about to catch the little cat, it immediately opened its eyes and ran away. After making a small detour, the kitten was now hiding behind the couch, leaving Little Tan falling on the couch since he had lost his balance due to leaning forward too much.

"How come you think about bringing up a cat again?" Master Bao returned to the living room with bowls, dishes, and chopsticks in his hands. He then gestured Little Tan to sit down on the couch after him.

His name was Bao Qing. In fact, he was just several months older than the other two, and that made him one year older than them. The three of them had been classmates since kindergarten up to high school. Bao Qing had been called ‘Master Bao’ since primary school. Well, things are, he wasn’t dark or tanned at all, and there was no one who’d ever been a government officer in his family. Plus, during his school time, he had never ever been the monitor of his class.

However, no one had ever expected that when Master Bao grew up, he would become a real ‘Master’. He was currently 25 years old this year, working as a government officer. His daughter was already two and a half years old. He was more stable and mature than those two bastards sitting next to him. Since he was young, Master Bao had a special feature, which was his ‘gloomy face’. Well, no need to mention his marriage, because after he got married, he showed a face of a bitter melon all day long.

"The kitten and I are destined," Feng Bujue said, "it’s destiny!"

There was the word ‘again’ in their questions since they all knew that Feng Bujue had kept a cat with him since he was young. At that time, the granny next door’s mother cat had delivered four kittens. She gave him one and Feng Bujue had taken care of the cat for almost 13 years. The kitten became an old cat and eventually died. The little boy had become a man, burying the old cat himself.

"Did you name it yet?" Wang Tanzhi asked with his excited face.

"Arthas," Feng Bujue calmly replied. It was as if it didn’t just slip out of his mouth but had been carefully thought of.

"Pfff..." Master Bao spewed out a mouthful of beer in shock. "Even if you didn't want me and Little Tan to name your cat, you should give it a normal name, such as Kule, Mike, or something along those lines."

Feng Bujue clapped his hands, "Arthas!"

The little cat turned its head and 'meowed'.

"See, everything is fine. No hurt feelings." Feng Bujue pointed to the cat face of Arthas.

"I want to take photos." Little Tan took out his cellphone.

"Wait," Feng Bujue put his beer down on the table, then came to the window and putt the curtain aside. He snatched Arthas the cat, not giving it a chance to escape.

Feng Bujue held the kitten, raised it up with its back towards him, and stretched his arms to catch the daylight. This was to imitate a scene in the 'Lion King' at the Pride Rock. Moreover, he didn't forget to speak up the lines.

"My son. That day when you were born, your name was reverberating at every remote corner of the Lordaeron. Arthas!" Feng Bujue spoke with his solemn and low tone.

Wang Tanzhi instantly focused his phone on the dumbstruck face of the little cat using the 360 degrees photo app.

"What the heck are you doing?! How old are you this year? Are you two all sick today?!"

As having been scolded by Master Bao, the two of them then came back and sat on the couch. Arthas ran to a cushion and dozed off on it.

"Master Bao, how come you are free this week?" Feng Bujue asked.

"My wife brought our kid with her and went to her parents' house," Master Bao took a swig of his beer and replied satisfyingly.

"Permanent or temporary?" asked Feng Bujue.

"Bullsh!t! How could it be permanent? My mother-in-law just wanted to see her granddaughter." Master Bao luckily didn't get choked to death.

"Look at you with your relieved face..." said Feng Bujue.

Wang Tanzhi intervened them, picking up the TV remote and asked, "What's the topic for this week?"

"Bad movies marathon," Feng Bujue answered.

"Wut?" Wang Tanzhi turned his head.

Feng Bujue said, "Yeah. It is. Things we've discussed last time. There are so many bad movies through the time as they have gradually become the bottom line in the movie history that we haven't seen yet."

"Alright, let me see." Wang Tanzhi used the remote to browse through the streaming TV programs.

When the three of them had free time hanging together, they always chose a topic for movies and watched them nonstop for ten hours. Their movie choices were mostly the masterpieces of the 20th and 21st centuries. Those movies were getting better with the improvement of computing and recording technologies. In the time of the fifth computer generation, basically, there were no bad movies anymore. In this golden age, no matter how bad the movies were, their excellent images and sounds could cover it up.

"How about 'Ghost Rider'?" Wang Tanzhi suggested.

"Do you know 'Daredevil'?" Feng Bujue asked.

"Yeah, I've seen it," Wang Tanzhi answered.

"Bro, same director," said Wang Tanzhi.

"Alright," Wang Tanzhi continued to search for movies, "there, 'The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn - Part 2'. Wow, this series has seven volumes." (They'd made two more in 2055)

"Haven't seen any." Master Bao shrugged.

"I remembered this movie had received seven out of ten of the Golden Raspberry Awards. 20 years later, they've assessed it as one of the top three worst movies of the 21st century," Feng Bujue added.

"I really want to know what the other two are. Don't tell me that they are the other episodes of this series," Master Bao said.

"No, they are 'Battlefield Earth' and 'Jack and Jill', which won all the Golden Raspberry Awards in 2012." Feng Bujue said, "I've just heard about their reputation, but I haven't seen them before. Hey, how about watching all three of them today?"

"No problem." "Agreed." Little Tan and Master Bao answered him.

Two hours later...

"Are you alright?" Master Bao looked at the last line of the subtitle on the big screen.

Wang Tanzhi said with his gloomy and sorrowful face while gazing at the floor, "I feel I've lost something very important."

Feng Bujue was floundered, looking at the sunshine outside his window. "This is the worst two hours of being humiliated in my life. My brain got screwed."

"Next, we have science fiction and comedy. I think we'll go with comedy first," Master Bao spoke with his bitter-melon-face and a very somber expression.

90 minutes later.

"Al Pacino seems to not be able to keep his old-age upright..." Wang Tanzhi said.

"The acting is so hard to ridicule, and the plot is... eww." Feng Bujue said, "Master Bao, what do you think?"

No one answered him.

"Master Bao? Bao—" Feng Bujue turned around to see Master Bao was slumbering with his soft snoring.

"This despicable officer—"

At six or seven p.m, the three of them went to the food stall on the street to have some dirty grilled food. Jue-Ge and Little Tan told Master Bao that they were playing Thriller Paradise recently. However, Master Bao seemed to not be interested. The life of a

man with a family is somehow bitter as he didn’t have much privacy and leisure time for himself to entertain. They had chatted for a while more, and at 9:00 p.m, they split up. Feng Bujue told Wang Tanzhi that they would enter the game in the early morning to check out new scenarios. Then, they all returned to their homes.

It had been hard for these three to form their friendship, but it was sincere. When they were still sniffing their nose, those little boys had established the purest relationship. Until they were 50 or 60 years old, when looking back on those dear memories, the feelings they once had at the bottom of their hearts would never vanish.

Feng Bujue didn’t sleep enough today. Moreover, considering the desire to log in, Feng Bujue got in his cabin by midnight. After the scanning was over, he selected the sleep mode and established the time connection.

"Entering sleep mode. Adjusting... Adjusted. Please set the time setting or return to the superior option."

"Setup completed. Connection will activate at 1:00 AM, April 6th 2055. Sleep well."

After having listened to the system’s voice, Feng Bujue closed his eyes. The game cabin was cozy and comfy, and with the little bit effect of beer, he soon fell asleep.

When he got his consciousness back, he was standing in that familiar elevator booth. The screen on the wall showed the global standard real time. It was 1:00 AM, April 6th. However, this digital clock didn't show seconds. Moreover, after a few minutes had passed by, the clock didn't tick to 1:01. Apparently, this was the sleep mode of Thriller Paradise.

Soon, Wang Tanzhi's party invite popped up on his screen. When Feng Bujue got in the party, he saw Longao Min was already there. Wang Tanzhi had teamed up with him when he saw his status was 'Idle'.

"Jue-Ge, big news!" Wang Tanzhi spoke up first.

"Someone has reached level 20?" Feng Bujue opened his mouth to answer him.

"Oh, you knew it already?"

"Nah, I guessed it from your tone."

"Ha, ha... Feng-Ge does have a divine strategy and wonderful planning!" Longao Min said, "It was about 12:30 real time, the first player ranked level 20 of our server was born!"

Feng Bujue glared at the party menu. It was just one day, and Longao Min had already reached level 13, and Little Tan was at level 11 now. Perhaps in around 10 minutes being online, he had finished a scenario alone to level up.

"So the first player who got max level would be announced in the game?" Feng Bujue asked.

"It’s true. The system’s notification had announced at every individual login space. Also, when you touched the screen, you would see the news. Well, the forum has been exploding!" said Longao Min.

"Let me see." Feng Bujue opened the forum page. The thread was pinned on top with the title that read: "Congratulations to one member of the ‘Order Studio’—Fearless Hero—for becoming the first player to reach the max level in Closed Beta stage."

Master Bao: Bao Zheng (包拯; 11 April 999 – 20 May 1062), commonly known as Bao Gong (包公, "Lord Bao"), was a government officer during the reign of Emperor Renzong in China's Song Dynasty. During his twenty-five years in civil service, Bao consistently demonstrated extreme honesty and uprightness, with actions such as sentencing his own uncle, impeaching an uncle of Emperor Renzong's favorite concubine and punishing powerful families. During his years in office, he gained the honorific title Justice Bao (包青天) due to his ability to help peasants overcome corruption. Bao Zheng today is honored as the cultural symbol of justice in Greater China. His largely fictionalized gong'an and wuxia stories have appeared in a variety of different literary and dramatic mediums (beginning with The Seven Heroes and Five Gallants), and have enjoyed sustained popularity. In mainstream Chinese mythology, he is often portrayed wearing a judge miter hat and a crescent moon on his forehead. Some Chinese provinces later deified Judge Bao, equating him to the benevolent war god Guan Gong.

Arthas: a character in World of Warcraft. Arthas Menethil,

Crown Prince of Lordaeron and Knight of the Silver Hand, was the son of King Terenas Menethil II and heir to the throne.

360 apps is a popular camera application that could modify monsters to angels, turning ugly people to beautiful ones.

Chapter 34: The Mountain Pool and the Haunted Mansion (1)

"Oh, they even provided the studio's name. Seems like Dream Inc. doesn't repel professional gamers or teams of professional players," Feng Bujue said.

"It's not a good news for players who don't belong to any 'organization' like us," Longao Min said, "if the game producers don't restrict those studios, some of those people will control many resources of the game. For example, they can negotiate to control prices of items on markets, carry out monopoly of high-level resources, or spy on top secret information in the game, etc."

"There's another possibility in which Dream Inc. feels that the balance of this game is perfect that their system has controlled the benefits of those studios well. And, your assumptions couldn't be possibly true in the technical point of view," Feng Bujue continued, "of course, we don't need to pay much attention to this matter." He paused for a second then said, "Hey Long-Ge, I have something I don't know whether I should ask you or not. Are you a professional gamer?"

"What? Ha, ha. It's okay to ask. Professional gamers aren't superstars!" Longao Min smilingly said, "Actually, I really admire professional gamers. Unfortunately, I'm not one," he answered, "I'm just a person who loves to play games."

This was his honest answer. In reality, his name was 'Long Liwen', and he was a police officer. Although he had the word 'Wen' (lit. literature) in his name, when he was on duty, he was

brave and gallant with the style of a workaholic. He had almost been assigned to the special force that year. Unfortunately, good guys always got a bitter life. In a case when he was chasing kidnappers, he got hurt badly. It could be said that since his knee had been hurt, he could only work from his desk. Although it didn’t affect his daily performance and he could be considered promoted, he could never join the frontline again.

"So that’s how it is," Feng Bujue said, "I thought you were a lonely gamer."

"Ha, ha. Actually, I don’t have much time to get online. These two days, my wife and her mother have been going tomb-sweeping and visiting their relatives, and I had days off so I can be online a little bit. Tomorrow, I have to go to my..." He hesitated for a while, and eventually, he didn’t say the word ‘department’, "... office. Perhaps I won't have more time to play."

"So we have to stick to the time tightly and try to solve two or three multiplayer scenarios within the night," Wang Tanzhi said excitedly.

"Then we should join a party," Feng Bujue said.

"I’m ready. Let’s go!" Longao Min said.

Little Tan "ah" then the system’s notification arose.

This time, Feng Bujue wasn’t the captain, and he didn’t have the

right to select the mode, so the contents of the reminder weren't similar to the previous time. It didn't have the first part of the introduction.

[Your team is entering the Multiplayer Survival Mode (Normal). The number of your party's members is randomly generated: 6 persons.]

[Your team is in the party. Searching for more members or available teams.]

[Searching completed. Nervous system connection adjusting... Generating scenario...]

[Loading... Please wait...]

"Welcome to Thriller Paradise." The greeting this time was like it belonged to someone who got schizophrenia making his speech. After he went half way, the voice then changed to another different voice.

[Loading completed. You are in Multiplayer Survival Mode (Normal).]

[This mode offers an explanation of the plot. There are chances of side/hidden quests, together with special Worldview]

[Rewards for completing the scenario: A random Skill Card that player could be able to learn.]

[Plot’s introduction is about to play. After the introduction, the game will start immediately]

The opening scene this time was a vast area of forest and mountains showing under the first-person view. The subtitle appeared.

[In an autumn night, you and your new friends in a tourist group got lost in a mountainous area. You guys were going through a dense forest of sweet flag grass then through another shriveled forest before arriving in a large mansion all of a sudden.]

At this moment, an ancient mansion appeared in the picture. There was a large pond next to the house. The wall adjacent to the pond had two windows that gave people a feeling that the old house had a pair of empty eyes looking down to the pitch-black deep pond.

[This mansion always gives people bad premonitions. You guys could see it through the shriveled forest, those gray, gloomy walls, and the tranquil pond. However, you have no other choices. The creepy atmosphere is crawling on your skin, getting into your bones and joints. The feeling of being hungry is melting your alertness, so you’ve decided to enter the mansion.]

The subtitle stopped there. The space in front of Feng Bujue’s eyes suddenly lit up, and he saw himself standing in a big room.

Here should be the living room with wooden floor. The furniture

equipped in the room was the popular style of the 19th century. The chandelier and the wall lamps were all electrical, however, besides those things, there wasn't anything else that was electrical.

Facing the living room was a staircase, which was around two meters wide, leading to the second floor. There were three or four more doors around the room. Behind the staircase stood a long corridor, but since the light wasn't enough, they couldn't see where it led.

Feng Bujue had spent a few seconds to observe the whole surroundings, then his eyes stopped at the three other players.

First, it was a male player whose name was 'Invincible Hero'. It was just one word different from that 'Fearless Hero', however, this guy was still far away from level 20. His level now was 15. His title was the [Imprudent Pugilist Warrior]. Then, Feng Bujue could guess that this Invincible Warrior and Longao Min belonged to the tribe of the sturdy men. Of course, he was still a little bit less than the guy who had the power of Schwarzenegger as Long-Ge, no matter in terms of muscles, height, or aura.

The other two were all females. They seemed to be on the same team before entering this scenario because they were standing close to each other. Well, from their nicknames, people could guess their relationship somehow. One named 'Like Rain' and the other was 'Dispirited Laughing Bones'. They were all at level 13.

Like Rain was around 20 years old. Her hair was short as it was just long enough to cover her neck. However, the strange thing was, her face was beautiful, but it didn't draw people's attention.

Theoretically, with the aids of modification functions of the cabin game, everybody could become an outrageous, beautiful lady. It was also fine for a man who wanted to disguise himself as a lady. Anyway, it could be said that a female player who didn't modify her appearance in the game was a woman who hung out without wearing makeup. Wasn't this sister's appearance extremely rare in reality, thus what she looked now was the maximum adjustment that she could make?

When Feng Bujue was observing her, her look also raked over him. The eyes were the critical features that gave a deep impression to other people. At this moment, what could be seen in Feng Bujue's eyes were his calmness, while Like Rain's eyes were full of cold murderous intentions. She didn't oggle or tried to be cold. It was just her normal state that could emit such tremendous aura—these were the eyes of someone who was an assassin.

Feng Bujue's look scanned over her and saw her title that read [The Heartless Beheader]. He quietly acclaimed in his mind, "F*ck! What's that? An agent of the Safety Bureau on training?"

Little pretty 'Dispirited Laughing Bones' looked more ordinary. She was one or two years younger than Like Rain. She had a lovely delicate oval face, and a long hair without fringe on her forehead. Her mouth was like it was smiling, however, there was not a small streak of happiness in her eyes.

'Dispirited Laughing Bones' title was [The Skilled Gunman]. If there were nothing eccentric, she would possibly be a player who relied on her shooting skill, and it wasn't bad at all.

"What’s up?" Like Rain suddenly spoke up.

Her eyes were looking straight at Feng Bujue. Her countenance was as cold as ice as her words implied more than its length.

Feng Bujue understood that she had questioned him for staring at her. He tried to force a smile, coming up with a random topic to greet his teammates, "Uh, yeah. Your ID makes me feel like I’m facing a ‘thunderbolt’."

Like Rain didn’t answer him as if she had just heard some babbling. Feng Bujue got embarrassed immediately.

Dispirited couldn’t help but smile before answering him, "I'm the same. Your ID looks interesting too." She knew that her cousin didn’t like to talk, so she spoke up to help Feng Bujue.

These two then introduced their situation. Dispirited Laughing Bone’s grandmother was the sister of Like Rain’s grandfather. Basically, they were cousins. They were both 22 years old. Like Rain didn’t like to talk much since she was young, however, she always had her own opinions and more importantly, she had never been beaten up by anybody, even if her opponent was a schoolboy. Her cold manner was ‘gifted’.

Dispirited Laughing Bones was like a teenager. She was mischievous and she liked to tease other people. Moreover, she was pretty smart. Talking about being smart, her IQ was perhaps higher than Feng Bujue’s. Anyway, she didn’t like to read books, but her passion was for strange reasonings.

What? You ask me why I need to write in great detail about those girls? Of course, it’s because they are the main characters! It’s been over 30 chapters already and it wouldn’t be okay if I didn’t introduce the main female characters. What? Do you really hope that the system would turn out to be a female and have something with the MC? Well, if you want that, go away and read the other novels. You bastard!

"Ah... not that much flattering." Feng Bujue immediately changed the topic. He turned to the Invincible Hero and asked, "You... ah, Invincible-ge, are you related to the Fearless Hero?"

"Same studio." The Invincible Hero didn’t care about him at all. "You shouldn’t ask much. I’m about to die being irritated by you ‘amateur gamers’." When he said those words, his tone was full of despise and mockeries.

"Ah~ professional gamers. Pleasure, pleasure ah." Feng Bujue used a more despising-tone to greet him.

The guy snorted as his nose faced up to the sky and turned around. If the system didn’t prevent him, he would have burst out for sure.

At this tense moment, the system’s voice had broken the heavy atmosphere, "Main Quest, activated."

Schwarzenegger: Arnold Alois Schwarzenegger (/ˈʃwɔːrtsən ˌɛgər/; German: [ˈaɐ̯nɔlt ˈalɔʏs ˈʃvaɐ̯tsnˌˌɛgɐ]; born July 30, 1947) is an Austrian-American actor, producer, businessman, investor,

author, philanthropist, activist, politician and former professional bodybuilder. He served two terms as the 38th Governor of California from 2003 to 2011.

Chapter 35: The Mountain Pool and the Haunted Mansion (2)

Then, the Quest Menu showed their quest, which was [Search the house for ways to escape.]

After Feng Bujue had read it, he didn't say a word, but instead turned around right away and headed to the main door. This was a double door made from two large pieces of wooden door. Feng Bujue gripped the handles of both doors tightly and started to wriggle them. Apparently, the door was deadlocked that he couldn't open it easily that way.

The Invincible Hero gave a snort of disgust. "Amateur! How could this door be opened that way?"

Crack... Crack...

Wang Tanzhi joined Feng Bujue's side. One hand of his was holding the chef knife and disorderly stabbing the gap between the two wooden pieces, while his other hand was pulling the handle of the door. He was using this deed to show his support to Feng Bujue.

"Hey, dude! Yeah, you with the name 'Flustered', are you kidding us? I told you—" Invincible Hero spoke up again.

Thud! Thud! Bang! Bang!

The other two then pushed it harder. Each of them was pulling and wriggling with one door, trying to shake it.

"I told you—" Invincible-Ge felt his words were drained.

CRACK~! CRACK~! Two crunching cracking sound echoed. The handles of the two doors were broken. This meant, even if they got the key, they couldn’t open the door.

"HEY! What have you done!?" Invincible Hero said with fear. At that one second he was dazed, his Fear Value surged.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

They continued to shoulder the big door that now had lost its handles.

Finally, after two or three minutes of noisily messing with the door, Feng Bujue turned around, adjusted his collar, and cleared his throat, "Seems like we couldn’t open it."

The Invincible Hero could hear his soul was screaming, "F*cccckkk!!!!!"

Nonetheless, he couldn’t say it out loud as he could only shout indignantly, "Bunk! Haven’t I told you that right at the beginning?"

"You've just talked about it," Feng Bujue answered, "and I used real action to prove it."

"Boy, why don't you try to prove that disbanding in the middle of the scenario is possible and take the system's penalty?" Invincible Hero shouted at him.

"Yeah, seems there's a supernatural force that has closed the door." Feng Bujue rubbed his chin and babbled.

"And you ignore me now!" A fury was set in Invincible-Ge's heart.

Like Rain watched the scene for a while then turned around heading to that dark corridor near the staircase without saying a word. As someone had proven that the main door was deadlocked, she didn't waste time staying here to watch the comedy. Dispirited followed her getting out of the living room.

Seeing the two of them were walking away, Longao Min wanted to say something, but he didn't know what to say. The irritated Invincible Hero was calling after them after he had noticed them, "Hey! Don't wander around. If you cause something—"

"It's okay," Feng Bujue intervened him, "according to the given quest, it'd be better if we could trigger more things." When he finished, he then walked to a glass window, which was a rectangle window about one meter tall and more than 30 centimeters wide. The window had a sharp, pointy top with a wooden frame. Looking out from that window, they could only see a curtain of dense mist that prevented them from seeing further.

Feng Bujue took out the wrench and pounded it on the window. Consequently, he got his arm tingling by the reaction force. It was like his wrench had hammered something made from metal resulted in that heavy reaction force.

"Oh yeah. This glass door and the main door are in the same situation. Some forces out there are creating the prevention," Feng Bujue said.

Invincible Hero shook his head and sighed. "That's why I said you amateurs don't know how to play. How could the system create something that could be broken with force and let you finish the scenario?" He turned around and started to climb up the staircase. "You three are together? Please, don't hang around and hold me down with you three amateurs. If we don't do well, even I can't pass the round. You guys search the ground floor, leave the second floor for me alone."

Invincible Hero had determined that the three of them were the big scumbag teammates in his mind, except for that guy, whose name was Longao Min—[The Squad Defender]. He looked a little bit strong, while the other two were totally untrustful. That [The Flustered Ambusher], just from the name, he could see how despicable he was. And that [Mad Cold-blooded Headshot] got an unclear title and his current behaviors irritated people with nonsense deeds.

Furthermore, the thing that had annoyed him the most was having others ask him about the relationship between him and the 'Fearless Hero', who had just reached level 20. Those amateurs

who didn’t know their studio always liked to ask a lot. In fact, at his Order Studio, being able to level up quick didn’t mean anything special. It was just they had different tasks.

Being professional gamers was a ripe industry in 2055 with a large number of players and a relative number of small popular professional studios. Although they called themselves professional, their planning and executing abilities were low. Usually, a boss would do the manager jobs together with accountant jobs and even be the team leader. Moreover, a majority of bosses as a gamer always took the chance to make use of the collective resources to build fame for themselves in the cyber world. It happened all the time. Studios were established and dismissed, and their income wasn’t secure either. Teams of those gamers had formed the bottom echelon of this industry.

Then, we now take a look at the medium level of this profession. Half of them are small-scale studios, but they had abilities to manage personnel and talents. Although they still had some bottom-level teams, the difference was that they all had one or two ‘superstars’, which was a type of positive famous hotshots. In those party competition kind of games, just one or two professional gamers like that could hold up the entire studio. However, most of the studios that were able to survive at this level had gotten rid of the gangster management style so they could be able to do the planning and utilize their team's resources.

Well, frankly speaking, any industry that wanted to survive and make profits has to have a long period for planning strategy. A team without a plan was no different from a group of random players. They just had more time to play games.

And the top of this profession was something like the first-class ‘Order Studio’. They had the special management teams for planning and training for their gamers. In a group of six players to be in charge of leveling up, their specialties, position of individuals, information, items, and resources were clearly planned. In the same studio, the items and skills that players of other teams had gotten would be distributed to the team who was in charge of leveling up.

Players like Invincible Hero were the ‘scattering out’ players, but they also had their own tasks. Taking Invincible Hero as an example, his tasks weren’t to level up, but to enhance the grade of ‘Fighting Specialty’ and collect information. Besides, it’s okay if his other Specialties couldn’t be trained much since he could get them enhanced later through joining other teams under the management of his studio. What the ‘Order’ wanted now was to collect information, and that’s why Invincible Hero was responsible for practicing his Fighting Specialty through different scenarios.

Thus, every time the Invincible Hero was asked about the situation of his studio, he had only one word for them —‘Annoying’. First, this was business secret and confidential information that he had to keep. Moreover, even if he was allowed to tell others, he wasn’t bored enough to do so.

"Alright, but Invincible-Dage have to be careful. You are alone—" Feng Bujue smiled and said with his tender face.

As having listened to him, the Invincible Hero suddenly shivered. Some unknown eccentric feelings caused his Fear Value to

reluctantly surge a little bit as if what Feng Bujue had said implied something unpleasant was about to happen.

He turned around and glared at the three of them in the living room, trying to wash away that strange thought in his mind and head to the second floor.

Looking at him disappearing into the turn leading to the second floor, Longao Min said, "Feng-Ge, why do you need to act stupid?" He had doubts on his face as he continued, "It’s not that you aren’t able to see the twist that the system provided. It’s obvious that the door and the window can’t be opened; even if you wanted to try, why did you need to exaggerate like that?"

"Cheap tricks should be done adequately to make him think that I don’t know anything." Feng Bujue said, "He bought that. That’s why he did it that way, leaving us the ‘bundle of burden’ to take action alone."

"Jue-Ge, don’t you want to ambush him from behind? We can’t attack our teammates in this game," Wang Tanzhi said. Previously, he had given Feng Bujue a hand in trying to destroy the door; however, it wasn’t that he had helped Wang Tanzhi to play his trick, but actually, he did think that the door could be opened that way. =_=||

"I don’t want to hurt him. I just think that in this sort of scenarios, separating is a good tactic to work on," Feng Bujue continued, "those girls were taking action as I thought, leaving by themselves. However, those people wouldn’t be the type that would discuss things with us." He paused for a while then said,

"Talking about level, his ranking is the highest. Talking about the game, his job's a gamer. Thus, his voice should be considered in the party. If I asked them to separate and search, eighty percent that he would object it immediately. At the time I was pulling the door, he did prevent the other girls from leaving the room. It could be seen that he wanted to drag the team along everywhere." Feng Bujue now came to one of the walls and squatted down just like he was watching something. "Now is the best situation. He separated himself." He gently cleaned the spider web and dust away. "We should split up and search. When the main quest changes, we will gather again in here."

Little Tan panicked. "We also have to split up?"

"Didn't I say that splitting up would increase the effectiveness?" Feng Bujue answered, but his look didn't leave the wall. "Don't worry, this kind of haunted mansion wouldn't be designed to have jumping ghosts or too ugly monsters. Thus, this scenario would mainly scare the players and let them solve the puzzle. In fact, what could hurt us physically are only some traps. It will be alright if you pay attention."

He hadn't finished, yet the system's notification arose, "Side Quest has been triggered."

The three of them then checked their Quest Menu. The main quest was still there, but there was another quest placed under it, which read: [Find the whole six stanzas of the 'The Haunted Palace'. Current progress: 1/6.]

Chapter 36: The Mountain Pool and the Haunted Mansion (3)

"What does it mean? What is the ‘Haunted Palace’?" asked Wang Tanzhi.

"Would your next question be ‘Is it edible’?" Feng Bujue asked.

"That stage is over! I’ve been getting through the time pretending cute to get treats and I’m serious!"

"You guys take a look." Feng Bujue stood up, leaving some space so as Little Tan and Long-Ge could see what he had been watching.

As they came closer, they found some words seemed to be carved on the wall. They were all written in English, however, players could see the translated version from their menu.

It seemed to be a part of a poem, which read:

[In the greenest of our valleys,

By good angels tenanted,

Once a fair and stately palace—

Radiant palace—reared its head.

In the monarch’s thought dominion—

It stood there!

Never seraph spread a pinion

Over fabric half so fair.]

"What does it mean?" Wang Tanzhi read the poem but didn’t understand a thing.

"Probably this poem called ‘the Haunted House’ has six stanzas?" Longao Min guessed.

They all thought that as they had Feng Bujue here, the guy who knew everything, they just needed to ask him. Unexpectedly, when the two of them turned around to look for him, that badass had suddenly disappeared.

"Jue-Ge?" Wang Tanzhi swept his eyes around then leaned forward to look up to the staircase leading to the second floor. "Where’s he? Why did he disappear so fast?"

Longao Min looked around to see nobody else staying in the room; he begrudgingly shrugged and said, "He just said we should split up, perhaps he took the time when we were reading the poem to flee away."

Wang Tanzhi said, "We shall go and look for other clues. Anyway, Jue-Ge said that we would gather here again when the main quest changed."

Longao Min nodded. The two of them quickly split up and searched the ground floor, pushing and pulling doors that could be opened, scanning the room to see if they could catch other stanzas of the ‘Haunted Palace’ or any clues.

...

The first floor, inside a complex winding corridor.

The two female players were cautiously walking forward. It seemed that they had encountered some kind of traps.

At this moment, Like Rain was holding a shiny long sword in her hand. This was just a normal quality item, but she had used this normal quality weapon to achieve the title of ‘The Heartless Beheader’. Of course, it should have something special.

Dispirited Laughing Bones wasn't equipped with any guns as she had the same assumption with Feng Bujue, of which no guns were needed since the scenario would have only ghosts and traps.

"Oh wow!" Dispirited yelled in surprise while walking behind her. "Hah, they’ve found a Side Quest."

Like Rain took a quick look at the Quest Menu and asked, "Should we join them to find the ‘Haunted Palace’?"

"Yeah, no need to push it much." Dispirited contemplated and answered, "Temporarily, we don’t know what it is, and, we are searching for clues now anyway."

"Let's keep going then," Like Rain replied then continued to go forward.

...

The Invincible Hero was in a spacious room on the second floor. The interior of this room was the same with the living room with tall windows placed at a high position on the wall, leaving a certain space between the windows, and the swarthy oak floor. Faint dark red light shone into the room through those windows, which was enough for him to fumble around the objects in the room. Well, it was over midnight, so it was unknown where that red light was coming from.

The Invincible Hero was trying his best, but he couldn’t see the farther areas of the room or the corner moldings that were decorated with carved patterned frame. Of course, he didn’t care about those decorations. What if he couldn’t see it clearly? He just needed to know if there was no mob hiding in the corner.

Gloomy curtains were hanging loosely on the walls. All of the furniture in the room was old, decayed or broken. They didn’t look comfy at all. Scattered books and instruments didn’t add a living

aura to the room at all. The air seemed to be absorbed with a murky and mournful atmosphere of a desolate place as a strange, forlorn feeling was soaking the room.

After having listened to the system's notification on the new Side Quest, when the Invincible Hero looked at his menu, the first thought that popped up in his mind was that it was activated by the two female players as they had found something in this mansion. He didn't realize that this side quest was found by the other three dummies.

Even if he wasn't good at solving puzzles, the Invincible Hero was still a professional gamer. Despite the fact that he couldn't do reasoning, he still had some experience in playing games. He had quickly scanned the room once to seek for equipment or consumable items. Unfortunately, what he could use to swing around were just a wooden guitar and a violin with broken strings. He'd rather use his fists to hit the monsters than using those fragile items. The special ability that his title of 'The Imprudent Pugilist Warrior' had given him was a passive skill that could enhance the destructive power of his punches.

As he didn't find anything useful, the Invincible Hero started to search for the quest items. However, he didn't know what the 'Haunted Palace' was, nor bother to read those books scattering on the floor for once. Then, he suddenly walked to the table, where something looked like an obvious hint laid there—an envelope.

While the other readable stuff in this room was on the floor or piled up, only this envelope was placed on the desk under a bottle of ink.

When the Invincible Hero picked up the ink bottle, he found that the envelope had some ink stains on it and they were all dried up a long time ago. He took the envelope, blew a long breath, and brushed the dust off it. He then opened the envelope, took out the letter, and started to read the content.

This letter wasn't complete as many places along the letter were covered with ink stains and some other places were faded. There were no header or signature in the letter. However, according to the unclear content of the letter, he assumed that this was a letter that the mansion's owner wrote to his friend.

The writer said that he got a 'curse' that gave him an illness and mental disorder. His illness was torturing him to an extreme that it was inexplicable. His only wish now was to see his best and also his only friend again. He hoped that his friend could come and stay in the mansion for a while so his illness could become better.

The words on the letter did show signs of mental disorder, mainly because the writer got his hand shaken too much or he wasn't able to arrange the words in his head while writing, making the text difficult to read.

Although the Invincible Hero couldn't find any clue from this letter, he still brought it along. His eyes raked over the room one more time before leaving.

...

In a pitch-black stone tunnel.

A beam of a flashlight suddenly lit up a short distance of the tunnel. As soon as Feng Bujue saw the surrounding, he slipped his tongue. "This place is a serious problem. Castlevania? Chaotic dimension with teleportation?"

In fact, a couple of minutes ago, he didn’t intend to flee away behind Little Tan’s and Long-Ge’s backs. He had just walked to another wall to take a look at a painting hanging on the wall.

Internet slang meant to be dense to dumb questions.

Castlevania is also known in Japanese as Akumajō Dracula (Akumajō Dorakyura, "Devil's Castle Dracula"), is a series of dark fantasy-themed action-adventure video games created and developed by Konami, centered on the Belmont Family, a clan of vampire hunters, and their fight with Dracula.

Chapter 37: The Mountain Pool and the Haunted Mansion (4)

There were some paintings hanging on the walls of the living room. Most of them looked like the artworks of a painter with a mental disorder, painted when his delusions were breaking out. Those paintings didn't carry any clear meanings at all, however, there was one that didn't belong to the abstract art.

That painting depicted a long, narrow rectangle tunnel with four small, polished and white walls. There was neither ornamentation nor anything else. The tunnel seemed to be a downwards slope. It somehow looked like… no—it absolutely looked like a tomb. Some minor and insignificant details showed that this tomb was buried deep down underground. Also, there was no exit or source of lighting in the picture. No one knows what kind of method the painter had used to give the painting a bizarre and demonic aura, which was totally not fitting with any kind of lighting.

Feng Bujue had scrutinized the painting for five seconds. When his eyes were glued to the painting, some mysterious force had muted and bounded him. In the next second, darkness had covered his vision, and everything suddenly disappeared. Not long after that, when he was able to move again, he took out the flashlight from his bag and found himself standing in the tunnel of that painting.

He didn't know the rule of this teleportation, or if Little Tan and Long-Ge had seen him disappear. Anyway, whether they had seen it or not, he had to depend on his own to get out of this place.

Behind his back was a stone wall which didn’t move an inch when pushed. The ceiling was low and narrow; of course, there was no exit above his head. Feng Bujue sighed, hauled the Eye of Hatred out of his luggage and put it on; one hand of his was holding the flashlight, while the other hand was gripping the wrench tightly, groping along the tunnel, towards the slope.

As he was wearing the [Dance of the Knight], Feng Bujue didn’t worry that groping for a long time would drain his Physical Value. With 1100 points of Stamina Value and the aid of this special item, he could reduce his energy consumption while running around the entire area. Even if Castlevania was there, he believed that he could search the whole area at once.

After 10 minutes of walking along the tunnel, the flashlight in Feng Bujue’s hand flashed on and off. He then shook it and patted on the flashlight thinking that perhaps the batteries were running out. However, such a thing was impossible, as he had only just used it for a short while in the previous scenario. Poor contact? Almost impossible. This thing had the words ‘MADE IN CHINA’ inlaid on the body. The quality should be fine...

All of a sudden, a feeble yet strange whisper arose, "Let me out..."

The voice was coming from roughly 10 meters ahead of where Feng Bujue was standing. He swept his flashlight to that area and found his flashlight was turning on and off constantly. Then, the light completely disappeared, leaving behind a pitch-black surrounding.

At the short glimpse when his flashlight was on, it shone on a

sole lonely white shadow standing there. Looking at its body shape, it was a woman. Her body was covered with wounds; a bloodstained white garment shrouded her bony body. Since it was a very short moment, plus the distance and the problem of his flashlight, Feng Bujue could only see a glimpse of her face.

The light went off, leaving Feng Bujue immersed in darkness again. However, that horrible image had stayed in his retinae. Then, he heard another terrible cry.

"Let me out!" The thudding sound of a human body crashing on wooden object echoed in the dark right after that. Together with the pounding sound, there was also the clinking noise of metal chains and the hinges squeaking. Those sounds were vaguely coming with the wind from afar. It seemed that there was somebody mournfully crying in the deep area of this tunnel.

After 30 seconds, his flashlight worked normally again without blinking anymore.

Even though Feng Bujue had just witnessed something horrifying, his countenance didn't change as he sighed. "The flashlight isn't broken indeed. It was the plot that made it flash."

Right then, the system's notification sounded, "Side Quest, updated."

Feng Bujue took a look at his menu and saw that the Quest of [Finding the whole six stanzas of the 'Haunted Palace'] had been updated to 2/6. It seemed other people had found another stanza.

However, in the Quest Menu, he couldn’t see the specific contents.

At the same time, Wang Tanzhi and Longao Min were crouching next to the wall of the fireplace in the kitchen of the ground floor to check out a section of the brick wall, where the second stanza of the ‘Haunted Palace’ was written with some dark martial like ash or charcoal.

[Banners yellow, glorious, golden,

On its roof did float and flow;

(This—all this—was in the olden

Time long ago)

And every gentle air that dallied,

In that sweet day,

Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,

A winged odor went away.]

"Agh... I completely don’t understand anything!" Wang Tanzhi almost forgot all after he had just read the stanza. He then put his head into the fireplace, trying to observe inside the chimney.

He withdrew his sooty face, got up and said, "Sigh, too narrow, we can’t climb up from there."

Longao Min seemed not to have any reaction to his words and Wang Tanzhi didn't bother with that either. However, after just a few seconds, Wang Tanzhi turned his head to see Longao Min with his strange complexion. Longao Min was speaking something with his mouth and eyes wide open, but Wang Tanzhi couldn’t hear a word.

This weird scene had sent shivers down Wang Tanzhi’s spine. He immediately realized something else. At this moment, his voice didn’t come out from his mouth either.

What happened next, people who were involved in this scene felt it was really horrible. However, outsiders found it funny.

They could see each other, who didn’t understand a thing about sign language, were happily waving and gesturing their hands. They were trying to express their opinions and mouthing for the whole time without being able to understand what their friend was trying to say.

I think the most suitable verses for this play could be, "Are you sick?" "Have you taken your pills yet?" "How many do you have?" "How much did you eat?" "You’ve eaten all what you had!" "You could eat anything you have!" "You are sick!"

Anyway, the convo they were trying to convey followed this

order.

Wang Tanzhi: "What happened? What are you saying? What does your gestures mean?"

Longao Min: "The black thing on your face is doing something weird!"

From Longao Min's view, he could clearly see the charcoal gray thing on Wang Tanzhi's face was like a 'living' mask, which was oddly smiling at him at this moment. The visage of this 'black face' didn't relate to anything that Wang Tanzhi was trying to express. It looked like a painting floating above his face.

Eventually, Longao Min came up with a solution. He had found a cloth in the dirty kitchen, then he stood in front of Wang Tanzhi, making a gesture of wiping his face clockwise. After that, he pointed at the cloth and then on Wang Tanzhi's face.

That guy seemed to understand his deed. He received the dirty cloth then rubbed it on his face to clean it. Then, the two of them had restored their ability to speak.

"Wow! What kind of monster is that?" Wang Tanzhi looked at the towel. The 'black face' was like it was printed on the towel, maintaining all the details, just like it was moved from Wang Tanzhi's face to the towel. Now, Wang Tanzhi's face was clean; it didn't even have a small dot of ash.

"However, we don’t know what the system had designed this for." Longao Min now found that this didn’t have substantial lethality or was too scary. Besides, the system’s malicious idea to trick players, it seemed not to have any other reasons to be here.

"But I think we should burn it just to be sure." Longao Min took the cloth and then found two pieces of flint to strike the fire.

Chapter 38: The Mountain Pool and the Haunted Mansion (5)

Feng Bujue continued to walk along the tunnel. The previous terrifying scene didn't affect him a bit as he was deliberately walking forward without any pressure.

Not long after that, he reached the end of the tunnel, which was a small, narrow and dank cellar.

There was a door in the cellar. This wasn't a surprise. Long time ago, this kind of underground chambers was used to support some sinister thoughts, turning them into prison cells, but this was turned into an abandoned area today. The floor and all the walls were carefully wrapped in copper. The door was made from iron that looked hefty; once pushed, the chain would squeak ear-piercingly. A coffin stood amidst the cell. Feng Bujue shone his flashlight to the coffin and found that its lid wasn't nailed.

Feng Bujue pushed the door then swaggered into the cell. However, he didn't lift the coffin lid right away but swept his flashlight around the wall to search for things. Obviously, he had a good harvest when he found another stanza of the 'Haunted Palace' on one wall, which was written with blood.

[But evil things, in robes of sorrow,

Assailed the monarch's high estate

(Ah, let us mourn, for never morrow

Shall dawn upon him, desolate!);

And, round about his home, the glory

That blushed and bloomed

Is but a dim-remembered story

Of the old time entombed.]

"Yep. This is the fifth stanza," Feng Bujue read all the verses and mumbled.

In the next second, the system’s notification arose, "Side Quest, updated."

The Quest Menu had also been changed to [Finding the whole six stanzas of the ‘Haunted Palace’, current progress: 3/6.]

Feng Bujue came to the coffin. While holding the flashlight in one hand, the other hand then knocked three times on the lid of the coffin just like he was knocking on someone’s door. "Hey, Miss Madeleine, are you there?" It was unknown how he got the name.

As time was passing by, the Invincible Hero's Fear Value had been surging up to 15% and remained at this value. He got frightened not because of seeing any monsters, but because he couldn't find the way to get out of the second floor after searching for a while.

Each corridor, each room, the paintings on the walls, the chandeliers, and the other ornamentation looked strange at first, but became more familiar as the time passed by.

This structure was clearly a strange space. It was much bigger than it looked like from the outside. The length of the corridors seemed to be changed from time to time. Moreover, the number of doors on both sides of the corridors also changed to different numbers every time he was crossing by. And, up to now, the Invincible Hero hadn't reached any other ends of the corridors successfully. At any time, when he was about to reach the end, he would see a new turn or a T-junction.

The Stamina Value consumption was insignificant when performing normal traveling. Only 'long time' traveling could reduce the Stamina Value. It was the same with such a situation in reality. If one person has been walking for 20 minutes constantly, he will feel tired. For 40 minutes and above, he will feel his legs are sore. After one hour, he has to stop and rest. Of course, this is just an example of an ordinary person, not applied to other kinds of professional athletes.

This sort of tiredness is accumulative; moreover, it becomes obvious with time. When fear was eroding the Invincible Hero, he started to speed up. When he saw his Stamina Value was

decreasing with a speed that could be observed with naked eyes, he didn’t stop to rest but tried to walk faster.

He wasn’t searching anymore as he was now running for his life.

He got a strong psychological hint that if he didn’t take action quick, not only was he going to be restrained, but also when his Stamina Value was drained, something in the dark would come for him.

"Gasp... gasp..." the Invincible Hero’s breath became heavy. He glared at his menu to see he had around 1000 points of Stamina Value. Moreover, he wasn’t running; he was just walking fast. It shouldn’t be consumed that much.

He stopped, resting two hands on his knees to adjust his breath and swallow saliva down his throat. At this moment, he felt something funny in his stomach, but he couldn’t tell what kind of feeling it was.

"What’s going on..." Invincible Hero said with a low tone as mumbling could ease his feelings of fear and help him gather himself together.

All of a sudden, his corner of his eyes caught something. He turned around to see a square mirror embedded on the wall, about two meters long, standing next to him. The mirror had a wooden frame, which was simple but delicately carved.

"Strange. Was it here before?" he asked with a suspicious face.

The Invincible was numb; he looked further to the end of the corridor and continued to walk forward. He now didn't care how many doors along the way or bother to watch the paintings, the wall-lamps or other decorations. This corridor wasn't significantly large; however, such a big mirror had appeared for the first time that he simply couldn't ignore.

Before the Invincible Hero had found the mirror, he was backing on it to gasp for his breath with both of his hands resting on his knees. However, after his attention had shifted to the mirror, he instinctively got upright and faced the mirror directly. This turn had him almost choked on his breath.

The image in the mirror didn't look different from the original object. However, 'he' in the mirror had his belly exposed without any skin or clothes. Just in a glance—he could see a chunk of intestines inside his stomach.

The Invincible Hero immediately inhaled a cold breath. His face was pale as he had to take several steps back, leaning against the opposite wall. His eyes were wide open, and he almost couldn't breathe for 10 seconds.

"Ill... illusion..." He regained his calmness. His face was showing his guts as he came closer to the mirror. "Who do you think you can scare? Isn't it just seeing my bowels?" Although he was saying so, he couldn't fool other people with his fluctuating Fear Value. He was scared, however, people in their extreme fear could have different reactions. Being sinister or getting angry were one of

them.

The Invincible Hero couldn’t help but watch his stomach, in which he saw his intestines were moving. With a closer look, he could see some strange details.

The longer he had looked at that odd cross section of his tummy, the more bizarre it had become. It looked like... a corridor!

He felt his back was cold and his neck was so numb that he couldn’t even move his head. After two seconds, he shouted indignantly and kicked the mirror to break it. Then he turned around in an attempt to get out of that place as quickly as possible.

Unexpectedly, when he had just turned around, he immediately found numerous mirrors had suddenly appeared on the whole length of the corridor, while the other doors he had seen had vanished into thin air.

"Ahhhh...!!!" Invincible-Ge roared, opened his eyes wider while vehemently dashing forward. He didn’t know whether this situation was just his illusion or the house had actually transformed. However, he could feel fear and danger as he didn’t want to stay here even for one more second.

Crack... Crack... Crack...

The noise of breaking glass echoed when a shadow smashed the glass window and jumped off from the second floor.

When he was falling in the air, Invincible Hero hadn’t been prepared. One second ago, he was still running in the middle of the corridor with a path ahead of him, but one second later, the feeling of having pieces of glass cutting his skin together with the pain from bumping into something flooded his mind. It seemed that he had hit something and then lost his balance as he fell down.

At the short glimpse of one second before his death, he saw the scene outside the house.

Stonewalls were covered with mold, and dead trees were surrounding a huge dark mountain pool, which stagnant water was reflecting twisted shadows. The creepy, gloomy atmosphere came along with the dark pool, the gable and the big mansion, oozing out from the deep places as darkness had tilted on both the spiritual and physical worlds.

In such an isolated and invisible silence, the Invincible Hero had fallen into the pool outside the house. Ghostly miasma had swallowed him as he couldn’t utter a sound. The house was standing there, as cold as a shadow of a ghost, looking at a shattered life.

The last image reflected in this professional gamer’s eyes was the tired blood moon descending to the west.

...

"Party’s member—The Invincible Hero, died. An item that is

related to the plot is transferred."

The system’s voice arose, putting Wang Tanzhi and Longao Min in fear.

"What! The level 15 professional player died!" Wang Tanzhi said in a daze. He even opened the menu to take a look at the Party Menu to confirm the information. Indeed, the poor player’s name had turned into a gray hue, as his status ‘Alive’ was now ‘Dead’.

At this moment, Longao Min and Wang Tanzhi had searched many rooms, but they hadn’t found anything valuable, except for the floor which had fallen several times or some traps with sharp spikes. One, they hadn’t found a clue. Two, no rewards either.

"If we didn’t decide to split up, perhaps we would have been dead several times already," Longao Min said, "I don’t know if Feng-Ge alone could encounter any dangers."

"If it’s Jue-Ge, don’t worry. If he told us to split up, he would have considered the risks," Wang Tanzhi said, "hey, last time when I was free at the login space, I’ve read the introduction that said if a player died bringing with him an item related to the plot, that item would reappear somewhere near his teammates."

Longao Min had experienced more Multiplayer’s scenarios as he said, "Yeah. I knew that. We should go and search for it now."

Then they started to rummage around. Luckily, thanks to what

so-called ‘unintentionally plant a tree, get a shade later’, they didn’t find that letter, but another stanza among the debris on the ground.

[And travelers now within that valley,

Through the red-litten windows, see

Vast forms that move fantastically

To a discordant melody;

While, like a rapid ghastly river,

Through the pale door,

A hideous throng rush out forever,

And laugh—but smile no more.]

[Side Quest, updated.]

[Find the whole six stanzas of the ‘Haunted Palace’, current progress: 4/6.]

Chapter 39: The Mountain Pool and the Haunted Mansion (6)

The dining room was spacious. Stood amidst the room was a long table where people who sat on both ends could only shout and yell at each other to communicate. On the white tablecloths scattered some empty dishes and forks, together with some broken candles.

A chandelier was hung above the table, which was much bigger than the one in the living room. However, it wasn't working, and the room counted only on the wall lamps to be the sources of light.

The wooden chairs were disorderly and randomly arranged; some of them now laid on the floor with spider webs tangled all over.

When Like Rain heard the notification of the system, she paused for a second then continued searching with her regular ice-cold face.

Dispirited Laughing Bones spoke up first, "That Dage who looks pretty cool is dead."

"Cool?" Like Rain said, "How could you know that?"

"Relatively high level, should be a professional gamer," Dispirited answered.

Like Rain used her sword to draw a part of the tablecloth. As she didn’t stop her search, she replied casually, "Our levels would increase too. We could also self-proclaim ourselves as ‘professional gamers’."

"Cousin, you quibble with me again." Dispirited looked at her cousin with sad eyes as she mumbled, "Well, even the professional is dead, why are you still so calm?"

At this moment, Like Rain was picking up an envelope under the table. She uttered only five words, "Item related to the plot."

[Name: A letter with ink stains]

[Type: Related to the plot]

[Quality: Normal]

[Functions: Unknown

[Being able to be brought out of the scenario: No]

[Remarks: Some parts of the letter are covered by ink stains, which is impossible to read.]

She handed the letter to Dispirited Laughing Bones then said, "Possibly, this shouldn’t be placed under the table. I guess after that ‘Invincible Hero’ died, it was transferred over here."

Dispirited took the letter, opened it and read it, then put it into her waist bag as she moisturized her lips. "Oh, if this letter is one of the main clues, possibly, the one who keeps it will be the target of some unknown force in this room. That one will be endangered. Thus—"

"Thus the professional gamer was dead?" Like Rain continued.

"Yeah. But it’s odd, you know," Dispirited continued, "there are four of them, and why is it he’s the only one who died? Moreover, he was the strongest one among them. Perhaps—"

"No ‘perhaps’." Feng Bujue’s voice suddenly arose as he was coming into the room from the door. "Apparently, we’ve split up."

Like Rain and Dispirited turned around to see him. Feng Bujue continued, "Moreover, considering the fact that he was screwed in the middle of the scenario, we should question the word ‘strongest’ here."

"His level is higher than yours. Moreover, he is a professional player." Like Rain spoke to Feng Bujue and she directly repeated Dispirited’s assumption that she had used to convince her.

"My level will increase and I can self-proclaim myself as a professional gamer. Is that what you call ‘strong’?" Feng Bujue answered her casually.

Dispirited covered her mouth trying to hide her giggle. Well, she almost burst out laughing.

Like Rain’s countenance slightly changed. "How long have you been here?"

"Just got here. What’s wrong?" Feng Bujue said. He actually didn’t overhear their convo, but he did hear Dispirited’s last words.

Like Rain kept silent for two seconds then spoke up, "You’ve found the ‘Haunted Palace’ side quest?"

"Yep," Feng Bujue answered, "I’ve found the first and the fifth stanzas. You guys have found the other two?"

Dispirited shook her head, "No. But we have met a lot of traps on the way."

Like Rain said, "What is the ‘Haunted Palace’? Scripture? Why it is an item?"

"It’s a poem." Wang Tanzhi appeared at the threshold of the dining room. Longao Min was standing next to him.

"Right on time," Feng Bujue said, "which stanzas have you guys found?"

"Well, the good news is that we've found two," Longao Min said.

"And the bad news is that we can't remember them." Longao Min's expression didn't show that he felt ashamed; quite the contrary, he looked proud somehow.

"Then just repeat a few things that you guys have some impressions of then," said Feng Bujue.

The two of them then started to discuss whatever verses that they could remember.

As having listened to them, Feng Bujue said, "They should be the second and the third stanzas." Then he did something that frightened all of them, which was to read the whole stanzas that Little Tan and Long-Ge had found then asked them if he recited them correctly.

"Jue-Ge, what is going on?" Wang Tanzhi panicked. "Are you watching us silently in the dark?"

"This room was born based on my imagination in reality. In fact, I'm a mad serial killer. This is one of my lairs," Feng Bujue calmly said, "the 'Haunted Palace', I wrote it on the wall when I was bored to death."

Wang Tanzhi dropped his jaw and his eyes and mouth were wide open as he stared at Feng Bujue in awe. His mind was a mess now.

After 10 seconds, Feng Bujue spoke to him, "Geez, the only one who hasn't realized that this is a joke is you."

"Ha, ha, ha..." Longao Min suddenly burst out laughing. He had soon understood that Feng Bujue was just kidding. It was just that he thought he shouldn’t laugh, but the fact that Wang Tanzhi had bought it made people speechless.

"Mister Feng, we’ve done laughing; could you please tell us the situation?" Dispirited said, "If you know the order of those stanzas and their contents, you must know the origin of this ‘Haunted Palace’, is it true?"

Feng Bujue said, "This poem is from a short story called ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’ by Edgar Allan Poe. I think this scenario is also generated based on that short story." He stood up a chair and sat on it. "Have you ever read it?"

"Not yet~" Except for Like Rain, the other three were like primary students answering their teacher with their echoing voice.

"It’s okay. His novels aren’t good either," Feng Bujue said, "Poe was a high-end educated ruffian. He gambled and drank alcohol. He flirted with both older women and even married younger ones. He had spent his entire life to write on mocking people without feeling tired. Most of his novels possess a heavy atmosphere. If skipping the details, sometimes, he could even earn benefits from that. For example, at the beginning of the ‘Ligeia’, he just made up a paragraph, added a dash, and claimed it was Joseph Granville's words. Lucky him, there’s no Google or Baidu in the 19th century, or else, he would soon get himself dragged on the street for the

world to criticize."

"Looks like you are a hardcore fan," Like Rain said with her cold voice.

"Looks like you are jealous of him." Dispirited Laughing Bone threw him a despising look.

"I think it looks more like you," Wang Tanzhi said.

"Feng-ge, show yourself some respect." Longao Min didn’t know what to say, so he advised him a little bit.

Feng Bujue stood up, struggling against them without changing his face. "Well, I know one or two. Anyway, it doesn’t matter—"

"You know the poem. No need to explain more." Like Rain interfered.

"Hey Jie-Jie—" Feng Bujue said.

"How old are you? Calling me Jie-Jie!"

"Hey Mei-Mei—"

"You dare try it again!"

Feng Bujue took a deep breath. "Alright, Wonder Woman, in fact, I know many genres of literature."

"Mister Feng, you actually don’t need to explain to me." Like Rain secretly beamed a smile that no one could notice.

Feng Bujue got floundered for three seconds. Then, he turned around just like nothing had happened and said, "Today, the wind is especially brisk today. How noisy..."

Longao Min could feel that Feng Bujue was ashamed, "Feng-Ge, even if you got busted, you shouldn’t care too much. We should continue in searching for clues."

Feng Bujue almost puked out a mouthful of blood as he thought, "Man, it would be much better if you just said the last part of your speech. Didn’t you chop me off with the first half?"

"Hey. I want to ask you guys, don’t you see anything weird?" Feng Bujue said with a somber face, "why did we all come here to the dining room? The structure of this house has been changed. We are all here now, does it mean—"

He hadn’t finished, yet the only door of the dining room had been closed automatically.

Baidu: Baidu offers many services, including a Chinese search engine for websites, audio files and images. Also, it offers 57 search and community services including Baidu Baike (an online, collaboratively built encyclopedia) and a searchable, keyword-based discussion forum.

Jie-Jie: Chinese word for older sister.

Mei-Mei: Chinese word for younger sister.

Chapter 40: The Mountain Pool and the Haunted Mansion (7)

Time had flashed back to 10 minutes ago when the Invincible Hero was still alive, and when Wang Tanzhi was still in the cellar.

Feng Bujue knocked on the coffin lid and said with a joking manner, "Hey, Miss Madeleine, are you there?"

Of course, he didn't expect that there was someone laying in the coffin, who would answer him with an unhappy tone that said, "Get lost!"

Because he knew that the coffin was empty.

After he had read the first stanza of the 'Haunted Palace', Feng Bujue assumed that this mansion could possibly be the Usher's house in Poe's novel. When he got to this cellar and saw the coffin and the fifth stanza written on the wall, he was more certain with his assumption.

Perhaps he hadn't reached the realm of being able to remember everything that he had seen yet, but it was true that Feng Bujue knew every genre of literature. Besides those stuff that he considered trash and swept them off his memory, if he read some novels, he could remember 60% or even 70% of the contents.

However, it was impossible for him to remember the whole poem just by standing there and reading one stanza. Thus, he asked

Little Tan and Long-Ge to say something they could remember to remind him. Then those two verses had emerged from his memory.

Of course, Feng Bujue could still recall the major details of that novel.

Many people know the name Edgar Allan Poe. He was the one who had set the foundation for detective novels. His ‘The Murders in the Rue Morgue’ was the first detective novel ever in the history of modern literature. When he published this novel, he had used the term ‘reasoning novel’ to address his word.

Anyway, those things happened in 1841, but ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’ was written sooner than that. It is a Gothic horror story, which is soaked with a dark, gloomy and sorrowful atmosphere for the entire novel.

The plot of the story generally is as follows: the main character is an old friend of Roderick Usher whose family had a mysterious genetic illness. When he stays in the mansion, he also got cursed by a dark, strange force. For hundreds of years, the Usher Family only had one son for each generation. When the father dies, the son will inherit his properties and that put the name of this family into old fading memories. This mansion and this family are equally related. When people mention ‘the Usher’, it could mean the Usher Family or the house itself.

One day, Roderick wrote a letter to the main character, in which he said that his days weren’t many anymore as his illness has been torturing him too much and he couldn’t bear it any further. His

mental health wasn't good either. A terrifying, unknown force in the Usher's house has been destroying his consciousness and taking his life away.

The main character then came to visit his old friend in hope that he was still well. However, right at the night he arrived, Miss Madeleine, Roderick's sister, died due to her illness.

She was the only family member of Roderick in this world, also his only friend for those passing years. Miss Madeleine had been living in sickness for many years without having a positive cure. However, she was still enduring and fighting against her sickness as she had never been so sick to the point where she couldn't get up from her bed. Roderick was strangely sad. He was almost broken mentally due to his sister's death.

Roderick said that he would keep her body in the cellar for two weeks before finally burying her. The main character himself helped his good friend put Miss Madeleine into the coffin in the cellar, but no one knows that she hadn't died yet.

Seven or eight days later, due to his extreme mourning, Roderick eventually became insane. It was a terrible night when the main character saw Miss Madeleine's horrible figure appear in the room and scare her brother to death before she finally died. Then, the main character stormed out of the house and saw the 'deep black pool was drowning the entire Usher's house'.

There were many loopholes that are 'unscientific'. For example, why was Madeleine buried alive without anyone's notice? A woman that has been struggling for seven or eight days inside the

coffin still has enough strength to kill the person in the house? Why did the mansion collapsed? Is it because of an earthquake? Or was it an intentional demolishing?

Anyway, readers in the 19th century wouldn't have questioned such a mysterious and thrilling novel. Quite the contrary, by the end of the 20th century, the main tasks of the professionals in 'over-interpreting' and 'spotting mistakes' had become more profound in many fields, especially in literature. If Poe were living in the 21st century, a random person could still demote him as worthless in the name of an academic 'Professor'. Or, one with 'deep interpretation' could dig out some more standpoints that might not be included in the original works.

We won't go any deeper on this discussion; now we should go back to our story.

According to the novel's details, this coffin was now useless. Whether the ghost that Feng Bujue had seen in the tunnel was Madeleine or not, her body wasn't in the cellar, but instead in the house right now.

Feng Bujue slid the lid open. Indeed, it was empty. He then brushed the dust away with his hand, sweeping his flashlight through the coffin's interior. Soon, he found a group of words carved on one piece of wood. It looked like someone had used their fingernails to make those words.

It read, 'He knows'. No punctuation. Crooked letters. If putting oneself into her position, there was no light inside the coffin that could help Madeleine see whether her writing was neat or not, let

alone she had to maintain a weird laying posture while writing it. Thus, it was good enough that those words were readable.

"[Hidden Quest] has been triggered."

As Feng Bujue was listening to the system's voice, he opened his menu immediately. A pop-up window suddenly appeared, covering the others.

[[Hidden Quest] is a scenario that could reward a player with impressive bonuses. However, it's hard to find or to complete [Hidden Quest] since its difficulty level is higher than the Main Quest and the Side Quest.]

[Only players who found the quest can see related system's notifications, including voices or texts of the [Hidden Quest] in this menu. If more than one player has found the [Hidden Quest] at the same place, that group can receive the quest together. However, [Hidden Quest] wouldn't be prolonged in sharing. Only one player could receive the task's description, while the other people could see the updated progress in the Quest Menu, but they will not be considered as taking the Quest or receiving the bonus upon completion.]

[Notification will be displayed once when the player has found the [Hidden Quest]. If you need to review again, please read the Game's introduction.]

"In other words, who finds it will deal with it alone and receive the unique rewards," Feng Bujue mumbled to himself then closed

the two notification windows while looking at the new quest, which read [Unchaining Miss Madeleine’s soul].

Feng Bujue said, "Ah, the situation is—" He had some assumptions about the plot of this scenario; however, the current problem was, how to get out of this cellar?

He raised the flashlight again and carefully searched the surrounding but found nothing. His eyes once again raked over the coffin. Besides the line of words and some scratches of fingernails on the inner wall of the coffin, there were no other valuable hints.

Feng Bujue put the flashlight in the coffin and adjusted it as to secure the beam, then lifted up the heavy lid of the coffin and leaned it against the wall. He then studied the back and the front of the wooden plate altogether. But then, there was still nothing to be found.

"Wait a minute—" Feng Bujue’s move suddenly ceased as he was thinking, "The one who lays in the coffin must lay on her back. Even if she wanted to carve some words, she could only carve it on the lid. Although she was worrying that other people could notice this if she carved them on the lid, she couldn’t help it. But why was there was no trace of struggling? Scratches and other vestiges could be seen here and there, but why did the lid look pretty new?"

Feng Bujue took the flashlight and shone it on the lid which was now leaning on the wall. He squatted down as he said, "Yeah." He knocked on the lid again. The sound echoed from the wooden plate was normal, which meant it didn’t have a double layer for a hidden compartment.

At this moment, Feng Bujue made a decision that would take all of his guts (well, at least to other people) to do. He lifted the lid again, put it back two-thirds on the coffin, then climbed into the coffin himself. After he had adjusted himself, he pushed and slid the lid with both hands to close the coffin.

He was now lying inside the coffin, feeling not much comfortable. It wasn’t because of psychological causes, but because the coffin wasn’t equipped with a soft mattress. It was purely wood that made him feel like he was sleeping on a hard bed with nothing else.

Feng Bujue had put himself into Miss Madeleine’s situation as he shone the flashlight on the coffin lid and said, "How could you get out afterward?" Then, he pushed the lid with one hand.

Unfortunately, it didn’t move an inch.

"What?" Feng Bujue was astounded. He immediately put the flashlight next to his head and used all of his limbs to push and kick the lid, but the coffin lid stayed still.

After he had struggled for a while, he stopped to breathe. Then, he saw the area of the wooden lid, which was facing him, start to transform into a human face.

It was hard to tell the gender of that face. With the voice of a witch, it spoke to Feng Bujue, "You are about to die, do you really want to get out of here?"

"Yes," Feng Bujue answered. He really wanted to know what tricks that this coffin monster would offer him.

"What could you offer?" asked the coffin lid.

Then, the system's voice arose, "You can offer a normal or higher quality item and this monster will teleport you out of this cellar."

"Ah, 'can' offer, right—" Feng Bujue thought, "In other words, I can choose not to offer anything—" he contemplated, "moreover, what if players don't have a suitable item? Will he be stuck here forever? Yeah, there should be some other ways."

"Coffin, I don't want to offer you anything," Feng Bujue said.

That face started to dramatically change all of a sudden. The eyes and the mouth were all opened bizarrely as they became more ferocious. If this were another person, he would be startled to death. However, since it was only a human face emerging from the coffin lid, it couldn't attack people. At most, it could just scare them a little bit.

"Then you will stay here forever and die in your extreme fear and hunger. Even if you have your fingers worn out to a mess of blood and flesh, even if you have your knees and toes crushed, you can never break this coffin lid—"

Click. Click.

Feng Bujue hauled the M1911A1 Pistol from his bag and switched the safety switch.

"Let me introduce you something"—Feng Bujue pointed his gun at the glabella of that face—"after the second industrial revolution, some interesting toys had been born."

"The damages that the weapon in your hand could make on me wouldn’t be enough for you to escape. One or two small holes are nothing," answered the coffin lid.

"I know you can heal yourself. But what about the sides, both ends, and the bottom of the coffin?" Feng Bujue asked.

"Ha, ha, ha—" The face on the coffin lid laughed. At the same time, the words that Madeleine had carved above Feng Bujue’s head disappeared together with the other vestiges. "If only I agree."

"Yeah. That’s it. Anyway, I’ve accepted the quest and the secret of this coffin. Thus, it’s okay if those scratches disappear," Feng Bujue said and retreated the gun.

"Do you want to change your mind now?" the coffin lid asked again, "perhaps you should give me that weapon and I will take you out of here."

Feng Bujue constantly took things out from his bag, including [Western Chef Knife] and the [Mario’s Pipe Wrench]. "You have

two choices. First, bring me back to the house and end this happy talk." He used the knife to make a cut on the lid. "Second, I will break you into pieces and have some firewood."

10 seconds later, Feng Bujue smoothly appeared in the house again. However, his current location wasn't in the living room but a corridor. There was a painting hung on the wall next to him. This time, it wasn't a cellar, but instead an ugly and abstract human face.

He didn't stop there. Actually, he just checked if his Survival Value was still full and his abundant Stamina Value. He then continued probing.

Chapter 41: The Mountain Pool and the Haunted Mansion (8)

"Jue-Ge, this... this... this... is... is..." Wang Tanzhi was so scared, he was stammering again.

"If I didn’t intervene you, you are ready to be so—beep—going on?" Feng Bujue said.

Longao Min turned around. "Feng-Ge, how could you speak a beep censor?"

"Apparently, by the time I spoke those rude words, my mind didn’t contain any insulting ideas. Thus the system didn’t prevent me from speaking. However, that word is not nice, and it got censored," Feng Bujue explained. "Hey, it’s not the right time to discuss this matter!"

BANG! BANG! GRUMBLE! GRUMBLE!

The crisp sound of breaking light bulbs and the shattering glass falling on the ground constantly reverberated. At this moment, all the wall lamps in the dining room were exploding at once. The room was suddenly immersed in darkness.

When the breaking sound hadn’t stopped yet, Wang Tanzhi took out the flashlight from his bag and shone it onto the space in front of him. "Why did you do that? Couldn’t you just turn them off nicely? You shouldn’t scare people." He put on the [Eye of Hatred]

while speaking.

As soon as Little Tan and Long-Ge saw the light from his flashlight, they both started to back off to Feng Bujue and took out their own flashlights at the same time. Their flashlights could light up a fan-shaped area in front of them.

On the other side, Like Rain and Dispirited Laughing Bone had their own ways to light up the area. Like Rain took out an old barn lantern. Although it looked ancient, the properties of this item weren't too bad.

[Name: Constant Glimmering Portable Lamp]

[Type: Tool]

[Quality: Broken]

[Function: Lighting]

[Special Effects: Never die out]

[Remarks: This little portable lamp used to be a powerful magic device. However, as it hadn't been repaired well after a serious damage, it could only light up a surrounding area of about five meters in diameter. Anyway, the switch couldn't control the brightness or to turn it off anymore. Fortunately, it still retains an infinite amount of fuel.]

She put the lamp on the dining table. Just as what was described in its description, the lamp could only light up an area within five meters in diameter.

Dispirited Laughing Bones then hauled out a yellow miner hat and turned on the small flashlight on it. However, she was holding the hat in her hands instead of putting it on. It might be she had felt that it was uncomfortable or due to its ugly appearance, she didn't wear it on her head.

All of them tried to press down their breathing noise, listening attentively to see if there was something approaching them.

All of a sudden, the clinking sound slightly echoed above their heads. As they looked up to see the source of the sound, they could only see a large glass chandelier hung above the dining table was being pulled by some invisible force, aiming for Feng Bujue.

Just in a blink, the chain holding the chandelier broke, flinging an object as big as half of a washing machine towards Feng Bujue. Feng Bujue's first reaction was to go under the dining table.

However, there was someone whose reflexes were much agiler than Feng Bujue's. Moreover, she wasn't just one step faster.

Like Rain slightly flexed her foot, stepped on the chair and jumped up into the air. Her actions were fierce and agile, but she didn't lose the tender feminine features that were signature to a woman. Her sword was cold, so were her eyes. The sword slashed

out as fast and strong as a thunderbolt. She had neatly chopped off the oncoming chandelier. The metal stent of the light was split up into two pieces, falling vertically to the ground as if it had lost all of its power. Pieces of glass were scattered here and there.

Like Rain gently descended. Then, she used one hand to push aside her scattered fringe while the other hand was holding the sword. Her breathing didn't even change. She could be described as a valiant majestic heroine.

Little Tan and Long-Ge were surprised. The image of Feng Bujue madly pounding the corpses yesterday was hung low in their minds at this moment. The 'Heartless Beheader' standing in front of their eyes was 10 streets ahead of him no matter in terms of skills or levels of ferociousness. The fighting scenes of the two of them, when compared to each other, was like Qin Jiaxian and Feng Zhihen. Yeah, there's not a more proper comparison.

"No need to say thanks." Like Rain stopped Feng Bujue when she saw he was about to open his mouth.

Feng Bujue swallowed the urge of saying 'Thank you, my heroine, for giving me a hand.' He thought, "It's good that I didn't say it. This verse is for mass cast characters in knight-errant films, which is a very popular one." He cleared his throat then said, "Hey... Like Rain, could you please adjust your lamp brighter?"

"Nope," Like Rain answered.

"Oh, can I see it?" Feng Bujue asked.

"For what?" asked Like Rain.

"I have a skill that could fix mechanical devices for a short period of time." Feng Bujue said, "If your portable lamp’s quality is under normal rank—"

Before he could even finish speaking, Like Rain had used her sword to lift up the lamp on the table, bringing it in front of him. "Broken."

She liked to be more effective with fewer words used. Naturally, he understood and took the item. When he used his [Perfunctory Maintenance] to fix the lamp, the system’s voice arose, "Skill’s application, failed." Feng Bujue didn’t bother with that since failure in using this skill was normal. His Weapon Specialty now was graded F with the success rate of 20%. It was his luck that he could fix the flashlight with only one try last time.

He wouldn't always be that lucky. However, after trying two times in a row, it worked. It cost him 100 points of Stamina Value for each usage. Now, he had already spent 300 points of Stamina Value for this skill. After the portable lamp had been repaired to normal quality, its brightness had been improved as it could light up the entire dining room.

This dining room was quite large, possibly the largest room that each of them had ever seen in the house. At this moment, there was a shadow in the farthest corner of the room, or a ghost to be exact.

That was a middle-aged man, wearing a classic black suit. He had pale skin with deep sockets. His facial features were bright with a wide forehead and square jawline. This face was hard to forget just at first glance.

According to some folklore, the appearance of a ghost, including clothes, would remain the same with what he had worn before he died, or his regular appearance when he was still alive. From the appearance and his mien, this guy could possibly be Roderick Usher.

The ghost was originally hiding in this dark corner that their lamps couldn’t reach; however, at this moment, the portable lamp’s brightness was suddenly increased which left him nowhere to hide.

Roderick seemed to be afraid of this light as he covered his eyes with his hands. At the same time, he proceeded to crouch down and roar.

Feng Bujue took the lamp with him, stepping towards this ghost without showing fear. His tone was bold and firm. "Mister Usher, please tell us how to get out of this place?"

"Don’t come closer," Roderick said, "if not, you will..." The first half of his talk was tender, and it even made people think that he was weak. However, when he was saying the other half of his sentence, his hands were moving away, revealing a twisted face of a beast roaring madly, "... Pay a big price!"

Feng Bujue stopped at roughly one meter in front of him, without even frowning. Quite the contrary, the group of people standing behind him got scared of this sudden change in Roderick.

"What are you up to? Manipulate the chair to pound on my nape?" Feng Bujue knew that this guy couldn’t touch them directly as he could only control the other stuff in the room to attack him.

Words are slower than actions itself. Indeed, a chair was now flying across the air, aiming for Feng Bujue from behind.

This time, Longao Min was close to him as he took a big step forward, and stretched out his arm to shield Feng Bujue with his [Ultron’s Fragment].

"Well, there are five persons here, but you seem to be more interested in me?" Feng Bujue’s tone could even stir up ghosts. "Where is Madeleine’s body? Is it put together with yours?"

"Ahhh... ——" Roderick madly screamed out as dishes, forks, knives, and candles on the table all flew up at once.

Feng Bujue didn’t say a word as he took the bottle of [Largo Quicksand] in his bag and threw it on the ground.

This item could only slowed down ‘mobs’ 10 times within the diameter of 100 meters, which meant it couldn’t reduce the physical speed of ‘objects’. Anyway, when Roderick got slowed

down, those floating objects, which were controlled by an unknown force, were relatively affected as they eventually fell on the ground.

To take an example, well, the ‘telekinesis’ this ghost was using to control the other objects in the room was like when someone is riding a bicycle. If his movement is slowed down by 10 times, it won’t happen to reduce his speed, but he will fall for sure.

Feng Bujue moved the lamp in his hand forward while shining the flashlight onto Roderick. Facing this ghost who didn’t have a body, he had no other way to attack him; thus, he could only use the light, which his opponent was afraid of to make some positive effects.

Roderick grunted something unclear in his mouth. He then slowly turned around, arching his hands to cover the light as he attempted to make an escape. However, since his action was too slow, basically, he couldn’t do anything significant.

"This scenario is too easy. We only need to have devices that could produce strong light and be alert for traps in the house and not to get deluded by those mysterious illusionary objects, then we wouldn’t have to worry about our Survival Value," Feng Bujue said, "perhaps this scenario only tests our courage, not our fighting ability." Feng Bujue determinedly put the lamp through Roderick’s body and the light could only make the ghost more transparent; however, it couldn’t destroy him.

One minute had soon passed. Roderick retreated into the wall. Feng Bujue shrugged in disappointment and came back to the long

dining table, then put the lamp back on it.

"Let’s reason for a while." Feng Bujue picked up a chair then sat down on it. "After that Invincible-Ge had died, the items that were related to the plot should be transferred to somewhere nearby, so we should look for it first."

Dispirited took out the letter and said, "This is it. Anyway, the information it brings is limited. Probably, the writer’s mentality wasn’t okay. He got sick or something, so he wanted to invite a friend to pay him a visit."

"Can I see it?" asked Feng Bujue.

"Of course," Dispirited handed him the letter and added, "if you want to collect the first letter of every line or Roman letters to decode the hidden messages, there’s no such thing in this letter." When she read it, she already confirmed that.

Feng Bujue had spent a whole minute to study the unclear letter then said, "Players who have read the novel would recognize that this is the Usher’s House. For those who haven’t read it, they could use this letter to guess the twists of the plot." He returned the letter to Dispirited, "This item can’t be brought out of the scenario. It seems that it’s just a regular item of the main quest; basically, it can’t push up the progress of the game."

"Please explain the current situation then. It looks like you know this story well. Moreover, recently, that Ghost has focused only on you and nothing has happened to me even though I’m holding the

item related to the plot. Is there a reason behind this?" asked Dispirited.

Feng Zhihen is a peerless, powerful swordsman in the legend of the devil world while Qin Jiaxian is a buffoon who is only good at debating.

Chapter 42: The Mountain Pool and the Haunted Mansion (9)

Feng Bujue simply narrated the details of the novel. He also mentioned the [Hidden Quest] he had received when he was in the cellar. Then, everybody could see his special quest in the menu bar. However, they could only see it there; even if Feng Bujue could finish it later, only he would receive the bonus.

When he was going half way into his story, the lamp's brightness was reduced since the effective time was over. Anyway, Like Rain and Dispirited didn't intervene his talk as they were still attentively listening to him.

After Feng Bujue had told them everything he knew, he continued with a concluding tone, "So, according to my analysis, the plot should be developed this way. This family has been passing the Huntington's chorea for generations, and this house itself possesses some supernatural powers and some sort of curse. Roderick's sister soon went insane. Thus, even though he knew that she hadn't died yet, he buried her alive. This then tortured him until his mind was completely broken. Until that night, his sister had used the power of the house to get into the house and scare him to death. After that, she also died of exhaustion.

"The soul and body of Madeleine perhaps are bound together with Roderick in the house. And, the house itself has some extreme grudge to 'living' objects like us.

"From the game's perspective, the Main Quest is to find the rules or flaws of this house and escape from there. Side quest is optional.

It’s just to make us complete our search over the map. If we can visit many rooms and find the whole six stanzas of the ‘Haunted House’, we will receive the rewards later. Regarding the souls of that brother and sister, it’s just something the system has made up to make it more interesting. And, about the [Hidden Quest], it’s still okay if we couldn’t finish it."

After having listened to him, Like Rain was the first one who spoke up, "S’okay, we can join you."

Feng Bujue just made it clear that it wasn’t hard to pass this scenario; side quest could be done, but they might not do it and [Hidden Quest] wasn’t compulsory. He was asking Like Rain and Dispirited whether they wanted to help him complete the [Hidden Quest] or not. However, his teammates had answered him even before he had raised the request.

"Thank you then," Feng Bujue said.

Like Rain didn’t answer him this time. She really didn’t like to talk much.

Dispirited said with good manners, "No need to be ceremonial. We want to do the side quest too. [Hidden Quest] wouldn’t be easy, but we will help you as much as we can."

Feng Bujue immediately stood up. "Back to the matter before that thing had interfered us. Why did we come back here at the same time?"

Little Tan instantly said, "The house has changed itself, hasn’t it? It just needs to modify some corridors to connect the space then it could lead all of us to this place."

"You said ‘how’ we came here, not ‘why’ we came here, right?" said Longao Min.

Dispirited licked her lips and muttered, "There are some simple causes for such situations, which include the right time or getting some items or—"

Feng Bujue continued, "We’ve reached the boundary of the map."

"What does that mean?" Little Tan said.

"Do you know Betrayal At House On The Hill?" asked Feng Bujue.

"Boardgame?"

"Yep, that’s it. What should we do when we have opened all the rooms of one floor?" Feng Bujue asked.

It was Wang Tanzhi who seemed to get the idea. "Can’t enter a new map!"

"In our current situation, it seems we have searched all the rooms of the first ground. If we continue to search further, we will only meet the ones we used to visit," Feng Bujue explained, "then, we

would come to one room at once, which is linked to the unlocked area of the map."

"Hm, what if we move to the second floor?" Longao Min said as he felt a little bit insecure. "The Invincible Hero died there for some unknown reasons."

"The first floor has three stanzas of the ‘Haunted Palace’. I found one in the cellar, and the other two should be on the second floor. If we want to finish the side quest, we have to go there," Feng Bujue answered, "and, we’ve visited all the rooms on the first floor, but the Main Quest hasn’t been updated yet. Thus, no matter whether it is the Main Quest, the Side Quest or the Hidden Quest, we have to go there to complete them."

Dispirited added, "As the last challenge of the scenario, the difficulty level of the second floor, or the cursing power there, apparently, would be stronger than here. Certainly, the traps on the second floor would be more dangerous, and the illusion would be more intimidating. That’s why the lonely Invincible Hero got screwed there."

As having listened to her, Little Tan turned to Feng Bujue, "Jue-Ge, listen to her. Splitting up had him killed."

"Invincible-Ge would die eventually since he wasn’t strong enough." Feng Bujue shifted his look, revealing the expression of ‘Today, the wind is especially brisk’ again.

10 minutes later, the five of them had crossed several corridors and found one leading to the second floor.

The wooden staircase exuded an annoying smell of mold and rotten things as it squeaked along their steps. Little Tan was much anxious as he broke a part of the decayed handrail. It then scared him even more.

When they got on the second floor, Longao Min once again took his pioneering role. His new title of [The Squad Defender] had granted him a special passive skill, which could increase his defending power by 10% for every teammate he had. Although defending, attacking and blood values weren't indicated with particular digits in Thriller Paradise, it didn't affect this increasing calculation. Simply speaking, Longao Min's defending ability now was increased four times compared to when he was taking action alone. If he had to fight against that evolved Bloody Corpse at this moment, he wouldn't be blown away within just one strike.

Feng Bujue and Wang Tanzhi closely followed Longao Min; Dispirited Laughing Bones stayed in the middle of the formation, while Like Rain got their backs.

After they had walked for a while, Dispirited suddenly patted Wang Tanzhi on his shoulder. Wang Tanzhi's mentality was tense, and her move had threatened him so much that his face turned pale. It was good that he didn't scream though.

"Hey, hey, Little Tan-Ge."

"What’s up?"

"I want to negotiate with you a bit and we can trade some items."

Wang Tanzhi said, "Which ones?"

"Oh, what do you have?" Dispirited smiled.

Little Tan continued walking forward while telling her the items in his bag, "Yeah, I have the western chef knife, a baseball bat, the largo..."

Feng Bujue was walking ahead; he facepalmed and shook his head as a thousand words in his mind had consolidated into just one sigh. "This dumbass—"

Dispirited burst out laughing with Little Tan’s silly deed. She intervened, "Good, good, good. Did you tell me all the things?"

Wang Tanzhi was dazed. "Oh~ Yeah, it’s you who wants to exchange items with me. Why do I have to report first?"

Longao Min rolled his eyes while leading the team. He then said with a low tone, "This boy is such a genius."

"Don’t bully children," Like Rain spoke up from behind.

Dispirited stuck her tongue out, then spoke to Little Tan, "I’m sorry. I was just joking with you. I didn’t expect that you would tell me all."

Wang Tanzhi was still mad because of Like Rain’s words as he clarified, "I’m 24 years old this year!"

Feng Bujue couldn’t stand it anymore. He turned his head and scowled at Little Tan. "I’ve found that your EQ is increasing more and more these days."

"Huh?" Little Tan didn’t understand a thing.

Dispirited pulled his sleeve. "Alright, I’m serious," she brought the miner hat and said, "I want to exchange this for your flashlight."

Little Tan checked its properties out. This was an item which had the lighting effect.

[Name: Miner Hat]

[Type: Defensive item]

[Quality: Normal]

[Defending power: Medium]

[Attributes: None]

[Effects: Lighting but it consumes batteries.]

[Equipment requirement: Common Specialty Grade F or Weapon Specialty Grade F]

[Remarks: This is a trustful defensive item. The miner’s lamp on the front of the head is really useful.]

"So? I can see that you don’t have a defensive item for your head. Using this to exchange for your flashlight isn’t a bad deal," Dispirited said.

Little Tan took a quick look. "But it’s clearly unprofitable to you, isn’t it?"

"Yellow doesn’t suit me well. Moreover, a little girl will look dumb wearing this hat." She smiled slyly. "I think it fits you well."

"No need. I have a defensive item already," Little Tan answered as he took out another flashlight from his bag (when they were still in the Mall, Feng Bujue suggested each of them taking two flashlights. Wang Tanzhi was still keeping all of them in his bag) and handed it to Dispirited. "I have two, is it okay if I give you one?"

Dispirited opened her big eyes wider, staring at Little Tan’s face for three or five seconds. "Hey! You said ‘give’, does it mean I can

take it for free?"

"It looks silly to wear. You should keep it." Wang Tanzhi smiled.

After having listened to him, Dispirited suddenly understood what ‘seeing the darkness inside when cutting open a natural idiot’ meant afterward.

She received the flashlight and put it together with the miner hat into her bag. With a complicated feeling, she said, "Thanks", but her face didn’t show that she was excited.

"You deserved it." Like Rain poked her one more strike from behind.

"Seems like something’s wrong." Longao Min suddenly stopped as he found something abnormal. "Haven’t we just passed this place?"

"We’ve come up one corridor that looks exactly the same with this," Feng Bujue continued, "then we took one left turn and two right turns. Each time we’ve changed direction, we have crossed straight corridors with different lengths. Obviously, we are not going in a circle."

"It's an illusion that—" Longao Min only said half a sentence as he wanted to hear Feng Bujue’s opinions.

"It's an illusion indeed," Like Rain spoke up from the back of their

formation. At this moment, she was stretching her body in front of a mirror. She could see her image in the mirror with normal shape and unchanged costume; however, her belly was exposed with a chunk of intestines.

Around one second later, mirrors appeared all over the two walls of the corridor. This transformation had happened so quick that it didn’t leave any trace of a twisting space or something.

Feng Bujue turned around and, after seeing himself in a mirror that was nearest to him, said, "Yeah, it’s more obvious than the nuclear magnetic resonance." He took some steps to get closer to the mirror. "Ah, there are details of a corridor on the cross section of my intestines—interesting!"

Betrayal At House On The Hill: Betrayal at House on the Hill is a board game published by Avalon Hill in 2004, designed by Bruce Glassco and developed by Rob Daviau, Bill McQuillan, Mike Selinker, and Teeuwynn Woodruff.Players all begin as allies exploring a haunted house filled with dangers, traps, items and omens. As players explore the mansion, new room tiles are chosen at random; accordingly, the game board is different each session. Eventually the "haunt" begins, with the nature and plot of this session's ghost story revealed; one player usually "betrays" the others and takes the side of the ghosts, monsters, or other enemies, while the remaining players collaborate to defeat them.

Seeing the darkness inside when cutting open a natural idiot: It meant that people who is slow can be savage too.

Chapter 43: The Mountain Pool and the Haunted Mansion (10)

"Feng-Ge... you are too calm...." Longao Min was a little bit scared while looking at those chunks of intestines.

Anyway, Little Tan was relatively calm now, because he wasn't afraid of human internal organs.

Dispirited Laughing Bones didn't react too much as she only frowned her delicate eyebrows, thinking that those things were quite nauseating. Like Rain's tranquility was as tough as Feng Bujue's.

"Now we assumed that the Invincible-Ge had also encountered this type of situation at the second floor," Feng Bujue said, "he was alone, and there were so many corridors that looked exactly the same. He then saw the reflections in the mirror hinted that he was trapped inside his moving intestines. What would he do then?"

"Run." Like Rain's response was always that simple and direct as she was saving words just like someone saving up gold.

"Exactly," Feng Bujue nodded, "thus, we can't run. Moreover, we have to walk slowly."

"He died due to him running in confusion?" Longao Min thought then said, "So... there are other traps in this corridor or some steel wire set in the middle of the air that naked eyes couldn't see

clearly?"

Little Tan said, "We've just crossed over this section, why haven't we met any traps or bumped into—"

"Was there a mirror there before?" Feng Bujue intervened, "the surroundings could be changed as it pleases. Nothing significant." He knocked on the wall of the corridor. "Wall. It's covered. It could be an intact wall, or a door, a window, or even nothing." He took out the baseball bat from his bag. "From now on, 'sight' can no longer be used as a reference."

Feng Bujue crossed over Longao Min. "Next, I will lead you guys with my eye closed." He then used the bat as a white cane, putting it in front of him and started to grope. "You guys don't need to close your eyes, just follow me. Even if it looks like I'm about to step on a trap or on the void, don't disturb me, just follow me." He contemplated and added, "I will focus so as we can move forward faster; thus, you should memorize the route. You don't need to remember everything. Making two turns on the same side is okay, but if I make the third turn also to that side, you should stop me."

"Hey, can I ask what does this Jue-Ge do in real life?" Dispirited couldn't hold it anymore as she asked the same question that Longao Min used to ask him before.

"A great author," Feng Bujue replied without feeling ashamed.

Like Rain's complexion slightly changed as having heard that. She questioned him suspiciously, "Novelist?"

"Wow, you Wonder Woman is so cool. You got it," Little Tan said.

Feng Bujue also felt awkward. He thought, "How many times could she see through me? What's going on?"

"Oh wow, are you a celebrity?" Dispirited asked.

"Well, I'm not as famous as the second or the third-class actors," Feng Bujue said frankly.

Dispirited was surprised. She immediately opened her menu to take a look at the list of members in her party. Feng Bujue... Feng Bujue... No way! Is he that 'Bujue'? His pen name and screen name are the same!

"Cousin, he is your—" Dispirited turned around, lowered her tone as she wanted to whisper something to Like Rain.

"Got it." Like Rain stopped her then rose her voice again, "This is not the right time for chatting. Lead us, 'Great Author'."

Feng Bujue didn't see anything strange. He shrugged then turned around, closed his eyes, put the bat in front of him, got into a hunching position and started to move forward. He had no choice. The baseball bat is only 100 cm long, while a normal white cane could be lengthened to the user's sternum. The bat could only reach his waist level.

The five of them were moving forward at a speed slower than before. However, it was fast enough using the ‘white cane’.

Before they had reached the first turn, everything was still normal as the wall at the end of the corridor was real. When Feng Bujue touched the wall, he made a left turn. It was odd that he didn’t completely turn to face the left corridor, but a little bit askew. The four of them opened their eyes wider as they saw something terrifying while walking behind him. Feng Bujue’s body was gradually immersing into the wall on their right. They didn’t say a word but instead just followed him. As the path Feng Bujue was walking on had crossed the wall, everybody was then walking through the wall successively. The eyes are easy to be misled. However, human body comes with a sense of balance that could help us walk on a straight line in case we don’t use our eyes to watch the way.

Those corridors looked like they had square corners; in fact, they also had more skewed corners. Feng Bujue closed his eyes while walking then used his sense to turn 90 degrees at the end of the corridor; that was how he deviated them from the straight corridor.

Under his guide, the five of them had passed through walls and walls. The ground, the staircase, and the other ornamentations underneath their feet couldn't be trusted. The second floor of the house was a bizarre, mysterious space. Any objects, including doors, windows, corridors, or even a big hole in the ground looked both real and unreal at the same time. It was even more difficult for people to locate themselves than that of a maze. The straight corridor was actually a curved one, and the wall that looked solid could be walked through.

Only if they closed their eyes could they make themselves walk on a straight line that they had set in their minds. If not, they would absolutely be puzzled.

This strange journey took them 30 minutes. During the trip, they didn't meet any traps or any ghosts. It seemed that those ghosts, who could pass through the walls, were afraid of this mysterious area.

Along their path, besides some freaking illusions that could befuddle players and many 'see-thru intestines mirror', there were also many paintings, which made people dizzy when looking at their depicted and twisted contents, hung randomly on the walls. It could be said that in this journey, as far as they had been going, the scene had become more disgusting. If one was goggling his eyes and probing in this scenario, reluctantly, he could be able to complete the round, but he must possess a very strong mentality.

The long, silent, and pensive journey had lowered their spirits. Luckily for them, it was finally about to be over.

Feng Bujue came in front of a door—a real door. The walls on both sides were also real walls. It seemed that this was the 'end' of the illusionary corridor.

In fact, with such distance and a normal corridor, it would take them only 50 minutes to finish. However, they had spent the whole 30 minutes there, and at this moment, Feng Bujue was mentally exhausted though his Stamina Value was still pretty

good. He wasn’t a blind one or had taken a professional training course as it was strenuous for him to close his eyes and walk around for a long time. My dear readers, if you are interested in this, you can try closing your eyes and walking around your house searching every room once. It could help you understand this difficulty. That's right, remember to be careful.

"Seems we’re there," Longao Min spoke up from his second position in the line.

Feng Bujue opened his eyes, blinking to adjust his vision with the not-too-bright surrounding. He immediately saw ‘the end’, which was a door that looked like it was made from human flesh.

On that ‘flesh door’, something looked like blood vessels were forming a verse of the ‘Haunted Palace’.

[And all with pearl and ruby glowing

Was the fair palace door,

Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing

And sparkling evermore,

A troop of Echoes whose sweet duty

Was but to sing,

In voices of surpassing beauty,

The wit and wisdom of their king.]

"Side Quest updated."

"Finding the whole six stanzas of the "Haunted Palace', current progress: 5/6."

"This is the fourth verse. Now, we only need to find the sixth verse," Feng Bujue said then carelessly touched the knob of the door that was made from bones.

"Feng-Ge, let me go first," Longao Min suggested.

"Alright." Feng Bujue put his bat away; moreover, he didn't wear the [Eye of Hatred] now. When they were still in the dining room, he couldn't see Roderick hiding in the dark and manipulating the chandelier to attach him. And, when he took control of the chair, Feng Bujue saw that Roderick's target was actually the chair itself. It could be seen that the [Eye of Hatred] was useless to monsters that used indirect attacking methods.

When he was pushing the door open, they saw a medium room without any windows or lights. The four walls were made from blood and flesh, while white bones were put together to form the floor. The ceiling was tangling with long black hair. Those locks of hair were weaving randomly and strangely with each other to form

a dome.

Besides this door, the room had no other exits.

There was a bone beam installed amidst the room, where two corpses were hung down from there. They were a male and a female bodies. Both of them were coiled with something that looked like intestines, dangling in the air.

The male corpse wore a classic black suit, while the female wore a white robe. Both of the corpses didn’t have any signs of decaying, however, their skin was ashen, and their eyes were tightly closed—an indescribable ‘dead aura’ exuded from them.

Chapter 44: The Mountain Pool and the Haunted Mansion (11)

When Feng Bujue just had a glimpse of the room, he instinctively slipped his tongue, "Is it the SCP002..."

"What's that?" Longao Min suspiciously said.

"Ah...!" Wang Tanzhi suddenly shouted, "Don't you ever ask him anything! He will give you a lecture for hours."

Feng Bujue just ignored him, then answered Longao Min directly, "It's a forum on the internet established by the community of freelance writers who love science fictions."

"You concluded everything in just one sentence!" Wang Tanzhi said with awe, "I still remembered that you had given me an explanation that lasted for three hours!"

"Because your expression told me that you were buying what I was saying, so I wanted to see how far I could develop my lie," Feng Bujue smilingly said while entering the room of flesh.

The other four then closely followed him since none of them wanted to wait at that constant changing corridor.

"Assume that this place is the center of the curse of the Usher's House," Feng Bujue stepped towards the two corpses, "this entire

room has been formed by souls and bodies of generations of the Ushers. Roderick and Madeleine will soon become a part of this room." He grabbed Madeleine by her leg, trying to pull her down. However, those intestines were tying her tightly as it was useless pulling her like this.

Feng Bujue hauled out the chef knife from his bag, keeping it in between his teeth. It seemed he wanted to climb on one of the corpses and cut the intestines that were hanging them.

"Allow me." Like Rain touched Feng Bujue's shoulder to stop him.

Feng Bujue turned his head to look at Like Rain as she was looking at him straight in his eyes. Like Rain didn't say another word. She pointed at Feng Bujue and then at the ground.

"Alright," Feng Bujue got her ideas. He bent down on one knee, leaned forward and backed to Like Rain.

Like Rain took her sword out, stepped on his shoulder and tenderly jumped up. Her sword swept half a circle in the air, neatly cutting off the strings of intestines that were hanging the two corpses. They immediately fell on the ground.

After Like Rain had descended, she told Feng Bujue, "Thanks for your trouble."

"Nothing. Not at all." Feng Bujue had a feeling that he himself had troubled her.

Right at this moment, the ghost of Roderick appeared again at the door. He had emerged out of nowhere, standing behind Dispirited-Mei.

"You… can’t change anything…" said Roderick.

His sudden voice startled Dispirited. She immediately stepped to the other location while sweeping her flashlight to the door. Nothing could be shone now.

At the same time, the body of Roderick on the ground started to move as the intestines binding him were loosening. When everybody was still looking at the door, this ghost had controlled his body, got up from the ground and started to attack Feng Bujue again.

Feng Bujue was always alert. It was true that he was looking at the door, but his reflexes were quick enough when he heard something from behind. He turned around and raised the chef knife. The blade of his knife timely confronted Roderick’s arm.

This damn corpse had the ability to move again, but still, it was just flesh and bones. Feng Bujue’s knife had chopped into the flesh of Roderick’s right arm. However, it was stuck there and had failed to chop off his arm.

Longao Min’s response wasn’t slow. As he saw that, he immediately leaned forward and swung his shield at Roderick’s temple. [The Ultron’s Fragment] was a good item since ‘Erdmann

Secondary Alloy' wasn't just a joke. Together with Longao Min's strength, it could chop off half of Roderick's head.

The corpse now exposed his ash-grey brain that looked like a pulp of tofu with a strange, gross smell.

Feng Bujue looked at the other half of the head that remained on the corpse's neck; he took out the wrench, holding it in his other hand and fiercely poked several times at the chin of the corpse. His vehement deed was like he couldn't wait anymore. This made people think that if he didn't take the time to hit the head, he would have no part in sharing this head.

As seeing the two of them could deal with the corpse pretty well, Like Rain didn't assist them. Not long after that, there was only Feng Bujue who was still 'whipping corpse'. He was holding the chef knife and the wrench pounding on the motionless corpse just like he was smashing meat. He had been hitting the corpse until Roderick's body had become a pulp of flesh and blood. Pieces of internal organs were scattered here and there. When the bones of the corpse's limbs were all broken, he stopped to gasp, "Phew, certainly, it can't get up again."

Although Little Tan got used to seeing dead bodies, at this moment, he couldn't help covering his mouth and said, "Up my ass. How could such a shape does the 'up' action again? This pile of thing could be used to make dumplings."

After his body had been destroyed, his ghost appeared again in one corner of the room. "It's useless. My flesh has been merged with this room. You... are not an exception."

When he hadn’t finished yet, the door automatically closed while the flesh walls started to move. Large mouths with sharp fangs gradually emerged from the walls. These mouths were big enough to bite off one’s face.

"Hey... Jue-Ge, what to do now?" Wang Tanzhi took his chef knife out, but he didn’t know what to attack. Slash that wall of flesh?

"If there are tongues sticking out from the wall, I’m not gonna play with them." Dispirited looked at those mouths on the wall and commented in disgust.

"If we are going to be swallowed, why did you want to make it messier here using your dead body to attack me," Feng Bujue muttered while shining his flashlight onto the Ghost of Roderick. However, it seemed that this ghost wasn’t afraid of this sort of light anymore.

"Ah..., there’s nothing you are afraid of in this room, isn’t it?" After Feng Bujue said that, he came to Madeleine’s body and pretended to squat down.

Roderick clearly showed his terrified face. "What do you want to do?"

"Madeleine’s soul is not willing to be a part of the Usher’s House. In the cellar, she came to me for a short while to ask for help," Feng Bujue said, "I’ve thought carefully. When she asked me to ‘let

her go', she didn't actually want me to take her out of the coffin; because when she was still alive, she had already gotten out of there." After he had confirmed Roderick's reaction, he got up and smiled. "Madeleine wanted me to bring her body out of this room so as later, she wouldn't become a part of it just like you did."

Roderick's face became more grimaced as the sinister visage of a demon had replaced his human features. "Take a look, how are you going to bring her out of here?"

Feng Bujue said, "Does the surrounding around me really exist? If this room could eat human flesh that quick, your bodies would have been soon swallowed up, leaving nothing behind." He then swaggered to a wall and stretched out his arm to touch a bloody open mouth on the wall.

The other four didn't say anything or have any intentions to stop him. Feng Bujue's confident tone and calm actions made them feel that he was certain of what he was doing.

Roderick could only roll his eyes as he stared at Feng Bujue; he couldn't do anything else.

Feng Bujue's arm went through the illusory bloody things and touched the real wall, which was a normal wooden wall. "Fair enough. The illusion has covered the real shape of this room. Well, now I only need to find—" he paused for a while, "ha ha, I'm slow, but where could it be?!"

Feng Bujue then headed to the remote corner where Roderick

was standing. The ghost was frightened as it immediately shouted. However, Feng Bujue was like he didn't see this blurry Ghost, crossing through his body to search the wall behind him.

Seconds later, both of Feng Bujue's hands were placed on the wall about his waist height and pushing open a window.

"Current Quest has been changed. Main Quest, updated." The system's voice arose.

In the Quest Menu, the Main Quest of [Search the house, find the ways to escape] had a checkmark next to it; also, there appeared a new quest under it, which read [Break the magic formation, get out of the house].

The bloody moonlight shone through the window, creeping across the room. When Roderick had contacted with this red moonlight, he instantly disappeared. At the same time, this light had also washed away all illusions, restoring the room to its original appearance.

This was just a loft made from wood without anything like flesh or blood or bones or hair. The thing that hung those two corpses wasn't intestines; they were just a pair of rough rope.

There was nothing else in the room, however, laid amidst the room was an odd formation, which was possibly just being generated by the system; anyway, there's no way to prove it.

At this moment, the only thing that looked scary in this room was the body that Feng Bujue had pounded.

The other four exhaled in relief. Wang Tanzhi wiped the cold sweat on his forehead. "It had me worried for the whole time! Turns out this room can’t hurt people."

Feng Bujue walked to the magic formation engraved on the ground, using his knife to scratch it randomly. "This room is the ‘head’ of the Usher’s House. When a member of the Ushers died, his body would be brought here to feed the room as if the dead body was its food." He looked at the pulp of meat next to him. "Their bodies would disappear while their souls would merge with this room and become those strange illusions. Perhaps those twisted sculptures and paintings are the reflections of this family’s members."

After he had scratched the magic formation, he put his weapon away, got up and said, "Besides, when we got here and saw the two corpses, I had some doubts. Madeleine had carved the word ‘He knows’ on the coffin, perhaps ‘he’ there isn’t Roderick."

"What? Could it be the main character of that novel?" said Longao Min.

"No, the main character is innocent. But," Feng Bujue answered, "besides the two masters, there are other people living in the Usher’s House. There’s one or two lines to describe them in the novel. I can remember it reads, ‘A tiptoeing, silent male servant" and ‘a cunning-looking family doctor, who was both surprised and panicked seeing the main character’."

"Are you saying that the Ushers are also the victims?" Dispirited asked.

Feng Bujue raked everywhere just like he was looking for something; he then said absent-mindedly, "Perhaps there's some bizarre religious group that had laid its eyes on the Usher family then made them their experimental subjects. Ah no, the sacrifices. After they had died, they would be sacrificed for this room. Who knows what has happened in this room. Perhaps the power of this room comes from a fictional 'Devil God'."

"Up there," Like Rain suddenly uttered.

Feng Bujue immediately looked up to see the last stanza of the 'Haunted Palace' on a corner of the ceiling.

[And travelers now within that valley,

Through the red-litten windows, see

Vast forms that move fantastically

To a discordant melody;

While, like a rapid ghastly river,

Through the pale door,

A hideous throng rush out forever,

And laugh—but smile no more.]

"Side Quest, completed." The system’s voice arose.

Feng Bujue sighed then said, "Alright, the magic formation is destroyed now, and the room has been restored. We will soon find the way out."

"Well, it’d better if we just jump off from this window since it’s so difficult to find one!" Wang Tanzhi said.

"You jump then." Feng Bujue picked up the body of Madeleine from the ground and walked to the door. "Good luck!"

SCP Foundation: The SCP Foundation is a fictional organization that is the subject of a web-based collaborative writing project of the same name.

Whipping Corpse: Beating on the dead body.

Chapter 45: They Mountain Pool and the Haunted Mansion (12)

It was unexpectedly smooth as they proceeded to get out of the place. After the formation was broken, the Usher's House had been restored to a normal mansion. On their way back, they could see a clear transformation as all the paintings that were hung on the walls now had become ugly doodles, just like a mess of colorful graffiti. Also, the illusion and displacing space had all disappeared. They soon reached the main door at the living room on the first floor.

This time, Longao Min only needed to kick the doors once to push it open. A gust of cold wind slapped their faces right when the doors were opened. Even if the outside was a world of snow and ice, the five of them wouldn't stay in the house for any longer.

The system's voice arose when their group was walking out of the main entrance. "Current Quest, completed. Main Quest, completed."

Feng Bujue was carrying the corpse of Madeleine and only him could hear the system's notification that said, "[Hidden Quest] completed."

"Oh, so I just need to bring her out of the house." As he was saying that, he put Madeleine's body on the ground.

Not long after that, the corpse started to decay with a speed that could be seen by naked eyes. Soon, it turned into a skeleton and,

just seconds after, her remains perished into dust.

A mist of dust drifted away, dissolving in the scarlet sky.

"You've finished the scenario. Automatic teleportation in 180 seconds."

"Pleasure to work together." Dispirited tenderly smiled.

"Yeah, my pleasure," Feng Bujue replied.

Longao Min stretched his back, took a deep breath then said, "Phew. This scenario was too frustrating. Such a scary game! I think my Fear Rating would be pretty bad."

"Long-Ge, you have even thought about the Fear Rating? I was 'shaking like a leaf' and 'body and soul separated' all the time! Maybe I got one time 'freaking out'!" said Little Tan.

"See you," Like Rain deliberately said then patted Dispirited's shoulder in signaling her to leave. Then, she immediately disappeared from their sights.

Dispirited waved at the other three, "Bye bye." She then turned to Little Tan and snappingly said, "Hey, thanks for your flashlight."

Little Tan didn't have the time to answer since she had disappeared into a white halo and teleported away.

Feng Bujue said, "We should go now to see the calculation for the rewards and play the next scenario."

Longao Min said, "Feng-Ge, I'll call it a night here. My time setup is 11:40. Before you got online, I'd been playing for ten hours. This scenario took three hours more. If I continue to play, I will have a headache for sure when I get up tomorrow."

"Oh, yeah," Feng Bujue said, "Long-Ge, you should log out first, we will continue."

Feng Bujue, Wang Tanzhi, and Longao Min said goodbye and the three of them then all left the scenario.

The autumn wind swept through the mansion that stood next to a mountain pool. This world was still dreary, forlorn, and quiet.

The Blood Moon descended from the sky. At the darkest moment before dawn, the main door of the Usher's House, once again, was closed by an invisible force.

...

Longao Min just simply glared at his reward calculation then logged out. He could take the rewards at any time before he started a new scenario. It was alright leaving the rewards in the login space. The screen displayed him leaving the team as his screen name in their friend list became gray.

Feng Bujue hadn’t checked his rewards yet as he noticed two friend requests. He touched the screen to see. Indeed, they were from Like Rain and Dispirited Laughing Bones.

At the same time, Wang Tanzhi’s excited voice arose in his team channel, "Jue-Ge!"

"I know, they sent you friend requests." Feng Bujue said directly.

"How did you know that?" Little Tan asked, "ah, right, they sent you friend requests too."

"It’s easy to guess from your excited voice," Feng Bujue said, "What is there to be excited then?"

"They’re pretty girls who actively requested you to be their friend, aren’t you excited?" Wang Tanzhi answered him with a brave, straightforward tone.

"You are considered a handsome, tall and rich guy, how come you are that superficial?" Feng Bujue said, "And, even if they are ugly in reality, they can be beautiful in the game."

"Jue-Ge, if you keep thinking that way, you will be alone forever!"

"There’s a question mark on how long my life would be. Do I

really need to consider being lonely or not lonely?" Feng Bujue said, "Moreover, since I was 10 years old, I have confirmed that I should consider everything around me in the worst aspects. That's how I could calmly deal with anything." He was very tranquil when he said those things. "Didn't you see how calm I was when my parents passed away and when I knew I got an incurable disease?"

"A... Ha ha... Alright..." Little Tan's mouth twitched as he couldn't snap back.

"Anyway, that superwoman looks really cool. Just from her fighting ability and what she had performed, I can confirm that she's stronger than Long-Ge," Feng Bujue said while accepting the friend requests. "In this stage, the number of players we could meet is limited. Up to now, she is the strongest player that I've ever met."

"Do you want to team up and play with them in our next scenario?" Wang Tanzhi said.

"Of course not," Feng Bujue said, "I've just said that we can only meet a limited number of players, and your suggestion will make it harder for us to meet new players."

"Ah, true," Wang Tanzhi said, "with the team of four, we can only meet two new members max. Or, we couldn't even meet anyone new."

"I'm going check out my rewards. When I'm ready, I will call you.

Let’s take a break," Feng Bujue said.

"Understood," Wang Tanzhi said, "I also need to check my rewards."

...

At the same time, at Like Rain’s login space, she was talking with the Dispirited Laughing Bones.

"Cousin, they all accepted our friend requests. Yeah, Long-Ge logged out after he accepted it," said Dispirited.

"Same," said Like Rain.

"Nah, nah, cousin, you knew it already?" Dispirited asked.

"You mentioned that Feng Bujue guy?"

"Yes. He’s a novelist, and his name includes ‘Bujue’. Moreover, he said that he wasn’t famous. All match with the other Bujue."

"Maybe. But the nickname in the game can’t be a trustful basis," Like Rain said, "anyway, he had self-proclaimed as ‘the Great Author’, this matched Bujue’s style. And, when I asked him whether he was a novelist, it was his friend who answered me. Thus, we can’t confirm that he’s a novelist."

"Ha ha, what if it’s true?" Dispirited laughed slyly.

"If it’s true, so what? Why are you laughing?" Like Rain answered.

"Cousin, aren’t you his fan? Isn’t befriending with idols the dream of every fan?"

"I just like his novels," Like Rain answered with a calm tone that didn’t look like she was explaining anything, "I know nothing about him. Why should I follow the ‘idol’ theory?" She paused for a while then continued, "Moreover, if it’s true as what you’ve said, I shouldn’t befriend him or get to know him."

Dispirited was contentedly thoughtful in her own login space. "Yeah. So, admiration is understanding the feelings from a long distance?"

"Did you think that if you said that with a serious tone, I wouldn’t know that you have cited Lan Ran?" Like Rain spoke with a cold voice, exposing Dispirited without any mercy.

"Hm, whether he is an idol or not, he isn’t my idol. Well, perhaps he didn’t notice you since you’ve modified your face to be uglier. Sigh." Dispirited stuck her tongue out although her cousin couldn’t see her.

"I don’t want to get attentions from others. But, currently, it failed." Like Rain said, "Showing off your strong capacity will draw

up many attentions and friend requests. Regretfully, I can't change it back after I'd finished one scenario. If not, I would modify my face to be the ugliest and that could save me from any harassments."

...

Order Studio's lounge.

The Invincible Hero was drinking coffee with an upset countenance. He had completed his sleep mode shift. After taking a rest for one hour, he would enter the game using the non-sleep mode.

"What happened? You'd been screwed in the scenario, Invincible-Ge?" A skinny teenager around 16 or 17 years old came and sat on the couch next to him. This young man was also a member of the studio. His game ID was [The Valiant Ghost Devouring Heaven].

Members of the studio also used their screen names in their working place since they had fixed screen name IDs for all the games they had participated. It's like their employee codes. Top studios like the 'Order' wouldn't worry that their nicknames weren't available when registering one game as they all logged in the game before it came to the Open Beta stage. Sometimes, they did pay the game producers to reserve those IDs for them.

"A... It's okay. I was dead due to my own mistakes. After that, I immediately entered another scenario. When I finished the second scenario, I found that the scenario, which I was dead in, had been

completed by three noobs and the other two female players. I'd gotten nothing, not even a point of EXP. This means my contribution in that scenario was too little."

"What happened?" Valiant Ghost asked.

"I've thought about it," Invincible Hero said, "I hope it wasn't 'disguising in pig cloth and eat the tiger' thing. That amateur 'Feng Bujue' ranked level 11 could pretend to be dumb to fool me and make me act alone."

"Ah, understood. At first, you were afraid that the others would hold you back; and finally, you found that you were just superfluous," said Valiant Ghost.

"Boy, whose side are you on?" Invincible Hero scolded.

"Ha ha... Alright, I won't say anything more," Valiant Ghost laughed and got up, "I'm going home to sleep."

"What? You've done your shift?" asked Invincible Hero.

"Nope, the manager asked me to stop training for one day. He gave me one day off." Valiant Ghost answered.

"What the heck? How many days have you been playing for them to give you a day off?" Invincible Hero opened his eyes wider, "you've reached level 20?"

"Fifteen." Valiant Ghost shrugged. "Well, the story is, I killed Fearless-Ge and the other two in the [Slaughter Game]. They complained to the manager that I didn’t cooperate well with them to increase the specialty grades," he laughed then continued, "sigh, adults nowadays... can’t accept the fact that they are losers."

Lan Ran: Sōsuke Aizen is a fictional character and the main antagonist for most of the first half of the manga series Bleach (and the most significant one for the entirety of the anime adaptation) created by Tite Kubo. He is the captain of the Fifth Division when he is first introduced, but later betrays the Soul Society and becomes the series' main antagonist, before Ichigo Kurosaki and Kisuke Urahara defeat him. His former lieutenant is Momo Hinamori.

Chapter 46: Intermission (9)

[Scenario completed. Calculating for rewards...]

[EXP: 1650]

[Game Coins: 16500]

[Items received: None]

[Completed/Received Quests: 2/2]

[Completed Special, [Hidden Quest]: 2]

[Worldview Unlocked: None]

[Fear Value surged: 0 times.

Highest Fear Value: 0%

Average Fear Value: 0%]

[Your Fear Rating: A whole sack of guts. This first rank grants you a bonus. Please select later.]

[Skill Value received: 90]

[EXP increased by Skill Value: 900

Game coins received from Skill Value: 9000]

[Rewards for completing the scenario: Skill Card x 1 pcs]

[Rewards from Side Quest: extra EXP of 1000 points]

[Rewards from [Hidden Quest]: A random item at excellent quality]

[Calculating completed. Please continue]

Feng Bujue read through his calculations of the rewards. He didn't level up after this scenario as it was still level 11. Anyway, his EXP now was 4900/11000, and he got 77000 coins. It seemed that his anxiety about leveling up too fast before was superfluous. In fact, he was still far from being fast enough.

The EXP he gained this time was quite satisfactory. In Multiplayer Survival Mode, the extra EXP and game coins one could receive from his Skill Value were 10 times and 100 times of the Skill Value itself respectively. And, in Single-player Survival Mode, they were just twice and 10 more times. Big difference. Also, the duration of the scenario would determine the EXP players could receive. For example, this scenario was one hour longer than the other scenario that Feng Bujue had experienced. Although the difficulty level wasn't high (The proportion of fighting in these

low-level scenarios wasn't too difficult to Feng Bujue), the EXP he gained was a little bit higher than the other scenarios.

Even so, the EXP he received in this scenario wasn't enough for him to level up. Without breaking the worldview, he had to play four or five multiplayer scenarios of normal difficulty level in order to break through one level.

Thus, it wasn't easy for the members of those studios. Since the server had been opened at 8:00 AM, April 4th and now it was 00:00 AM of April 6th, which meant 40 hours in real time, had passed by. If it was to be arranged into two different playing modes and deduct the time they had to log out, those players had to stay in the game and struggle for roughly five days to reach level 20.

Feng Bujue had spent less than 10 hours in this virtual world of the game. If compared with the professional gamers, he was just taking the beginning steps.

"Yeah, I'd better take EXP at this moment," Feng Bujue muttered, "Little Tan is still one or two levels behind me. Anyway, when the Open Beta is released, he can buy EXP and items. Soon he'll catch up with me." He continued, "After level 11, leveling up is relatively slow. It means nothing with the difference of five levels in Closed Beta stage. The gap between players at level 10 and level 15 are just 500 points of Stamina Value. If we have items, we can improve our capacities shortly. Anyway, seems developing specialties and skills is a good long-term strategy. Just like—" the image of Like Rain holding the sword and flying and slashing appeared in his mind, "her level isn't much higher than me, but her fighting skill... She must have her Fighting Specialty graded D!"

When he came to this point, Feng Bujue opened his menu to take a look at his Specialties. After another scenario, he got Common E, Weapon F, Investigating E, Fighting E, and Shooting F. His Curing Specialty was still locked.

In short, besides Shooting, his other four F graded Specialties had been leveled up.

[Grade E: Poor, entry level. When player reaches this grade, all skills could have a success rate of 40% in launching]

Up to now, besides Curing Specialty, Feng Bujue had experienced a little bit of the other Specialties. However, none of them was outstanding. This put a question mark on his fighting ability.

Besides, his title of the [Mad Cold-blooded Headshot] hadn't changed after this scenario as his special skill was still the [Cerebral Concussion].

After he read through the calculation, he then moved to the metal room outside his elevator booth. At this time, there were three glass columns in the room. They were the random rewards for completing the scenario, the optional rewards from his Fear Rating, and the item from the [Hidden Quest].

He came to the column of the optional rewards first. The system's voice immediately resounded.

"Please select your reward: One, a random item that suits your level. Two, 50000 coins (max). Three, 4400 EXP."

"Seems after level 10, the rating of the whole sack of guts still rewards 50000 coins," Feng Bujue mumbled.

At this stage where game coins were useless, and the exchange rate between game coins and RMB wasn't clear, he shouldn't choose coins. He then determinedly picked EXP. After he got this 40% of EXP, Feng Bujue's EXP now was 9300/11000. Just another scenario and he could reach level 12.

Next, he walked to the glass column for the reward from completing the scenario, and then took out a random Skill Card. Feng Bujue read the skill's properties from his menu.

[Name: The Lower Side Kick of a Brat]

[Skill Card's attributes: Active skill. Disappear after being used three times]

[Skill Type: Fighting]

[Effects: Ignore the specialties. Make 100% mobs, which can trip in theory, trip over. It also provokes them to make you their target.]

[Consumption: 100 points of Stamina Value]

[Learning conditions: Fighting Grade F or level 10 and above]

[Remarks: those are 3000 sidekicks of the Mischievous Blue Cat!]

"What the..." Feng Bujue gazed at that skill card for a long while. The awkward name and the remarks made people don't want to look at it. However, this skill seemed to be more powerful than what it appeared on paper.

Feng Bujue contemplated that it would be better to equip the skill as this kind of stuff could contain something weird, and it wasn't the type of item that he could sell in Open Beta. And, Feng Bujue didn't have the guts to give it to other people.

He then learned the skill. Now he could have an active skill that could be used in fighting. Next, he came to the last glass column in the room in hope that unfortunate streak wouldn't continue.

In fact, he had that bad premonition again. On the rewards calculation, the rewards from [Hidden Quest] read that 'a random item of excellent quality'. It didn't say that 'suits with your level'. This meant that he could have a good item, but it was not sure if he could equip it now.

The white halo materialized into something looked like a belt. The first thought flickered in Feng Bujue's mind was, this could be the Batman's tool belt! But he was wrong! This one was even much stronger.

[Name: Echo Armor]

[Type: Defending item]

[Quality: Excellent]

[Defending power: Quite strong]

[Attributes: Buffered]

[Special effects: None]

[Equipment requirements: Common Grade C or Weapon Grade D]

[Remarks: After he heard some whispers from Black Bolt, Dr. Doom had used this powerful energy to fabricate this item. User could have an invisible 'sound' armor.]

This item was strong. Unfortunately, currently, Feng Bujue couldn't wear it. However, he still put it in his bag. Anyway, his Weapon Specialty was graded E now, and in the next scenario, he could upgrade it to D. Then, he could put it on immediately.

Recently, his bag capacity was 7/10 with the following items: the [Mario's Pipe Wrench], the [Eye of Hatred], the [Western Chef Knife], [Baseball Bat], [Flashlight], [M1911A1 Pistol] and the [Echo Armor].

He was wearing the [Dance of the Knight] on his feet, so they didn’t take up a slot in his bag. The number of items he had stored in the login space didn’t change as there was still an extra flashlight and a piece of [Jigsaw Puzzle Card: Monkey]

After he had received all the rewards and bonuses, he arranged them neatly in his bag. When Feng Bujue had returned to the booth, he called Wang Tanzhi. Little Tan let Wang Tanzhi be the captain as they teamed up. They then wanted to enter the second Multiplayer Survival Mode scenario of tonight.

Mischievous Blue Cat: 3000 Whys of Blue Cat is the first large-scale Chinese animated series-American-Canadian in mainland China with an emphasis on science. The series is produced by "Beijing Sunchime Happy Culture Company". The show remains one of the longest running children's cartoon series in the world. It is most commonly referred to as "Lan Mao", or "Blue Cat". An English version was made for the first episode titled "The Adventures of the Blue Cat" and was made as a pilot for a series titled Lucky's Adventures but due to lack of interest, the series was cancelled.

Black Bolt: (Blackagar Boltagon) is a fictional character appearing in American comic books published by Marvel Comics. Created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, the character first appears in Fantastic Four #45 (December 1965). Black Bolt is the ruler of the Inhumans, a reclusive race of genetically altered superhumans. Black Bolt's signature power is his voice, as his electron-harnessing ability is linked to the speech center of his brain.

Dr. Doom: Doctor Victor Von Doom (or simply Doctor Doom) is a fictional character appearing in American comic books published by Marvel Comics. The son of Romani witch Cynthia Von Doom, Doctor Doom traditionally has been the archenemy of the

Fantastic Four, and the leader of the fictional nation of Latveria. He is both a genius inventor and a sorcerer. While his chief opponents have been the Fantastic Four, he has also come into conflict with Iron Man, the Avengers and other superheroes in the Marvel Universe.

Chapter 47: The Peerless Garlic (1)

[Feng Bujue, level 11]

Wang Tanzhi, level 11]

[Please select playing mode for your team.]

[You've selected Multiplayer Survival Mode (Normal), please confirm.]

[Your team is on Multiplayer Survival Mode (Normal). Random number of members of your party is generated: 6 players.]

[Your team is entering the party. Searching for other ready teams or individuals.]

[Searching completed. Adjusting nervous system connection. Generating scenario...]

[Loading...Please wait...]

"Welcome to Thriller Paradise." The greeting this time was a middle-aged man's voice. Moreover, he was lisping.

[Loading completed. You are playing Multiplayer Survival Mode (Normal).]

[This mode offers an explanation of the plot. There are chances of Side/[Hidden Quests], together with special Worldview.]

[Rewards for completing the scenario: 100% EXP to level up when calculating for rewards.]

[Plot’s introduction is about to play. After the introduction, the game will start immediately.]

Feng Bujue saw that the scene soon turned into the first person view computer graphic images. It looked like the opening scene from Call of Duty.

On the screen, he was ‘landing’ from the sky. However, he didn’t wear any military uniform as it was still the system default black T-shirt and a pair of trousers. In front of him was the clear blue sky with warm sunny weather.

His vision then shifted downwards as he saw the picture of a modern city with skyscrapers jutted from the ground like a dense forest underneath.

The system’s voice and the subtitle played together: "You are a member of a search and rescue team. Your mission in this city is to find and rescue a member of the Allerbmu Corporation—Doctor Ashford. However, your chopper got a serious problem that you and your other five teammates had lost all communication devices and heavy weapons while parachuting. Moreover, you guys are scattered throughout the city."

"What the heck is Allerbmu? Isn’t it just 'Umbrella' spelled backwards?" Feng Bujue read the subtitle and said, "The name of this city, didn’t they just turn the word Raccoon City in English backward and transformed it into pinyin?"

"An unknown virus is spreading and raging throughout this Nooccar City."

"Wow, it does!"

"This type of extremely dangerous virus is called ‘Z’. It has the four prominent features, which are, 100% infectious, 100% fatal, and it can be transmitted through mucosa and all kinds of human fluids. However, it can’t be spread out in air and water."

"Crap! Just said it’s the T-virus, what the heck is Z? Who can’t tell what kind of crap this scenario is?"

"All who got infected have turned into the Blood-sucking Werewolf Zombie."

"Oh wow!" Suddenly, Feng Bujue was dumbstruck as a rotten figure flashed in his mind.

"This kind of monsters possess abilities and habits different from a normal zombie. However, they have the best features of a Werewolf and Vampire. Thus, they are called the ‘Bloody Zombie Wolf’."

"What?"

"Silver weapons could harm the Bloody Zombie Wolf's body. Saliva with garlic could create a certain threat to them. Their intelligence and mobility are pretty low. You can kill them by beheading them or hitting them on the nape."

"Doesn't it mean that they are more fragile than a normal zombie? What kind of setting is that?!"

"The Bloody Zombie Wolves are afraid of sunlight, however, sunlight itself can't cause substantial damages to them. They have a strong sense of smell, and they have certain reactions to sound and flash. Their desire of eating flesh and their digestion system are not related. Although they have lost their chins, esophagus, stomachs or other related organs, they will still tear off their preys and eat them. All living humans are their targets."

This CG opening was relatively long. Perhaps it took time as players were landing from the sky. After the short introduction, the last image depicted was Feng Bujue having descended on the rooftop of a street shop.

One second later, Feng Bujue's vision and the image were matched as he officially entered the game. There was no parachute or strings on him. It seemed that the system had removed the entanglement for the players. It's good that he didn't need to spend time on taking it off.

"Main Quest is triggered." The system’s voice arose immediately.

At this moment, the six players had been scattered throughout the map of the scenario before the game started, and this was the first time Feng Bujue had ever experienced this situation. He opened his menu to check the contents of the Main Quest. It read, [Search and get inside the Allerbmu Corporation’s Building, find Doctor Ashford.]

Next, he checked the Party Menu. There were five nicknames in the list, including [Wang Tanzhi], [The Peerless General Pan Feng], [The Executioner Hua Xiong], [The Name Is Difficult To Choose], and [Young Master Ji Bu].

Feng Bujue thought, "Pan Feng and Hua Xiong are from the same team, and there are only male players in this scenario."

"A… —" Suddenly, a faint groan arose behind Feng Bujue.

Feng Bujue turned around and saw something. Alright, it was a Bloody Zombie Wolf, who was limping to him.

This thing appeared with a furry body, except for its arms and face, which was smoothly glowing. Fangs were bared from its vampire’s mouth on a human face. Besides, it had some special features of a zombie, which were some terrible open wounds and the decomposing limbs.

That monster was moving very slowly. Or perhaps being exposed

under the sun had caused its movement to become slower. Moreover, the monster was too dumb as it had exposed itself with the meaningless whine.

Feng Bujue eyed the zombie from an angle of 45 degrees. Then, he moved half a circle around the monster to get behind its back.

For the monster, it continued to limp heavily, turning around to face Feng Bujue again as it feebly groaned and started to approach him.

"Super slow." Feng Bujue didn’t take any weapons out of his bag as he didn’t even bother to kill this mob. He headed to the exit to get out of this rooftop.

The Bloody Zombie Wolf behind him was still approaching, but its speed was much slower than Feng Bujue’s regular walking pace.

Feng Bujue opened the door, leaving the place through a staircase. Although he was despising the capacity of the mobs in this scenario, he was still very alert to observe the scene behind the door before coming in. When he was about to leave, Feng Bujue didn’t forget to close the door.

The staircase led to a small restaurant. The kitchen was opposite to the bar. Next to the street side window stood a line of tables, and there were also some seats near the bar. Some leftovers were left on some tables, including sandwiches, fries, bacon and fried eggs. At this moment, they had become a delicious meal for flies.

When Feng Bujue was observing the scene, he heard a faint grunt.

"Ah—" There was another Bloody Zombie Wolf on the bar. Its upper body leaned against the oven while the lower part of its body had been eaten up. Stuff inside its intestines was poured on the ground. Seeing Feng Bujue appear near it, the mob rose one arm, waving at him and making some weird sounds as if it was telling him ‘come to the bowl!’

Feng Bujue didn’t pay attention to this dude as he looked at the road outside the window, as far as his vision allowed him to see. There were some Bloody Zombie Wolves wandering on the street, but they all hid under the shade of the buildings. Moreover, their movements were very slow.

"Yeah, they don’t look dangerous. I should do some experiments." He hauled out the wrench and then came to the storage. Two minutes later, he came back with a basket of garlic.

Feng Bujue put the basket on the counter and took out one garlic bulb. He put the wrench away and took out the chef knife, peeled off a clove, put it in his mouth and started to chew.

In Thriller Paradise, whenever a player had eaten something, the flavors and tastes were the same with that in reality. Moreover, if they ate much, they would have a feeling that they wanted to **. Anyway, there was nothing put in their stomachs in reality. The feeling of ** just appeared in their mind through the delusion created by the system through the nervous connection.

When the spicy heat had spread over his tongue, Feng Bujue immediately came to the bar counter and approached the Bloody Zombie Wolf on the oven. It seemed that it had lost its desire for eating human flesh. The annoying smell of garlic worked.

Feng Bujue despicably came forward; when he was about one meter away from the mob, he stretched his neck and blew his breath to the zombie, "Hah~~~"

That monster then started to use its arms to crawl on the ground in an attempt to get away from Feng Bujue.

"Ha, ha. This scenario is truly a heaven." Feng Bujue showed great excitement on his face. He had decided to play as much as he pleased in this city.

Chapter 48: The Peerless Garlic (2)

‘Professional gamer’ sounds like a dream job. Being able to play and make it a career with income and fame, who has never thought about it?

In 2055, this has become a profession that has received approval from society. Top hotshots in this field and famous athletes have the same influence.

Professional gamers are 14 to 35 years old. Of course, there are players who are much younger. However, the age restriction has prevented them from playing some games.

Thus, professional gamers can be divided into two types, superstar players and regular worker players.

Generally, superstar players would choose to retire at their thirties. They could change to the amateur section or to the semi-professional section. However, most of the time, all of what they’ve done is to prepare for their manager positions in the studios. Also, they could work on other sections of the field, including narrators, referees or organizers, etc. Earning more could help them soon become the boss.

When people join this field, they all want to become superstar players. Even so, many people have joined the game industry since they had just graduated from high school. However, they still got nothing when they are in their thirties. Eventually, they have to quit and find other ways to make a living. It could be said that

those people are gambling using their youth. Gain or loss, only they would know. They are not superstars; they are just the blue-collar workers in this field. However, they are the backbones of the industry. Without them, those studios can't even move as the superstar players also need those players to support them.

In this industry, there's a component that gives people grudges, which is the dreadful competitiveness.

No matter what kind of game it is, if it wants to be well-known instantly, it must have 'competitions'. In a game, if there was no way to differentiate the level between two players or two groups of players, basically, this game can't attract any studios as their attraction to a large number of players was limited too.

To many people who play online games, it's okay if they don't join any e-sport competition. They just need to play with mobs, train to level up or find more equipment, also PK to determine the winners. These can satisfy them.

The only clearest and simplest way for professional gamers to prove their values was consisted in only one word—Win.

Unfortunately, there's only instant Yu Liang and never be the Ever-victorious General. No one could always win.

Aging, unstable status in e-sport, the descending of some games, etc., those factors could dim the light of the hotshots who once became the 'Gods'. There are not many hotshots who could return safely from their peak time.

In the top rank studios, the competitions are even more merciless as they only need the youth for the main forces. They need a group of high-maintaining status in playing games, the competitive mindset, and new faces of hotshots. Those people could always drag a ‘God’ off his altar at any time.

Simply speaking, they are the geniuses with dark ambitions. For example, the Valiant Ghost Devouring Heaven.

This time, the Order Studio had assigned four groups to play Thriller Paradise. Each group had 10 players with two hotshots, and the others were the experienced worker players.

The Valiant Ghost Devouring Heaven was the only one who was under 20 years old among the players of the whole four groups.

The Order Studio had high expectations in him, and thus, he was assigned to be one of the first players entering the Thriller Paradise. The manager didn’t give him any tasks. He just needed to play as he pleased. Unexpectedly, in a killing mode’s scenario, he had killed the group of four, including the Fearless Hero. His deed was self-willed that made him deserve a ‘day off’.

Anyway, the Fearless Hero wasn’t actually ranked the ‘strongest’ player. In Order Studio, there were many famous hotshots. Talking about the games they had played in the past, Fearless Hero wasn’t in the top 10. Although he had led one group to reach the fame of the first player getting to level 20 in Closed Beta stage, the true capacity of the Order Studio was more profound than that.

Those current four groups were considered the ‘reclaiming team’. The strongest gamers in Order Studio had registered, set up their nickname and didn’t go online since. In other words, the true hotshots of the Order Studio hadn’t been assigned to this project at this stage. The managers of this studio soon had a decision as they just let their workers play and wait for Dream Inc. to announce their exchange rate and other expenses. Then, they would consider whether to engage their hotshots in this game or not.

Well, I’m talking too much. Maybe I’m distracting you. How could he drag us to here? Where is what ? Where’s the Nooccar City scenario?

Okay, be patient. I will use three details to bring you back to the story.

Talking about studios, in Feng Bujue’s scenario this time, there were members that came from one of those studios.

Nevertheless, he didn’t belong to such a big clan of the Order Studio. He was one of the third-class studios’ boss that I’ve mentioned, who was the manager, the accountant and the player at the same time.

He was [Young Master Ji Bu]

Alright, I think you guys could guess it. Yeah, his studio is called ‘Ice Emperor’.

In reality, Young Master Ji Bu was just 23 years old this year. He had graduated from university last year. His father had a shop that helped him acquire some savings for him to open a studio. The budget for a studio wasn't so high. He just needed to rent an office and buy some game cabins. He didn't need to worry about the personnel since they were all his brothers during his schooldays.

Moreover, Young Master Ji Bu now just managed three workers and one of them was with him now in this scenario, which was [The Name Is Difficult To Choose]. The other two took the names of [Naming Is Difficult] and [It's Difficult To Name]. Although Young Master Ji Bu had asked them to seriously choose some nickname like Zhu Ruhua or Oshitari, he got denied. And, when his employees got threatened, he got 'Aruba'.

Their studio also understood that they had to take turns and play in shifts. Thus, they had two teams. Currently, the other two were in their rest time and went out for dinner.

Young Master Ji Bu appeared in the game as a slender, soft white young man. His general appearance and the real appearance weren't much different, however, it was obvious that his face was modified.

[The Name Is Difficult To Choose] was a medium height man, a little bit shorter than Ji Bu. This guy's image in the game and his nickname gave people a feeling of seeing a messy man since he hadn't adjusted his appearance to be handsome; instead, he modified himself to be a bald man as he told them that he wanted to experience the feeling of having a bald head.

Young Master Ji Bu's title was a system's malicious ridicule. He was called [The Swordsman]. His weapon was a saber that looked like a popular weapon from the days of martial arts chivalry, but the weapon's quality was just normal without any attributes or special effects. Anyway, it was still a decent weapon.

It was much different from the Young Master Ji Bu's title that The Name Is Difficult To Choose's title got a high degree to be easy to recognize, [Strong Outside, Weak Inside]. The cool image of a bald guy was pretty contrary with his bright-colored bar of Fear Value. This guy didn't even have a decent weapon as he only got two baseball bats and a rusted steel pipe in his bag. It was also unknown where he got them.

They were lucky enough as their locations were just a square apart from each other. Soon, they had found their teammates.

These two didn't look trustworthy, however, they had some special features; if they knew nothing about the game, then why did they open a studio? Thus, Young Master Ji Bu had made a correct decision, which was to find a mall and arm themselves first.

At the first glance of this city's situation, they knew that the scenario had the plot taken place in the United States. Thus, there was 80% chance that there were guns stores somewhere in the urban area, although there was obviously no intimidating heavy hot weapons—shotguns, standard pistols, rifles, etc., and especially ample ammunition were much valuable.

The two of them had been walking forward. They often met groups of three or five wandering Bloody Zombie Wolves, however, those mobs couldn't threaten them. If they didn't want to fight, they could always avoid the mobs. In case they couldn't avoid them, they just hit them one or two strikes on the head. Even though those monsters were a little bit faster when the victims came into their biting range, they just needed to be careful and not let themselves converged by more than three zombies, and they could even kill them more easily.

After they had crossed two blocks, Young Master Ji Bu got into a public telephone booth and picked up the phone. The line was different, but it still worked. Anyway, he didn't know whom he should call. 911? Actually, he came there for the phone book. After three or five minutes, he successfully found the address of the nearest gun store. The Name Is Difficult To Choose, and he (I decided to call him Little Name from now on) walked faster towards the store.

Another 10 minutes had passed by and they approached their target. However, they spotted a strange scene.

They saw around 30 bodies of the Bloody Zombie Wolves. Each body was pounded to a pulp, lining up all the way to the front of the gun store.

On the street in front of the shop under the broad daylight stood a big cylindrical drum with some funny stickers on it. The drum was filled with a strange, red liquid. There were so many plastic blood bags scattered on the ground next to the drum. This heavy, dense, and distinctive smell of fresh blood could be recognized

from a far distance even with an ordinary human nose.

There were two massive speakers placed next to the ‘barrel of blood’, which were playing ‘the Bullfighters March’. Evident scratch marks that resulted from dragging heavy objects appeared from the musical instruments shop across the street to here. Laid on the sidewalk was an open circuit box. The situation inside wasn’t clear, but there were cords connected from there…

"What’s going on?" asked Little Name.

Young Master Ji Bu didn’t know anything. However, as he hadn’t answered his friend yet, a Bloody Zombie Wolf had flung out from a turn behind the blood barrel.

Right after that, a man, whose whole body was covered with blood, came out from that place. He was holding a sharp knife in one hand and a wrench in his other hand. There were strings of garlic on his back and shoulders, which were dangling across his chest, making an X. Those garlic bulbs were also dyed red with blood.

He was dancing along with the Bullfighter March; his dance moves were like the dance of the Axe Gang in Kungfu Hustle. He was chewing something white in his mouth that looked like chewing gum. That man danced along the way to where the Bloody Zombie Wolf was laying. Then, he started to madly pound on that poor mob’s head until the skull was smashed and its brain was scattered everywhere.

After he had destroyed the monster, he seemed to notice something. He suddenly got up and turned his head to see the dumbstruck, motionless bodies of the Young Master Ji Bu and Little Name.

"Run!" "Get away from there!" The two of them and Feng Bujue gazed at each other for two seconds then screamed simultaneously. They immediately ran away.

Feng Bujue didn’t say anything, chasing after them. In fact, he really wanted to shout, "Run away my ass! I’m a player!" However, his mouth was stuffed with garlic as he couldn’t raise his voice to shout.

On the other side, seeing the mad killer with his sturdy body running after them, Little Name’s Fear Value surged immediately. He told Young Master Ji Bu while running, "Done. Done. We’re done! This guy’s going to kill us. It’s your fault. Why do you need to find the gun store? Of course they will set up a small BOSS here!"

Young Master Ji Bu turned his head to check from time to time and saw Feng Bujue was coming closer. "It wasn’t me! How could I know this situation could occur?" He glared back again. "And, this guy is running much faster than we are running for our lives."

"I knew it! Faster!" Little Name screamed.

Feng Bujue was just 20 meters behind them, so he could overhear their convo. He thought, nonsense, your daddy have [The Dance of

the Knight] on my feet, you two brats dare to run with me?

Unexpectedly, at this moment, the two people running ahead of him suddenly shouted in union, "Split up!"

When they met a cross, each of them immediately took a different turn and tried to flee away.

Feng Bujue screamed in his mind, crap, these assholes have tactics!

He didn’t think too much; he just took the left turn and continued chasing after one of them.

It was Young Master Ji Bu.

"No good. He didn’t hesitate at all!" Young Master Ji Bu mumbled, "The shiny bald head is prominent. Why didn't he chase him instead of me? It’s absolutely my handsome appearance!"

Seeing Feng Bujue was coming closer, Young Master Ji Bu’s Fear Value was increasing. He understood that he would get caught soon. He’d better confront this Little BOSS rather than to get hit from behind and die.

Upon his thoughts, he immediately stopped, raised his saber, and swept it over Feng Bujue who was dashing with high speed towards him.

"Ouch!" When Feng Bujue rushed to him, Young Master Ji Bu found that his saber was paused as the system had stopped his action.

Feng Bujue walked to the front of him, ceased and panted, "I... ha... ha... ha... I... I'm... your... teammate! You –beep-!"

The system had censored the word 'idiot'. Theoretically, Feng Bujue couldn't interpret this word into utterance. However, the censor sound appeared, which meant when he was saying that, he didn't mean any insults to his teammate. It was like a slip of a tongue.

"What?" Young Master Ji Bu then crouched on the ground as his face paled and his mouth convulsed. "Agh, haha. Yeah, sorry bro," he actually apologized to him.

PK: Player Kill, Which is used most often for online games such as MMORPG's.

Yu Liang: two remarkable persons living at the same period, which was the Three Kingdoms period. They are Zhuge Liang and Zhou Yu, a chancellor and a general respectively.

Ice Emperor: Ji Bu was the name of a character in Prince of Tennis, who possessed a technique called 'World of Ice'. That's why he came up the name 'the Ice Emperor'.

Aruba: Taiwanese word for 'Happy Corner'. A form of ritual corporal punishment usually enacted in Hong Kong among male university students. 3 to 4 "executioners" carry their victim by their arms and legs; then part the victim's legs, and swing them, so their groin area is subjected to bumping against a pole or corner

(not violently). This is not meant to hurt the victim but can be used maliciously by friends or enemies alike. It may take more than 5 minutes occasionally until the executioners are satisfied. Sometimes it is called "to Bring Joy" and can be used for a victim's birthday, with "Happy Birthday" being sung to the individual while it being inflicted upon them.

Axe Gang: the gang in Kungfu Hustle by Stephen Chow. They have some scenes of their special dance moves in the movie.

Chapter 49: The Peerless Garlic (3)

Knowing that Feng Bujue didn’t chase him and since no one was running behind him, Little Name slowed down. Seconds later, he finally stopped and looked around and saw Feng Bujue was racing after Young Master Ji Bu. He thought that Ji Bu was about to die, but it turned out that those two people didn’t even fight.

Two minutes later, the two of them then walked shoulder by shoulder. Young Master Ji Bu even waved at Little Name, indicating that he was fine.

Soon, the three of them returned to the street in front of the gun store. Feng Bujue turned off the speakers and talked to them, "Thus, after some experiments, I discovered some special features of those Bloody Zombie Wolves."

"Although the narrator had mentioned them at the CG introduction, I did combine my practical situation to check."

"First, they feel irritated with the smell of garlic, just like when we experience tear gas. Garlic has some effects, but if you chew it, your stinky smell is much better."

"Hey Da-Ge, I have something to ask. You’re covered with blood, aren’t you afraid of being infected?" Little Name asked while glaring at Feng Bujue’s bloody body and the strings of garlic on his chest, which were also dyed red with blood.

Feng Bujue pointed at his own face, which was still relatively

clean. "Just pay attention and don’t let the monsters’ body fluids come in contact with your eyes and mouth." He regarded his costume and continued, "These things look exaggerated, but they are not all mobs’ blood. I got these stains when I was pouring blood from the blood bags into the barrel." He immediately took out a plastic bag full of garlic heads from his bag and flung it on the ground. "My two strings of garlic is my final defense. For the garlic that we could eat, I kept them in the bag. You two should find some bags and take some. When fighting with them, just chew some cloves. Basically, those mobs will find it hard to defend against you."

"Yeah. I just need one. One garlic head has six or seven cloves. Later, if we’re in need of it, we will just ask you for more," Little Name answered.

Young Master Ji Bu determinedly answered, "I don’t need it, thanks."

"Seems that both of you don’t like garlic much," Feng Bujue said genuinely with his meaningful and heartfelt words, "you know, garlic being added to plain noodles broth is like a stone turning into a bar of gold."

"Don’t know," they answered him in unison.

"Ha..." Feng Bujue maliciously craned his head, bringing his significantly despicable face to them as he blew out his stinky breath.

"What are you doing?!?! We aren't mobs!"

Feng Bujue's countenance became serious immediately. "In that case, I will continue talking about the features of the Bloody Zombie Wolves."

"You can change the topic this fast!"

"Sunlight will slow them down," Feng Bujue continued his narration, "their moves are as slow as the Magical Princess transforming. Wait until she takes off... ah, no, wait until they attack us, I can finish two verses of tongue-twisters already!"

"Your skimming range is quite wide."

Feng Bujue raked his eyes towards those dead bodies that packed the street. "Although beheading will make them unable to move, their heads are still alive. As I've tested, breaking their napes or blowing off half of their heads is the only way to kill them completely."

Then, he hauled out a shotgun from his bag and observed it with admiration. "I've found this Winchester at the gun store. Its power is okay. From a short distance, if we can't shoot the head, it can still make a big hole on the mob's body. Much better than the pistol."

"Yes! The gun shop!" Young Master Ji Bu opened his eyes wider. "Almost forgot it. We should look for weapons first and get back to

it later!"

He regarded Feng Bujue and hurriedly rushed to the gun shop with Little Name. These two belonged to the group of poor players who had never seen a single good quality weapon. For them, upgrading from cool weapons to guns was a big breakthrough. In case of Feng Bujue, a low-level player, it was hard to imagine that he had four items of excellent quality, even though there was one item in his bag that he still couldn’t use at the moment.

Young Master Ji Bu and Little Name stormed in the gun shop and found a mess inside. Shelves on the wall were all empty. There were many guns and items scattering on the ground. An open door stood behind the counter, which looked exactly like the crime scene of a robbery.

Feng Bujue walked to them from behind, using his always-calm voice without a ripple of fear to speak to them, "According to the set up, the gun stores in the city should be emptied out when the virus was expanding. Talking about the difficulty level of the game, we don’t have many choices for weapons."

Young Master Ji Bu didn’t pay attention to Feng Bujue since he was excitedly picking out two guns on the ground and putting them into his bag. He was holding a Steyr TMP and grinning. "Jackpot."

Little Name threw away a baseball bat and a rusted pipe from his bag, then picked up two guns and a submachine gun, the UMP45. His face showed only his happiness.

After getting some guns of normal quality, these two people were like a couple of homeless dudes that suddenly got rich. To be honest, they looked poor anyway. In comparison with the other official professional gamers, these two from the Ice Emperor were so pseudo as their mentality and levels were all amateurs.

They just remembered the key point when Feng Bujue had reminded them; they then reluctantly groped for bullets and checked the diameters of those bullets before putting them into their bags.

When the three of them had returned to the street, there were four or five Bloody Zombie Wolves that got attracted to this place. Feng Bujue then suggested that they should take them as the target for their shooting practice. These two were too clumsy; it took them a long time before they could understand the methods thoroughly. After some salvos, they recognized that they couldn’t hit the targets further than 10 meters away. Actually, they didn’t even know where the bullets had shot away. However, in the range of five meters, with a stable position for shooting, their success rate was higher.

Afterward, in dealing with the mobs, Feng Bujue said, "Where was I previously? Ah, yeah, the next feature is—" he paused, arranged his thoughts and said, "the desire for blood of a vampire exists on those Bloody Zombie Wolves too. Blood scent attracts them. Of course, it’s the blood of normal people who aren’t infected. This case, I guess they’ve used smell to search.

"Those Bloody Zombie Wolves’ sense of smell isn’t as good as the

real werewolves. However, apparently, it’s better than the zombies. Within 50 meters, they don’t need to see to recognize living people like us. If human blood is exposed in the air, within one kilometer, they could smell it. The attraction is very extreme to them."

"No way. There are murder scenes throughout the city. How could they distinguish our smell when we’ve been dipped in a barrel of blood?" Young Master Ji Bu glared at the barrel which was filled with blood.

"It’s easy. One of the requirements of a good sense of smell is to separate the smell. For example, hunting dogs can analyze the smell composition at the molecular level, " Feng Bujue answered, "it’s like when you smell a lump of sh!t, you could only feel it’s gross and stinky; however, if an animal with a sensitive sense of smell smells it, it will know what the owner of this sh!t had eaten yesterday."

"Now I only want to know why you didn’t get censored using those words?" Young Master Ji Bu said.

"It’s because of the normal context of my convo as the system didn’t consider this ‘sh!t’ as a bad word, but it’s just a noun," Feng Bujue continued, "I assumed that in this game, under some special circumstances, those gross words would become unavoidable topics." His face changed, "For example, perhaps in some scenario, players would be drowned in..."

"I can’t hear it. Can’t hear anything," Young Master Ji Bu covered his ears, muttering very quickly.

Feng Bujue shrugged and didn’t finish this disgusting topic. He then continued, "If you encounter that, it’s really easy to handle. Now, it’s 2:30 pm in this scenario. You should camp here and play with some mobs. The gun shop is right next to you anyway, even if you don’t have more guns, you can always find extra bullets there."

"Now I’m going to find the others, then I will bring them here." He looked up at the sky. "Whether I could find them or not, I will return here before sunset," he stopped when he seemed to remember something, "ah, yeah. Sounds can also lure mobs. After I leave, you can play the music again."

"Wait a minute," Little Name asked, "since I got here, I wondered, this—" his eyes shifted to the barrel, those blood bags, and the big speakers, "this arrangement, how could you make it alone?"

"Well, yeah. Before I got to the gun shop, I had passed by a hospital. I got in there to check if I could use anything. Then I accidentally found that blood that could lure mobs. After searching the hospital, I got here and decided to make it a temporary base. Thus, I came to the supermarket nearby and took a cart, pulling it along to the hospital, finding the blood bank then breaking in to take some blood plastic bags and got back here.

"After that, I took the barrel from the shop across the street and poured blood in it. I got those speakers from the other instrument shop. Loud sounds could lure mobs. Moreover, as their approaching frequency is not much often, I got bored waiting for them."

Feng Bujue quickly finished. "In short, just stay here and kill mobs. This scenario doesn’t have time restriction. We can take this chance to increase our specialties grades and also our Skill Value."

After that, he swung his sleeve, leaving the other two ‘professional players’ dumbstruck in the spot, looking at his back, which was fading away.

Magical Princess (named Minky Momo) is a Japanese magical-girl anime franchise. In the anime, the girls would transform into powerful magical girls. The transformation shown in the anime would take a long time for exaggeration purposes.

Chapter 50: The Peerless Garlic (4)

Wang Tanzhi could never be as calm as Feng Bujue. Being a simple guy, after he landed, he didn't think much but instead ran to do the Main Quest.

Although his character was simple, his ability wasn't too bad. Soon, he found a map of the city at a newsstand by the street, which showed him the address of the Allerbmu Corporation's Building.

Little Tan was thinking that his other teammates were now all heading to that place. Thus, he just needed to be quick and got there to meet his team.

On the way there, he had killed many mobs. Moreover, the closer he got to the building of the Main Quest, the number of Zombie was increasing relatively.

It might be because it was still in the daylight that even though Little Tan was alone, his Fear Value could be controlled well. It was hard to tell which one was scarier between those Bloody Zombie Wolves and the ordinary zombies in those movies. The key point was that their motions were too slow that it couldn't give players any feeling of a coming danger. Under the daylight, crossing over those mobs that couldn't threaten him wasn't much different from wandering around a packed lobby.

Perhaps the situation would change when the night fell.

Around 2:30 PM, when Feng Bujue left the base he had created alone, Little Tan got to the Allerbmu Corporation's Building.

This was a 52-storey building with a big steel frame standing on the roof, which read 'Allerbmu'. This made it and the Avenger's Building have the same feeling of pride.

This company could put its logo on the rooftop which meant this whole building belonged to it. According to the plot's introduction, this Allerbmu Corporation was the core structure where they studied and produced the virus. Also, only the land of the United States of America could give birth to such high technological anti-human armed corporations, whose finances and abilities had much surpassed the government's.

Wang Tanzhi was walking with the baseball bat in his hand. From the dried blood streaks on his bat, it could be seen that the user of this bat didn't give any mercy. Talking about fighting capacity, it wasn't sure that Doctor Wang was worse than Feng Bujue. Frankly speaking, in this game, at the same level and physical abilities, they could only perform normal moves that ordinary people could do and not much different from that.

In front of the building stood a gang of Bloody Zombie Wolves consisted of about 80 to 100 members. As they saw living objects, they started to gather to this place. Ahead of Wang Tanzhi was a big area under the shade of the buildings. Those Bloody Zombie Wolves walking under the shade were a little bit faster than the others walking under the sunlight. Their speed had now approached the normal speed of a zombie in movies. Of course, in comparison to some zombies in the movies who could run, jump or

even drive the car and use the gun, they were all frail.

At this moment, Wang Tanzhi was a little bit scared looking at a gang of hairy pale-faced corpses moving towards him. Even if he could swing his bat until it had been broken, he still couldn’t kill them all.

Moreover, he had noticed something strange. There were no Bloody Zombie Wolves that got killed in this area. If there were any teammates who got inside the building before him, they had to pass through this group of zombies. Even if they had a super fast speed, they still had to kill at least seven or eight mobs to break through this dense crowd. However, on the open space in front of the building, there was no dead body that couldn’t move.

"Seems I’m the first one to get here..." Little Tan mumbled and retreated. If there were no other teammates in the building, he wouldn't need to rush in; instead, he should just stay outside and wait.

Upon his thought, he decided to get out of this space. Unexpectedly, when he had turned around, he had triggered the FLAG. A gatekeeper-leveled BOSS appeared in front of him.

Little Tan was leaning on the building and, around 100 meters away in the general direction he was facing, stood a giant figure of roughly 2.5 meters. Little Tan didn’t know when or how this person appeared here. Anyway, he understood clearly that this wasn’t a mob that he could use his baseball bat to beat up.

That monster's upper body was completely transformed into a werewolf with a full dark brown mane. Exposed skin couldn't be seen on its face and arms as the monster had a wolf head with sharp claws on its fingertips. There were no features of vampire on its upper body, however, people could see the zombie's features on it. A big wound had pierced through its left chest. Through this wound, its internal body could be seen. But it wasn't any organs because behind the ribs; instead, one could vaguely see a bloody human head there.

This small BOSS could be called the Zombie Werewolf. Indeed, there was no feature of vampire on it. Perhaps because of that, it wasn't affected by the sunlight, and its body could break through the limits of the human shape.

The Zombie Werewolf walked towards him. Its build and aura exuded an obvious oppressive feeling.

Wang Tanzhi's Fear Value was increasing as his cold sweat was rolling down, but he didn't glue himself on the spot waiting for death. Since he couldn't choose the direction leading to the building or facing the BOSS, which was closer to death than being alive, he should run around and escape.

As he was running aimlessly in his fear, he took the direction on one side to escape. It was a downward slope leading to the underground parking lot. By the time he had noticed that, the walls around him were over his head that he couldn't climb up again. Thus, continuing to run further was the only option.

Seeing that he was running away, the Zombie Werewolf, of

course, wanted to chase after him. He was lucky as the monster wasn't a genuine werewolf that could aid itself with running on all-four. The mob could only run on its two legs, that's why its speed wasn't too exaggerated. However, its speed was still significantly faster than that of those Bloody Zombie Wolves who were like they were taking a walk after dinner. Wang Tanzhi couldn't lengthen the distance between them.

Soon, Wang Tanzhi approached the gate of the underground parking lot. Looking at the barrier, he guessed that he could jump over it. However, the problem was he found that there was no light inside the parking lot.

As his legs were still stomping, his hands shoved into his bag in an attempt to take out the flashlight. At this moment, a deadly scene appeared right in front of his eyes as he saw some moving shadows behind the barrier not far from him.

Then, a horrible image greeted his eyes.

At first, Little Tan just saw some random shadows. However, when he got closer, he could clearly see that the dark area of the parking lot was packed with Bloody Zombie Wolves.

Turned out that all the mobs were taking shelter away from the sunlight there! Little Tan was dazed inside, but there was no time for him to digest this surprise as he could only choose between the club of Bloody Zombie Wolves and the intimidating Zombie Werewolf. Apparently, in this case, if he barged into that dark area, he would soon be torn apart. Thus, he couldn't help but turn around and face the Little BOSS.

With Little Tan's competence now, killing the Zombie Werewolf was tough, but if he didn't bother consuming his points to run away, there were two options for him. First, use the [Largo Quicksand]; second, use the special ability that the title [The Flustered Ambusher] had granted him, which was the [Retreat then Chop rapidly].

[Name: Retreat then Chop rapidly]

[Type of special ability: Active]

[Consumption: 30% of the highest Physical Value]

[Effects: It could be effective instantly when hitting the target. The user can retreat backward with a high-speed at least 10 meters away from the target. (No cooldown time. Can only be used when the user is using a cold weapon.)]

[Remarks: I jump out. Then go back. Then jump out again! What? How about it? Hit me then, you dumbass!]

The first option was okay for Little Tan to escape from the scene. One minute was enough to run away from those mobs. However, the effect of his [Largo Quicksand] in this scenario was extremely important. Needless to say, when they needed to fight against a large number of Bloody Zombie Wolves or to face the final BOSS, this item could make a table-flipping effect (overturn the situation). What a pity he had to use it now.

And, the second option offered more life-risk. If he wanted to use this skill, he had to run around the Zombie Werewolf, or at least put himself back on the slope. Moreover, he needed to slash his target successfully.

The footage where Long-Ge was blown away with just one slap from the evolved Bloody Corpse was still in his mind. Little Tan actually didn't know how powerful this Zombie Werewolf was compared to the Bloody Corpse. Talking about levels, the average level of players in this scenario was almost double than the previous one; leaving aside some factors, the capacity of this monster could only be imagined.

While Little Tan was hesitating, the werewolf had approached him. As he saw the monster was about to bite him, it suddenly ceased.

It then turned around, didn't bother Wang Tanzhi's existence, alertly watching the other direction while grunting in its throat.

Thud, thud, thud—

The sound of metal boots stomping on the ground echoed. The shadow of two figures appeared on the ground as they were walking from the other end of the slope. Currently, Wang Tanzhi couldn't see their appearances since they were walking in backlit. However, based on that Zombie Werewolf's reaction, he guessed those two could be players or kind of its enemy NPC.

"The province of Hebei has a hero, the general named Pan Feng. Brings with him the spirit of the universe and the hiding thousands of soldiers in his will.

"Pan Gu reincarnated to this world, and his name is Vermilion Bird.

"Peerless prestige he is, one smile of a reckless hero!"

One of the two figures was humming something like a poem while walking forward.

This man's appearance wasn't significant. He was a bearded man that was just roughly over his thirties. He was holding a Mountain Splitting Great Axe. This weapon was really eye-catching.

Since he had been playing this game, this was the first time Wang Tanzhi saw someone using such a weapon that was even longer than his own height. This kind of aura was extraordinary. It wasn't too exaggerated if we referred him with the word 'mighty'.

"Little brother, don't be scared!" The one who spoke up got the name of [the Peerless General Pan Feng]. "Hua-Ge and I are here, we assure you are safe now."

The guy whose name was [The Executioner Hua Xiong] also had a long-handled weapon in his hands, which was a spear. He was not much older than the Peerless Pan as his character also had a beard. "Pan-Ge was right. Little brother, just wait there. This sorta mob

isn’t enough to scare us. I will take its life as easy as slaughtering a pig."

At this moment, the only thought in Wang Tanzhi’s mind was, "These two uncles are at the late stages of the eight-grade-disease for sure..."

NPC: A non-player character (NPC), sometimes known as a non-person character or non-playable character, in a game is any character that is not controlled by a player. In video games, this usually means a character controlled by the computer through artificial intelligence. In traditional tabletop role-playing games the term applies to characters controlled by the gamemaster or referee, rather than another player.

Pan Gu: The Creator of the universe in Chinese mythology

Vermillion Bird: The Vermilion bird is one of the Four Symbols of the Chinese constellations. According to Wu Xing, the Taoist five-elemental system, it represents the fire-element, the direction south, and the season summer correspondingly. Thus it is sometimes called the Vermilion bird of the South (Nán Fāng Zhū Què). It is described as a red bird that resembles a pheasant with a five-colored plumage and is perpetually covered in flames.

An eighth-grade-disease means people who have thoughts or do things that are frequently seen among 14-year-old boys although they are grown-up (childish to be short).

Chapter 51: The Peerless Garlic (5)

Although Wang Tanzhi had thought that way, the Zombie Werewolf was different. It wouldn't consider how dumb the players were as the mob would only recognize players' competencies.

As a gatekeeper BOSS with a low AI setting, the Zombie Werewolf gave up its current prey which it considered as an easy target to turn around and cautiously watch the other two who were coming closer. It even kept a certain distance from them, which showed how powerful they were.

From the names they had addressed each other, Little Tan guessed they were [The Peerless General Pan Feng] and [The Executioner Hua Xiong]. Since the beginning of this scenario, the players were separated, and now there was no name or title displayed above their heads (players could check their teammates' names, titles, and statuses in their Party Menu). Wang Tanzhi didn't know their names or could be able to guess their capacities from their titles. However, if these two were coming to rescue him, moreover, considered that their words were a little bit exaggerating, certainly, they could be able to solve this BOSS.

"You... you two Generals," Little Tan reluctantly said, "there are so many Bloody Zombie Wolves underground, perhaps we should lure this BOSS to the street. Aaahh—" Wang Tanzhi opened his mouth in shock and screamed when he got to this part.

Don't worry, he didn't get bitten. There were five or six zombies approaching Little Tan from the parking lot, but they hadn't

touched him yet. Indeed, no need to pay attention to those mobs since they were bound by the barrier. Due to their low intelligence settings, they would not climb or crawl to get through the barrier; instead, they were banging at it with their stiff bodies.

The reason why Little Tan screamed was because he had seen something unbelievable.

He saw General Pan had jumped up really high raising the Mountain Splitting Axe over his head. As he was descending, the axe also hacked down. Although he wasn't fast, his attack angle and his moves left the giant Zombie Werewolf no way to dodge.

The monster roared indignantly, swinging its claws to confront his attack. However, just in the blink of an eye, the weapon in Pan Feng's hand had hacked down on the monster's arm, which suddenly burst out. The cold light flared up from the axe; it was as strong as lightning and faster than a shooting star. Blood gushed out from the monster's arm as it was cut in half with just one strike.

The Zombie Werewolf's big arm was cut off and flung away. The ear-splitting roar hadn't come out from its mouth yet as the spear in Hua Xiong's hands had come. This was even faster than his teammate's attack. When the blood burst out, the monster's knee was pierced through.

Its left hand was cut off, and its right knee was poked through. The Zombie Werewolf's body was heavier in the significantly large upper body and lighter in the lower body. Under these two attacks, the monster immediately lost its balance and heavily toppled on

the ground from its right.

One second later, a cold light flashed in the wolf's eyes. Puff. Blood splashed on the ground when a wolf head rolled down the slope.

Little Tan was dumbstruck. These two people had just used three strikes to kill a Little BOSS. How intimidating they were! It was hard to imagine that they were just two levels higher than him.

"A... ——" The Bloody Zombie Wolves behind him were groaning again, waking him up.

Little Tan turned his head to see dozens of zombies were gathering behind the barrier. Deep in the dark place inside the underground parking lot, there were numerous shadows of the walking dead.

"Bro, how about going with us to the street?" Pan Feng asked.

Little Tan instantly woke up. "Okay, okay. We should find a place that doesn't have mobs." He hurried walking back to the street. When he was passing by the Zombie Werewolf, Wang Tanzhi couldn't help but to glare at the headless body of the big monster.

...

After leaving his 'base', Feng Bujue headed to the Allerbmu Corporation's building. He knew that he would find his teammates

there. At this moment, he just hoped that Little Tan and the other two players wouldn't blindly get into the building and die before he got there.

Also, he didn't hurry in rescuing that Doctor Ashford as the Main Quest requested. Honestly, it's okay if that doctor is dead already as the system had never mentioned that their scenario would be considered failed if that doctor died. This is the Multiplayer Survival Mode, unless all the players died, the scenario would then be considered failed. If the main character of the plot died, at most, the difficulty level of the scenario would be increased, or the plot would be changed.

Until now, Feng Bujue had killed over 50 Bloody Zombie Wolves. In fact, if he wanted, he could kill more. Anyway, he took his time doing 'experiments' to test those mobs' reactions.

Through these struggles, his Shooting Specialty had upgraded from F to E. However, his Fighting Specialty was still E. It seemed that his [Dance of the Knight] wasn't a weapon to burst the heads of the monsters. And, it couldn't upgrade his Fighting Specialty to D. He needed to arrange his thoughts now.

Feng Bujue couldn't help but recall Like Rain and her neat, light and deliberate moves. He couldn't do such tender actions. Perhaps if he could do that, his Fighting Specialty could reach grade D for sure.

Of course, fighting with those mobs, which were as slow as the crawling crabs, couldn't help him train his agility. At least, he had to fight against monsters at his level or even stronger than him to

be able to level up his Fighting Specialty.

His current priority now was to figure out a way to put the [Echo Armor] on. At this moment, he knew that it wasn't easy to leap up his Fighting Specialty to grade C. Anyway, he could try to make his Weapon Specialty to grade D. It was just one level ahead.

Along the way there, he always thought about how to take advantage of the degree of freedom in this scenario to harvest greater benefits. He just walked around and dodged all the mobs he met on the street. Soon, he was just some blocks away from the Allberbmu's building.

Now, Feng Bujue noticed the increasing number of Bloody Zombie Wolves around him and some other got killed on the streets.

Thus, this man was excitedly carrying out an 'autopsy' for those zombies. First, he crouched down next to a body and carefully studied the edge of the wounds on the smashed skull and the puddle of disgusting fluids on the ground. He also skimmed through the other wounds on the corpses, just like a cop investigating a crime scene.

"Yeah, caused by a baseball bat," he mused, "one strike on the front and two continuous strikes on the side. It's Little Tan." He got up, took the wrench and tackled down a zombie approaching him. Then, he stomped on its chest and smashed the mob's head with just two hits.

"Anyway, the baseball bat is the sort of weapon that are available everywhere. That [The Name is Difficult to Choose] has some," he contemplated, "can’t exclude the possibility that the other two players have the baseball bats too."

Upon his thoughts, he continued to walk straight forward. After several steps, he saw seven or eight headless corpses lying afar. They had just been ‘dead’ not long ago, as their heads were still moving. Nonetheless, since they didn’t have the windpipe, they couldn’t make any sounds, as their jaws were continuously moving in chewing motions.

"Right, he certainly hasn’t done this."

Chapter 52: The Peerless Garlic (6)

It was around 3:00 PM when Pan Feng and Hua Xiong took Little Tan with them and headed towards the top level of the Allerbmu Corporation’s Building.

Inside the building, the elevator that ran over 52 floors was broken, and the entrance to the emergency staircase was blown up. However, there were other elevators that could work between different levels.

They took the elevator many times from the ground to the seventh level. Then, they climbed up the staircase for three more levels. At the 10th level, they were able to take another elevator, and it went all the way to level 42. Along their journey, they had met two other Little BOSSES. However, under the powerful attacks of Pan and Hua, the BOSS could only resist without being able to fight back. Just after two or three minutes, they became a pulp of flesh smashed on the ground. Needless to mention, the other ordinary Bloody Zombies were cut and slashed just like cutting vegetables.

Little Tan felt his vision was broadened while following behind them. He didn’t need to dip his fingertips into their fight with the mob. Now he had a feeling of being a big boss of a gang who was taking a sightseeing trip with his two intimidating bodyguards.

"Hey, brothers." Little Tan was climbing on the stair between level 42 and 43. Finally, he couldn’t help but ask, "Are you going to kill all the mobs from the ground to the top and then from the top back to the ground?"

"Nope," Hua Xiong said, "we are going to rescue Dr. Ashford."

Little Tan was dumbfounded. "Agh, I... I don’t know whether it’s too late to say it now or not, but when I was on the first floor, I saw the map of the building. The lab is underground, not up there."

In papers, they had been killing and struggling all the way to this floor, having listened to it now, they should snap back at him. "Why didn’t you tell us earlier?"

Unexpectedly, these two heroes were still calm and deliberate. Hua Xiong turned his head and smiled. "Ha, ha. Little bro, we know the lab is underground. However, maybe that doc isn’t in the lab now."

Little Tan thought, "Where could a doctor be besides his lab? Is he hiding in the toilet? According to the common sense of science fiction movies, after the outbreak of the virus, the staff of the research institute would find a safe, isolated facility to protect themselves. Then, they would think about how to control the virus or call for rescue. The upper levels of this building were marked with ‘Office’; if Dr. Ashford was there, he possibly had been soon eaten up."

Although Little Tan was suspicious, he didn’t try to make it clear as he didn’t need to fight with the mobs; he only followed them anyway. Even if they just wasted their time climbing up and down the building, now he just needed to follow these two uncles back to the ground.

…

A couple of minutes ago, Feng Bujue had entered the building safely. Along the way, he had observed the wounds on those corpses and the bloody footprints on the street. Now he had a vague guess. There were two other persons accompanying Little Tan. One had a heavy weapon with sharp blades, and the other possibly had something that resembled a spear. Moreover, their competencies were extremely powerful as they could kill the little monsters with just one strike.

Thanks to the excellent performance given by the other three, Feng Bujue found it was a relief as the number of mobs he met in the building was limited while making his way through the levels. He studied the layout of the building then headed to the underground laboratory. Actually, he didn't even think that the other three would climb up to the top floors. He thought they would be underground now.

Thus, when Feng Bujue found an elevator leading to the laboratory underground in a corridor, he went in.

This elevator booth was quite wide which was similar to his login space. However, it didn't have the glass wall or the touch screens. There were some blood streaks in the booth, but not any other unidentified limbs. As this elevator served only the first floor and the underground laboratory, it had only five or six buttons. Feng Bujue pressed the floor button then another button to close the door. Soon, the elevator ran down.

According to his analysis from those ‘records’, in a close spaces, the Bloody Zombie Wolves were sort of monsters which couldn’t escape the dark hands of Pan and Hua. However, he still gripped his wrench tightly in case there were some fish that had escaped from their net. Anyway, this possibility was unlikely to happen.

When the elevator doors were about to slide open, a scream arose from some zombies. Feng Bujue was caught unprepared. Then, a hand stretched into the booth followed by a head.

As the doors hadn’t been opened fully, three or four Zombies stormed into the booth. Behind them, there were more than twenties of mobs crowding into the small space. Half of them were wearing security guard uniforms and white lab coats. Saliva was dripping from their mouths, and they were stunk with the smell of the dead.

Although Feng Bujue got a sudden ambush, he was still calm and precise. He immediately chewed the garlic clove he had kept in his mouth while taking out the chef knife and paired it with the wrench in his other hand, pounding on the head of the nearest mob.

After he had battered those mobs to death, he found a terrifying thing. The monsters who were attacking him were just ordinary zombies as they didn’t have a pale face or fangs or fur.

The key point here was, they weren’t afraid of garlic!

This unexpected situation had cost Feng Bujue a big loss. He had

thought that this place wouldn't have had many mobs, but it turned out they were so many, and they were backing him to the small space of the elevator, leaving him no way to escape. Moreover, the garlic didn't work on them. And, those Zombies were moving much faster than the Bloody Zombies. Their powers and speed were also different from that of a human being.

Feng Bujue didn't have the [Largo Quicksand] now. He had used it on the Roderick Usher's Ghost to prevent the mass attack from the furniture the ghost was manipulating. Thus, he had no other way now.

To a normal person, getting converged in the elevator booth by over 20 zombies, the best result to him would be, under the proper circumstances, killing himself with a gun.

At this moment, Feng Bujue didn't even have the time to take his gun out of his bag. Both of his hands were holding the weapons and constantly swinging them at the mobs. He had to use the [Cerebral Concussion], a passive skill, to resist reluctantly. However, those mobs were all stretching their arms towards him in the narrow space of the booth, which caused him trouble in hitting their heads.

Indeed, not long after that, he got bitten, but not only once. The pain wasn't intense, but he understood that he could be infected already.

After he was done with those zombies, Feng Bujue got into the corridor. A pile of over 20 corpses was left behind while his blood was streaming like a river. He checked his wounds. There were

bites on his arm, thigh and two other positions. Four bites in total.

Besides some private, sensitive positions, the other parts of one player's costume could be torn apart. As long as the damaged area didn't exceed 10% of the whole costume, the system wouldn't fix it, or it would fix itself later. Thus, at this moment, Feng Bujue could see his wounds exposed from under his ragged sleeves and trousers.

Furthermore the status next to his Survival Value was displaying [Sick] now. This proved that he had gotten infected already.

Feng Bujue sighed, took the Winchester out of his bag, loaded it and continued to walk forward. Why there were normal zombies in this laboratory, he didn't know. However, he understood that it will take time before the virus burst out in his body. He still got a little time before such symptoms like fever or flu appear on him.

He wanted to search the laboratory to see if he could find the serum or something useful, also, to check if he could see Little Tan and other people here. If they weren't here, probably those clueless three badasses had climbed to the upper levels of the building. Then, there must be a reason behind the ambush at the elevator.

...

At the same time, at the gun shop.

Young Master Ji Bu and Little Name determinedly dragged a big couch, putting it in the middle of the road, sat there and practiced shooting. Their targets were the slow-motioned Bloody Zombie Wolves converging towards them.

Even though they were playing games, anyway, they had to be careful since they couldn't make the headshot precisely from a far distance. Thus, whenever they cut off a leg or made the zombie fall on the ground, the two of them then came by to check if it was dead or not. If not, they were then well served with a headshot.

Most of the guns in the shop just required Common grade F to be able to use. The equipment condition was even lower than when Feng Bujue had picked up his M1911A1 pistol when he was at level 5. Apparently, at such scenario for level 10, the restriction on guns use was loosened up. If players hadn't had their Shooting Specialty unlocked yet, this was a good chance for them then.

"Hey, what is that?" Little Name said as he saw a strange figure appear afar.

Young Master Ji Bu was guarding another direction; having heard that, he turned around to check and said, "Is that... another player?"

That figure's motions weren't that of the zombies, which caught Little Name's attention. As 'she' was coming closer, they could see her clearer.

That was a young woman with a slender body. Her long hair

draped over her shoulders that outlined an exquisite oval face while her face was glowing with a delicate mouth, high nose, and a watery pair of eyes. She was wearing a swallow-tail black coat. However, her clothes couldn’t cover much of her beautiful, slender body, which made a significant contrast between her full bosom and the black coat.

"Her costume isn’t the default costume provided by the system," Little Name said.

"Yeah. Makes sense. Moreover, from her appearance, I guess she can’t be the Peerless General Pan Feng or the Executioner Hua Xiong." Ji Bu continued, "We’ve seen Feng Bujue, and as for his friend, Wang Tanzhi, he is a male player. We don’t have female players in this scenario."

"I don’t think she’s a mob. Is she an NPC?" Little Name continued.

"Then we should talk to her." Young Master Ji Bu aimed his Steyr TMP at that beautiful lady and shouted, "Stop! Who are you?"

She didn’t answer him, but she was smiling. Seconds later, her smile turned into a big grin that exposed the fangs in her mouth.

Chapter 53: The Peerless Garlic (7)

"Party’s member: [Young Master Ji Bu], dead."

"Party’s member: [The Name Is Difficult to Choose], dead."

As the system’s notification sounded in their ears, Wang Tanzhi took time to check his menu. Indeed, the status next to those two members displayed ‘Dead’. Little Tan contemplated then said, "Brothers, did they die in the underground research lab in the building?"

"Huh? How did you know that?" Pan Feng was walking ahead, asked without turning his head back. From his tone, it seemed that he didn’t care much about the other two. This feeling was like it was alright whether those two were dead or alive, as if it couldn’t affect him in completing this scenario. Of course, with the combination of Hua Xiong’s competence and his, they could be that confident.

"Well, think about it. They are at level 14 and 12, and they should be stronger than me at least. I’m not afraid of the Bloody Zombie Wolves on the street, so there's no way that they would die under their hands. However, if they got into this Allberbmu Building and saw the map on the ground, then they would go to the underground floor," he paused for a second then continued, "we haven’t cleaned that place yet; thus, it would be dangerous. They could even encounter some wandering BOSSES. If they met a Zombie Werewolf—"

"Yup. Makes sense," Hua Xiong said. However, he seemed to have thought about it earlier; when he said ‘makes sense’, he just wanted to give him a perfunctory support. "Anyway, they are all dead. It’s no use if we go there now. Moreover, we are so close to the top floor, we should go there to check and—"

"How about this," Little Tan intervened him, "You two go up there. I’m going to the ground alone." Then, he took out the baseball bat from his bag (since he didn’t need to act, Little Tan had put his weapon away), "the other alive player is my friend. I think he hasn’t gotten to the building yet, but I know he will come soon. I’m going to the lobby and wait for him there to prevent him from going to the underground research lab. Then, we will catch up with you guys."

Pan and Hua stopped walking, then they turned around to look at him. After they had exchanged looks, Hua Xiong shrugged and said, "Alright, little brother, you should be careful. We’re leaving now."

Little Tan regarded them then turned around. After he had passed by a corridor, he stormed into the emergency exit staircase. Anyway, he didn’t know that Feng Bujue was now in the research laboratory underground or his assumption of the place where Young Master Ji Bu and Little Name died was wrong. Now, he just simply replied on his inference to take action.

After he had gone, Pan Feng suddenly said with a solemn tone, "Those two players had been together at the same location for quite a long time before they died. That place is quite far from here."

Hua Xiong answered him, "Ah, I saw that. There's no Little BOSS in that area. Before the night falls, there were only wandering Bloody Zombie Wolves in this city. Moreover, they had died just seconds ago. Unless they had jumped off a high building to suicide together, it should be..."

"Indeed, the 'Derivative' did that," Pan Feng mused, "it took action against the players that fast. We should also be quicker to prevent the contact between the Derivative and the other two players."

"It's good that the little boy is gone. We don't need to worry anymore. It's safer going back down there. We've cleared most of the monsters. He'll be alright for a while," Hua Xiong continued, "the other one was called 'Feng Bujue', and he isn't in a good situation now. His Survival Value is 73%, but he got infected. When it comes to the outburst stage, the system will consider him dead. We should finish the matters before that." He took a deep breath before continuing, "There are four other players who had entered this scenario. Two died. If another was dead or all were dead before we could finish this round, our work would fail badly."

Pan Feng nodded. "Yeah, it's true. We should take time to kill Ashford. We just need to get into 'that' plot, and soon we will finish the scenario. No matter what, we have to bring the players out of this scenario first. Then we can focus on dealing with 'the Derivative'."

...

Feng Bujue was holding the Winchester walking on the corridor of the research laboratory. The lighting system there was working normally. The number of zombies there wasn't too big. Besides the ambush he got at the elevator, the frequency of the wandering zombies was the same with that on the streets, as he had met only one or two zombies on this section of the corridor.

The shotgun in his hands was pretty useful in this narrow corridor since he just needed to wait for the mobs to come closer and shoot them. No need to be accurate. Anyway, his weapon could blow off the monster's leg and tackle it down. Hitting the body, if it weren't blown away, at least, it would be torn apart.

The area he was searching was relatively large. All the electric gates could be opened. Many rooms had only steel shelves and boxes, which were full of documents. However, the contents were useless as they were just reports from experiments. Some important documents had ink stains or traces of being erased.

There were also some rooms equipped with large screens and computers. Unknown-functioned buttons were here and there, but they were all broken, no exception. None of them could be turned on. This was also a relief as he just needed to scan the room and get out of it immediately.

After several twists and turns, Feng Bujue finally found a high-security level electronic door, which requested both retinae and fingerprint scanning to open. Anyway, the game was also very thoughtful when it had set a zombie in a white coat just several meters away from there.

Feng Bujue aimed his gun at the Zombie's back and shot. The mob instantly fell on the ground with a bunch of intestines gushing out. Feng Bujue took out the baseball bat, then smashed the zombie's arms and knees. After that, he used the chef knife to cut off its head and one of its hands. He also checked the zombie's clothes to see if he could find anything else.

As the scanning finished, the electronic door opened. Feng Bujue hurled the arm and the head of the monster away, then stepped into the room.

Apparently, this room was related to the plot. On the wall opposite the door, there was a massive metal gate that didn't look different from a bank vault. A broken glass column stood next to the left wall, which was one meter tall and around 30 centimeters in diameter. Originally, this glass column should contain some kind of liquid substances. However, since it was broken, that liquid was now spilled on the floor. It was a faint green, translucent liquid, puddled a large area on the floor.

The computers in this room were also broken as the monitors were pitch-black and couldn't be turned on. There were two other corpses wearing white lab coats, lying on a table near the control board. Feng Bujue cautiously walked towards them. After conducting a quick study, he recognized that these were just two normal corpses and weren't the hibernating zombies.

These two corpses were all male. One was over 50 years old, bald and bespectacled. The other one had gray hair with a mustache that looked older than the other corpse. The bald man got a headshot while the mustached man got shot in his chest and

stomach. It seemed they hadn’t been moved after they had died, proven by the position of their corpses.

Feng Bujue started to analyze the shooting scene in his head. The murderer should be one of their acquaintances. He went through the electronic door of the lab, immediately took his gun and shot the bald, unprepared man. It took his life with only one shot. The bald man was sitting behind the control board. When he died, his body slid out from his chair to the ground. When the gun had been fired, the mustached man was standing several steps away from the control board, backing to the door. When he heard the gunshot, he fearfully turned around. Regretfully, the murderer didn’t give him time to react, immediately shot him. The mustached man fell. Before he died, he had clutched onto the edge of the desk for a short while, then completely fell dead to the ground.

Feng Bujue got those conclusions from the position of the dead bodies, the blood streaks, and from their frozen visages. As a novelist of the reasoning style, from observing the crime scene, he could analyze the procedure of the criminal case as easy as a piece of cake. There were so many details he had thought about in his head. Sometimes, he did conduct relevant experiments for some ‘excellent setups’ of the murder chamber. It sounds troublesome, but it’s the trick that people have to put their minds into it. However, it’s meaningless if proved to be impossible in reality.

"Uh huh." Feng Bujue looked at the two dead bodies on the ground and smiled, "You guys weren’t infected. It means you two already had the serum." He spoke to the corpses, "There were so many people in this lab, and only the key researchers who were dealing with the virus all day long could have this sort of benefits."

As he built the process of the incident in his head, he thought, "No matter what purpose it is, I can assume that the murderer is also a researcher who had already injected the serum. After he had killed these two, he broke the container of the liquid, which held the original virus. Then he took some of it and walked on the corridor, killing some more and dispersing the virus that had mutated the corpses. Afterward, he got out of the underground lab, came up to the street and spread the virus. No idea, however, why the other people in the city turned into a different kind of zombie.

"Or, the murderer couldn’t get out of the place and got killed by the security guards. The Bloody Zombie Wolves outside the lab are not related to those in this lab, totally a different story."

When Feng Bujue came up with this, another problem popped up as he mumbled, "That guy could access this room, so he must be a staff of the lab, and he should have injected the serum already. Then why did he still turn into a zombie later?"

Feng Bujue needed more clues and information to clear up this situation. Thus, he came to check the two corpses on the ground. He immediately found a key in the mustached man’s pocket.

A desk stood several meters away from there. When Feng Bujue took the key, he didn’t think much but stepped directly to the desk and opened the drawer. He then found two syringes, a messy stack of white papers, some stationaries, a stapler, some pins and some stickers. The last drawer of the desk was locked. Feng Bujue tried the key he had just found and it worked.

Chapter 54: The Peerless Garlic (8)

There were two paper sheets in the drawer, which were definitely the given clues to solve the puzzle. Feng Bujue unfolded the first sheet. There were three lines scribbled on the paper. The first line read ‘JMMJAOD’; the second line was 1/4F, and the third line was 3/4F.

Feng Bujue skimmed through the paper and disdainfully exclaimed, "Tsk."

The second sheet was richer in content. This was a part of a printed document with neat words that described the virus in detail.

First, this virus was named ‘Z’. The introduction of the Bloody Zombie Wolves at the beginning of the plot did mention it. It seemed that those mobs on the ground and the staff of this research laboratory had been infected with the same kind of virus, but it was unknown why they were turned into different types of zombies.

Next, after being infected with this virus, the time the players had to cure themselves was less than three hours. This document read that three hours after the victim had contacted with the virus, the same symptoms as the flu would burst out, and in the late stage, the victim would suffer from ‘dementia’. This explained why Feng Bujue was drenched in cold sweat. Moreover, he felt fatigued as his limbs didn’t have any strength remaining in it. The system, of course, couldn’t make the players get ‘dementia’. Thus, when the virus had reached their brains, players would then be

considered dead and have to leave the scenario.

The next paragraph described in great details about the mutant variations that the victims who got infected could have. For example, the necrotic cells appeared and resulted to gangrene; the blood cells' capacity would abruptly increase and slow down the bloodstream; the muscles and powers would be enhanced; cognitive ability would drastically reduce; and the desire of eating human flesh would appear, etc. Of course, there was one line at the end of the document, which read, ‘to suppress the infected person, a strong injury on the head is needed'.

After Feng Bujue had read this paragraph, he couldn’t help but spit out, "Isn’t it the SCP008? Anyway, this scenario offers an anti-poison serum." Upon his words, Feng Bujue’s eyes raked over the last paragraph that talked about the serum.

It read: "The experiment proved that the serum couldn't work on anybody. There are 390 subjects with different ages, genders, blood types and ethnicities who participated in the experiment. 150 subjects among the total number could be released from the effects of the virus or become immune after being injected with the said serum. The success rate of the serum is under 40%. Currently, it’s unknown why the serum couldn’t come into effect to any object."

Feng Bujue had a bad feeling after reading this document. With his thug life, the probability of failing in detoxification was self-evident. Even if he could find the serum, he only has 40% chance to get rid of his[Sick] status, or else, he had only two hours left to finish the scenario, which was almost impossible. The most significant contribution he could give to his team was to find the

serum and hand it to his teammates before he died.

Oh, talking about teammates, 10 minutes earlier when he was still in the corridor, he had heard the notification which announced the death of Young Master Ji Bu and Little Name. This scenario wasn't as simple as it seemed. It was only a mystery of how they had died. They seemed to be the kind of people who would not randomly leave the gun shop and wander around. Thus, since they had all died just in a short time, it was possible that they had encountered a tremendous monster at the gun shop.

But it was on a street of the city which wasn't related to the Main Quest, so how could such monster appear there? Just considering if it was nighttime already when the Bloody Zombie Wolves were strengthened, they could have never killed the two players who were equipped with rifles in just a couple of seconds apart.

Besides, Feng Bujue felt something odd when Wang Tanzhi had been going with Pan Feng and Hua Xiong, but they didn't search the underground laboratory when they got into the building; instead, they were in somewhere else now. Why is that? There was a big layout of the building displayed on the first ground. Also, the Main Quest said that they had to rescue a 'Doctor'. The other levels of the building were marked with different sections or just simply 'Office', so why did they climb up there in searching for him?

Many abnormal situations had happened without any obvious evidence. Feng Bujue didn't think further; he turned around and walked towards the metal gate, leaning over to check the electronic combination lock.

"Six digits, indeed." He looked at the blank spaces which required the number inputs. His face was as if he had guessed it all and determinedly entered the sequence 312928. Unexpectedly, after he had finished, on the screen appeared the ‘accept’ window.

When Feng Bujue read the notes on the paper sheet, he already knew the answer to the puzzle. The first line read JMMJAOD; these letters were the first letter of January, March, May, July, August, October and December, which all had 31 days each. And, the second and the third line indicated February since only February starts with an F. 1/4 means the February which has 29 days in leap years, and the number 3/4, of course, represents 28 days. It wasn’t a hard puzzle to him. He was someone who always had to think about puzzles and answers. With the given clues, as long as the required knowledge to solve the puzzle wasn't over his competence, he could solve half of them pretty quickly.

After he had unlocked the gate, Feng Bujue grabbed the hand valve on the metal gate and turned it to open the gate. Behind the gate was a small room. There were transparent cabinets standing along the three walls of the room, which were filled with test tubes containing some sort of liquid. Each row of tubes was labeled with numbers.

He saw the description of the item when picking up a test tube.

[Name: Antitoxic Serum]

[Type: Related to the plot]

[Quality: Normal]

[Functions: 39. 48% of users could be cured or immunized from the effects of virus Z.]

[Being able to be brought out of the scenario: No]

[Remarks: It could be orally consumed or injected. To Zombies and players who are completely turned into Zombie, this item is inoperative.]

Based on the numbers labeled on the tubes, those serum tubes seemed to be produced group by group. Thus, the contents would possibly be different. Feng Bujue couldn’t help but think about the possibility in which Allerbmu Corporation hadn’t created virus Z but found it somehow. Then they perhaps wanted to control it and create the detoxification.

Right now, Feng Bujue didn’t want to dig this matter further. Also, he didn’t know which group of those serum tubes would be more effective. He just randomly took a test tube from the cabinet and used the syringe to inject himself.

After the injection, his Curing Specialty was unlocked, which was graded F now. The system’s voice arose along with it: "Congratulations on fully unlocking all Specialties in Closed Beta stage."

"In Closed Beta stage?" Feng Bujue thought, "it means I can

unlock new Specialties later on?" He opened his menu to see his Specialties were all unlocked. It was a good thing. Pityingly, his [Sick] status was still there, next to his Survival Value.

"Of course it failed." He was a little bit disappointed as he muttered, "How about taking another injection? I wonder if this brings any side effects."

While he was still hesitating, the [Sick] status disappeared. The status next to his Survival Value was [None] once again.

Fortunately, he didn't close the menu immediately that he would have missed this change in his status. This could lead to a bad decision. Feng Bujue laughed cheerily with a feeling of being alive again.

He took a test tube rack in the cabinet which was holding eight tubes of serum. Then, he carefully put it in his bag. Now his bag was full with the 10 occupied slots, including [Mario's Pipe Wrench], [the Eye of Hatred], [Western Chef Knife], [Baseball Bat], [Flashlight], [M1911A1 Pistol], [The Echo Armor], [Winchester Shotgun], [Antitoxic Serum] x 8 pcs, and a bag of garlic.

He was wearing [The Dance of the Knight] on his feet. Unless he got something else to change into, it would never be back to the bag. Of course, if needed, Feng Bujue could take the Eye of Hatred out of the bag, equip himself and also hold another weapon in his hands to save rooms in his bag.

After the serum had taken effect, Feng Bujue didn't need to

search the laboratory anymore. He was here to find his teammates, and he hadn’t expected that he would be ambushed right when the elevator booth opened, leaving himself wounded and infected. Also, he hadn’t known exactly the time when his illness would burst out; thus, he could only try his best to find the serum, which might not exist.

And now, as his time wasn’t bounded by a coming death, he felt that it would be better to get up there and find his teammates. In consideration of the serum he took would create a FLAG, he would meet a Little BOSS if he wanted to search further more. Although he was immunized against the virus, it wasn’t worth taking risks now.

While he was still thinking, the system’s voice announced, "Current Quest completed. Main Quest, updated."

"What?" Feng Bujue was amazed, "is it true that Doctor Ashford isn’t in the underground lab? The three of them had made a right decision to climb up there and successfully rescued him?"

He took time to open his menu to check what the Quest had been updated to after they had rescued the doctor. It turned out the new Quest was [Defeat the mutant Ashford].

Chapter 55: The Peerless Garlic (9)

"What kind of joke is that?" Feng Bujue said, "the doctor we need to rescue is the true villain?" Something flashed in his mind combined with the Quest and a little more reasoning, seconds later, a strange light flared up in his eyes. "Perhaps this Ashford guy is the murderer who has poisoned everyone. So, the true details of the plot is that Ashford came to the top floor of the building after he had escaped the underground lab and used some device to spread out his mutated virus? And that's how the virus instantly expanded throughout the city leaving no living people for me to meet now." He couldn't help but curse, "This asshole must be Doctor Curt Connors the Lizard!"

He was the only one here at this moment, and there were no surveillance and control devices near him. Thus, the system didn't censor his cursing.

"Wait a minute—" Feng Bujue suddenly recognized something, "the other two players, Pan Feng and Hua Xiong, what kind of gods are they? They got it straight right when they had entered the building. Looks like they knew well that they didn't need to check out the underground lab to pass the round." He mused, "Hm, normally, the way the plot should have been developed is that after players have entered the building, they would come to the lab, find the serum and kill a small BOSS, etc. Then, they would find the clues, which said that Doctor Ashford is a villain. From those clues, they would go upstairs. What the heck are these two doing? Directly exposing the BOSS's identity and then beat it up until it came back to its original form?

"Little Tan is still alive. Basically, he is with these two. But he

doesn’t like or know now to control other people. And, he would have no reason to ask them to go to the top floor. Moreover, they are powerful players as it’s impossible that they would listen to him."

"Thus, the other two are doing on their own wills. And, they are strangely right about everything."

Feng Bujue found this scenario wasn’t alright at all. He got himself together from a little bit overexcited state, took out the Winchester, reloaded it and stormed out of the room.

Although he had rushed in here, his mind had automatically remembered the routes he had traveled by. Also, there were zombies acting as the traffic signals that aided Feng Bujue in finding his way back quickly.

Since his speed was improved with the Dance of the Knight, he almost consumed nothing to reach the speed that other players had to run madly and recklessly to achieve. He then ran towards his target.

10 minutes later, Feng Bujue had reached the elevator that ran to the ground and the first level. As he had rushed out of there, the piles of dead bodies were still blocking the elevator’s doors, and they were still stuck there. It took him more than three minutes to move seven or eight bodies from the elevator to the corridor. Then, he went up to the first ground and met Wang Tanzhi in the lobby.

"HEY! Little Tan!" Feng Bujue called out for him.

Little Tan turned around, "Eh? Jue-Ge, how did you come here from behind me?"

"Don’t babble," Feng Bujue stopped him, walked forward and took out a tube of serum in his bag, "drink it."

"What’s that?" Little Tan received the serum and checked out its properties. "How did you get it?"

"I’ve just checked the lab underground," Feng Bujue answered.

"Hey, the other two players—" Little Tan hadn’t finished, yet Feng Bujue understood what he wanted to say and answered him directly, "They died in another place."

They exchanged the information briefly then headed to the top floor of the building. On the way there, they told each other about their experiences and the situation they knew.

What Little Tan narrated to Feng Bujue had proved his reasoning, leaving him suspected that there should be something strange about the Peerless General Pan Feng and the Executioner Hua Xiong. To Feng Bujue, those two were still within his scope of acceptance. The problem mainly laid in their actions. They hadn’t done anything to collect the clues, but they directly went straight to the top floor of the building to find Doctor Ashford. This was the ‘amazing luck’, or they had known beforehand some

information that normal players couldn’t access.

Feng Bujue followed Little Tan straight to level 51. From the ground to level 47, they had followed the path that Little Tan and the other two had traveled. For the last four levels, even though Little Tan hadn’t come there before, with the landmarks of the dead bodies on the ground, they were still able to track down their predecessors.

When they were about to reach the top floor, Feng Bujue asked, "The first time you’ve been here with them, did you travel on the same road several times or met a dead end?"

"Oh," Little Tan tried to remember, "Not really," Little Tan immediately answered, "But now we are walking on the same route. We’ve changed the elevator several times and climbed some staircases at different levels," he paused for a while, "eh, yeah, how did they know in which level we should change to use the emergency staircase?!"

"They know the route too," Feng Bujue mused.

While they were talking, they reached level 52.

There was a long corridor that lead to the interior of the floor from the staircase. Along the corridor, there was a big flowerpot every 10 meters. A transparent glass wall stood opposite the corridor which printed the Allerbmu’s Logo. Inside, there was a large office that occupied the whole space of this floor. The office had countless cubicles with a typical arrangement of desks, chairs,

computers, kettles, and stationaries. Also, there were some separated offices at both ends of the place.

Just from the first glimpse, they knew this was exactly the zone marked ‘Office Area’ on the map at the lobby. Nothing more.

They walked along the corridor, getting into the large office area through an automatic sliding door. This floor didn’t have any traces or blood streaks to prove that zombies had been here. This wasn’t a good sign since it was the sign of a big BOSS-level monster.

Feng Bujue had scanned through the room just once. He hadn’t deployed any reasoning, and suddenly, he felt the ground under his feet was shaking as a large section of ceiling around dozens of meters ahead of them was falling off with a loud, shattering sound. An ugly human-shaped monster came into the room from the hole it had broken. A big section of cement ceiling grumblingly fell on the ground, diffusing a dense mist of dust.

Then, there were two more figures who plunged down from the hole. Needless to say, they were the two Gods Pan Feng and Hua Xiong.

Inside the mist of rolling dust, the three figures were tangling, struggling with each other. The light reflected from the axe and spear constantly flashed as they could hear the sound of sharp weapons piercing through flesh. Gradually, black blood expanded on the ground.

After one minute of fighting, the dust started to disperse. The monster turned around and dashed towards the glass wall as it saw the situation was too difficult to parry. Pan and Hua also knew its intention of running away. Of course, they didn't want to let it go. If not, their plan of completing the scenario here would be over.

Hua Xiong bent then ran to the front of the monster, turning and sweeping his spear to the monster's head as the handle of the spear turned into a fading shadow. Since Pan Feng's weapon was much heavier, his speed was slower. He could only step forward to approach the target, then hack his Mountain Splitting Axe on the monster's back.

The two of them were chasing after the mob non-stop, forcing the mutant Ashford to a dead corner. At this moment, in an attempt to run away, the monster didn't hesitate taking a hard strike from the spear. The spear then pierced through the monster's skull from its left eye socket, dragging out a mess of substance.

However, this kind of wound couldn't kill the mutant monster. It curled up its body and successfully dodged Pan Feng's axe. The monster then came to the glass wall, using its elbows, which were aided with sharp bones like spikes, and smashed the glass. After making a crack there, the monster balled its body and broke the glass wall, jumping off the building.

Pan Feng and Hua Xiong dashed to the wall, looking at the mutant body falling in the air. When the monster was about to reach the ground, it immediately used the suckers and mucus on its body to stick its body to the wall and quickly descended to the

ground, fleeing away from their visions.

"Tsk, it’s gone," Pan Feng said.

"Indeed, under circumstances of the absence of other players, when the two of us attack the BOSS, it will trigger changes in its intelligences and reactions," Hua Xiong replied.

"You guys," Feng Bujue’s voice arose behind them, making them startled.

As they turned around, they could see Feng Bujue’s unfriendly eyes and the inexplicable face of Wang Tanzhi.

"Could you please tell me," Feng Bujue asked directly, "who the hell are you?"

Doctor Lizard: The Lizard (Curt Connors) is a fictional character, a supervillain appearing in American comic books published by Marvel Comics. The character is usually depicted as an enemy of Spider-Man.

Chapter 56: The Peerless Garlic (10)

"Too bad," Pan Feng muttered.

"Has he heard that?" Hua Xiong also lowered his voice.

"I’m just a couple meters away from you. Do you think whispering works?" Feng Bujue said.

"Yeah... Ha, ha... It’s..." Pan Feng was about to answer him, but Feng Bujue interrupted, "Before you make up your lie with a smile, I should tell you that I don’t think you are using Auto to play the game since your behaviors don’t look like ones. Obviously, you are Dream Inc.’s staff. I don’t know whether you are GMs (Game Master) or not, but I’m sure you don’t want your jobs to be exposed to the light." His eyes raked over Pan Feng and Hua Xiong, indicating that he was about to tell the key points. "Tell us the actual situation. We will work with you guys. And, when this scenario is done, we promise to keep it on the down low. If not, I will enrich what happened today, add interesting details like oil or vinegar, divide them into many chapters as that of a novel, and post them at many different big forums to ask for benefits."

"Argh, wait a minute," Hua Xiong answered, "let us discuss for a moment."

"As you wish," Feng Bujue said then turned around, walking away from them.

The other two then left the broken glass wall, came into a corner

of the room and started whispering. Five minutes later, they came back.

Pan Feng spoke to Feng Bujue and Little Tan, "Alright, what do you want to know?"

"Who are you? What are you doing here? What is the true plot of this scenario?" Feng Bujue spit out really quick as he had soon thought about the questions he would ask them.

"You’re not wrong, we are Game Masters," Hua Xiong said, "we are here to solve a group of trash data, which is called the ‘Derivative’," he paused then continued, "about the plot, you’ve just seen we were fighting with the mutant Ashford. Generally, the plot is like... this Ashford has some anti-human feelings that he had sneaked the Virus Z from the research institute. Then, he had combined this virus with a special original fluid. This combination then was spread out from the rooftop of this building through a device. Then, the entire city got infected."

"Thus, only the zombies inside the laboratory are normal, and the zombies on the street are the nondescript mutated Bloody Zombie Wolves?" Feng Bujue continued.

"In fact, the Bloody Zombie Wolves, as an evolved form of the virus-host, were set to be stronger than the normal zombies. Although they look like garbage now, when the night falls, and without garlic, players at your guys’ levels would have to struggle hard with them," Hua Xiong said.

"What happened when we met those Zombie Werewolves?" asked Wang Tan Zhi.

"According to the plot's development, there should be some small BOSSES in the building," Pan Feng answered, "the relevant description of the Zombie Werewolves reads 'It's 3/100000 that the persons who are infected with the virus could become a stronger and more stable form of mutant zombies."

Feng Bujue said, "So you are able to check the properties of many things, including the profiles of monsters, the routes, when the FLAG is triggered, and the entire map of the scenario."

"Not only those but also the players' locations, current status, skills, abilities given by title, etc. We can check those at any time in our menu." Pan Feng said, "I remember you got infected. You're pretty cool that you alone could find the serum in the research institute."

Feng Bujue said, "Not that much, however, I think there's something that you can't check it out," he paused for a while, "did you mention the 'Derivative'?"

Hua Xiong sighed. "If I could check it out, we didn't need to put forth that much to find a way before completing the scenario."

"After we completed the quests to finish the game, we, the normal players would be teleported, but you can skip the teleportation. Thus, when we got out of the scenario and receive the rewards, it's when you start your works, right? Without

ordinary players holding you down, you can find the Derivative in the completed scenario and finish it," said Feng Bujue.

"Ah, cool. Just with some information, you can already make it to this step," said Hua Xiong.

"I have no interest in your situation and this scenario," Feng Bujue rubbed the nape of his neck then lifted his head up to relax his neck bones, "please tell me in details about the Derivative."

"Even if you know, you are not of help," Pan Feng said, "if I were you, I would wish for the GM to bring me to find the mutant Ashford and kill it. Then, I would happily take the rewards for completing the scenario."

"Please, explain only what's relevant to the Derivative," Feng Bujue said with his smiley face, "if not, I think I couldn't help but send two emails with sharp words and interesting information to Young Master Ji Bu and that Name guy to tell them that, because of some technical problems, you guys had been screwed up by a strong monster, which shouldn't have existed in this scenario."

"Hey, how did you know that the Derivative had killed them?" Pan Feng asked.

"I just simply matched the results and the process," said Feng Bujue.

Pan and Hue wanted to cry as they heard him saying that.

"Yeah, cough, cough. Alright," Hua Xiong said, "S'ok if you know the information. In fact, sooner or later, the other players will know about the existence of the Derivative. However, the chance that you can meet it is too small. The company is now preparing a relevant introduction with appropriate words for it." He scanned here and there then said, "You guys come here." He then stepped up, leading the other three to a coffee machine.

He walked into the room nearest to the coffee machine, grabbed an eye-catching coffee tin and opened the lid. He then pointed to the amount of coffee inside the tin, which was around three-fourth, and said, "Assuming that this amount of coffee powder was the data," he pointed his right hand's index finger, "and there existed a grain of powder, which was the uncontrollable trash data needed to be deleted." He paused for a while then continued, "However, this grain of powder in the tin is moving nonstop," he eyed Feng Bujue and Wang Tanzhi, "how do you filter it out and pick it up?"

"Impossible," Feng Bujue immediately answered.

"True, it's impossible," Hua Xiong continued as he put his hand into the tin and took a handful of coffee powder. "What the system could do is to grab the whole group of data including that trash data when they are traveling by and hold them like this." He raised his fist, and the coffee powder slowly leaked from the spaces between his fingers. "However, there was only one grain to destroy among the whole handful of coffee. As the coffee was still useful, I couldn't dump all of them for only one grain of powder. Moreover, I couldn't hold them for so long as the one I wanted to destroy could slip away and escape from the spaces between my fingers."

"Thus, the system uses these data to create a scenario," Feng Bujue said, "and it let the Derivative turns into the mob that could be killed or beaten up by the players. This would back it to the corner, and the system would solve it when the scenario is cleared."

Hua Xiong said, "Yes, it is." He then grabbed a cup and some sugar. "This cup is the container of the scenario. You players are the sugar cubes." He pointed to the glass. "When you are getting into the scenario, and the system says, [the number of your party's members is randomly generated: 6 persons]," he threw the coffee powder in his hand into the cup, "the data is put into the container, but at this stage, it is just the main elements, just like water, air, mud, etc.," he held six cubes of sugar in his hand, "next, six of you will enter the entrance of the scenario when the system says, [your team is in the party. Searching for more members or available teams]. At that moment," he took out two cubes, "two of them would be replaced by Pan-Ge and me. They would then be placed in another ready scenario. And, certainly, they are not aware of this change."

Pan Feng continued, "GMs always pair up to wait for an order. When there's a sign of the Derivative captured in a scenario, we are going to enter the party which is about to play that scenario. Players who got replaced are always from a team or lonesome players. And, they are not from the same team with the players who have already entered the party in another scenario."

"How about the case of a team of five or six?" Little Tan intervened.

"In the case of a team of five, we could only send one GM. If they are a team of six, we have no other way around, and they have to confront the Derivative on their own. Anyway, since the first day we've opened the server, such a situation has never happened," Pan Feng answered, "by the way, the system could only 'catch' the quantity of data enough for six players in Multiplayer Survival Mode scenario. Thus, you should be afraid that you could meet the Derivative in a scenario for two to five players or other playing modes."

"Does it mean that the scenario for a party of six would be very dangerous?" Little Tan was dazed.

"There're not so many Derivatives," Pan Feng smiled, "the chance of this uncontrollable data to exist is 1/10000. At our company, we have two teams that have been using both sleep mode and non-sleep mode for the whole 30 days, but we have just encountered the Derivative for 10 times."

"In short, when you hear [generating the scenario]," Hua Xiong put the sugar cubes into the cup and poured warm water from the coffee machine, causing coffee powder to instantly turn into liquid, "the available elements will base on your levels, fighting abilities, the tendency of your Specialty and performance to generate the typical contents of the scenario such as the plot or the worldview. And the Derivative, at this moment, has been blended into the scenario and started to be shaped together with the other elements."

Feng Bujue contemplated then asked, "So, how strong is the

Derivative?"

"Ha, ha..." Pan Feng smiled, "You've seen how strong we are."

"I have," Feng Bujue said.

"Do you know why we have to pair up to solve the Derivative?"

"One could be possibly killed," Feng Bujue continued.

Pan Feng said, "Good, you know it now. Don't think that we are just players at level 13. We are using the GMs' accounts. In fact, our fighting capacities are 10 times higher than that of our levels. Even so, we couldn't assure that we would win all the time and nothing could stop us. Take the current BOSS as an example, when it jumped off the building and ran away, our hands were tied. If we want to jump down, it will be the same result with the ordinary players, which is suicide."

"Why didn't your company increase your characters' competence? For example, you are at level 13, but you have the powers of level 50 or something," asked Little Tan

Hua Xiong raised the cup of coffee in front of his face. "Two cubes of sugar could be put in this cup, how about two watermelons?"

"Ah..." Little Tan nodded, indicating that he got it now.

"Our accounts wouldn’t be leveled up, I guess since we are in charge of the scenarios for a level range of 5 to 14. Besides, the other GMs, who are in charge of the higher levels, could have a tremendous fighting competence." Pan Feng said, "Now you know the story of the Derivatives, if we ever meet again, although this chance is almost zero, but if we really do, please cooperate with the other GMs and guide the other players to keep it on the down low."

"I really want to know," Feng Bujue contemplated, "if you can’t finish the Derivative in the scenario, what will happen?"

Pan and Hua got their face changed having listened to that.

Feng Bujue continued, "You’ve also said that one GM could hardly confront a Derivative. This means it’s happened before in which a GM was chasing after a Derivative and got killed."

"Normally, that scenario would be restricted and turned back to a group of data. And, the Derivative, which is lucky enough to survive, would be stronger and more cunning," Hua Xiong said.

"Cunning?" Feng Bujue said doubtfully.

"The Derivatives with a certain intelligence are categorized into four levels. Yeah, we GMs are sent to deal with the lowest level, which is level 4. This sort of AI got a higher intelligence than the final BOSS of the scenario and also stronger.

Once the scenario ended and the Derivative is still alive, it should

be, yeah, just like I've said, become more cunning and stronger. Possibly, it could level up to level 3. Under the normal circumstances, 97% Derivatives at level 4 could be solved by one GM. However, it needs two GMs to deal with the ones at level 3. If we send only one GM, the success rate is under 50%."

Feng Bujue said, "How about the higher level ones?"

"Never seen before," Hua Xiong said, "honestly, we've never heard of it before. The Derivative level 2 only exists on papers. In fact, up to now, there's only one Derivative level 3 that had appeared. In this stage, the chance that the Derivative level 3 appears is a little bit higher. Of course, even if it is 10 times higher, the chance is still relatively small."

"Yeah, I got it. Then, let us experience how strong the trash data level 4 is in this scenario," Feng Bujue smilingly said.

Auto was usually used by gamers that usually take advantage of the computer technology to make some changes to the game. In short, they invented these plug-in to cheat in a game.

Chapter 57: The Peerless Garlic (11)

"This, little brother, my words means nothing to you, does it?" Pan Feng opened his eyes wider, looking at Feng Bujue, "I told you the Derivatives are tremendous. Why do you want to see it? Wanna die? Now follow us to finish this scenario and leave, okay?"

"As you've just said, the Derivative level 4 in this scenario would be slightly stronger and smarter than Ashford," Feng Bujue said, "wouldn't we be able to kill it?"

"Thing is, you guys don't need to help us kill it," said Hua Xiong.

Little Tan showed a frightened countenance, looking at Feng Bujue and said, "True! We don't need to go and kill it!"

"The reason why you said that we don't need to do so is that even if we can kill the Derivative, it won't be counted for any Quests or can help complete the scenario. But the risk will be pretty high, right?" asked Feng Bujue.

The other two nodded and replied in unison, "Yes!"

"Leaving aside the level or Skill Value or the other benefits; perhaps you guys have forgotten the most important thing that the game brings to players," Feng Bujue said.

"It's... What's that?"

"Joy," Feng Bujue smiled, "you've also mentioned that the chance players could meet the Derivative is very small. Perhaps there would be no second chance. Contrarily, I can play as many Multiplayer Survival Mode scenarios as I please. If I die, I can always do it all over again. What's the problem?" He paused then continued, "It's a rare chance that we could meet the Derivative, but I would just stand here and watch the two GMs kill the BOSS and finish the Main Quest. Then I would get my ass dragged out of the scenario. Isn't it too boring? Normally, even if I'm going to die while struggling with the mobs in a scenario, it will be much better than just watch and do nothing."

Little Tan looked up at the sky. "Listening to you, I suddenly feel that it will be a very big loss if I don't chase after that Derivative."

"True. Many people don't even have a chance to meet it. What if we die in its hands?" Feng Bujue said, "just like you've played Contra for thousands of times, and now you are facing the last, powerful BOSS. Even if you are going to die, you will not go around and dodge it."

"Ah ha! Makes sense!" Little Tan said excitedly.

"This kid's thinking is weird," Pan Feng whispered to Hua Xiong.

"He's not only a weirdo. He is simply a (perverted) gentleman," Hua Xiong also lowered his voice.

"You two are still standing next to me. Do you really think that no one could hear your whispers?" Feng Bujue screamed out.

...

5:00 PM. The gun shop.

Feng Bujue and Wang Tanzhi were observing the death scene of the two other players.

Young Master Ji Bu and The Name Is Difficult To Choose had turned into white halos and disappeared for long. After the players had died, their bodies would definitely not be left behind in the scenario. In the same theory, if a player transformed into a monster due to a virus infection, when his time was over, he would turn into a white halo and disappear, leaving a zombie at his spot.

In short, the game producer would not let any dead bodies of players remain in the scenario under any kind of forms. Players would then turn into a white halo and leave or still be alive.

It would be hard to figure out how the Derivative had killed those two. However, after Feng Bujue had walked around the damaged couch which had a big puddle of blood for half an hour, he finally had some ideas, "They were sitting here with their guns. Each of them was watching a direction." He sat on the couch. "That’s why there are so many shells around the couch. The direction of the mobs’ blood splash also proves this." He looked at the general direction which The Name Is Difficult To Choose had watched over when he was still alive. "The Derivative came from that direction," he got up, walked straight to the cross in front of them and turned around, observing the road while walking back, "the

Derivative should appear as a woman. At least, from a far distance, it didn’t look like a monster. Perhaps it was a pretty lady."

"How did you know that?" asked Little Tan.

"The blood stains on the ground are quite useful. If it walked on this road, it would definitely leave some shoe prints." Feng Bujue crouched down and observed the road. "There are traces of high heels here. Pretty clear." He lifted his head. "And, all the zombies on this street, no matter female or male, none of them are wearing high heels." He explained, "Apparently, the owner of these shoe prints is not here at this moment. It left right after having killed the two players."

Feng Bujue got up and took several steps back and forth. "10 steps away from the couch is where the shoe prints stop. This is the distance from which it had taken its attack," he walked to the couch again, "here, there’s a shoe print. It’s where she stood while attacking them." He turned around to estimate the distance of around 10 steps away. "Roughly seven meters. It could get there in just one jump, which proves that it isn’t as slow as the Bloody Zombie Wolves."

He got to the other end of the couch. "After having killed them, she left in the other direction. She left some traces as she had stepped on the blood."

"Jue-Ge," Little Tan asked, "you haven’t answered me yet. Does it have to be a pretty girl if it is wearing high heels?"

Feng Bujue answered, "Check the shoe prints when it came," he walked to the place which had the shoe prints again. "These traces came from ‘walking’, not ‘running’. And, it’s absolutely not the way the zombies move." He pointed to the ground. "From the stride and the depths of the shoe prints on the blood, she should be around 1.65 meters tall. She isn’t heavy; moreover, her gait could be considered elegant."

"Maybe it’s a monster who has an alluring walking posture," Little Tan continued.

"If there’s a monster wearing high heels or a man wearing high heels and slowly approaching you, are you sure you can be calm enough to wait until it’s 10 steps away from you?" Feng Bujue asked.

"Oh," Little Tan mused, "Yeah, that’s true."

"If the Derivative looked like a monster, The Name Is Difficult To Choose would have shot it sooner," Feng Bujue continued, "next, we will have two possibilities. First, the Derivative started to run and attack them."

"From the shoe prints, we can cross this situation," Little Tan said.

Feng Bujue said, "The second possibility... the Derivative slowly approached them. When it got to a suitable distance, it assaulted them." He paused for a while, "If so, The Name Is Difficult To Choose and Young Master Ji Bu wouldn’t have just sat there and

waited as they had enough time to get up and back off while defending themselves."

"Perhaps the monster has super powers that kept them still on the couch?" Little Tan said.

"Well, then it flips over the possibility that the Derivative's appearance is of a monster."

"Eh, this is also true," Little Tan said, "so if the Derivative was a woman, how are you so sure that she was a pretty lady?"

"Stop."

Feng Bujue smiled then continued, "Thus, what had happened was, they were sitting here and they saw a lady who didn't look like a monster coming to them." He sat down on the couch again. "When the Derivative was around 10 steps away, they finally figured out something was strange, and they decided to attack it first. However, it was too late to smell the danger with such a short distance. The Derivative instantly jumped and finished them." He caressed the torn leather couch. "This looks like the claw of Wolverine; moreover, besides those last shoe prints, there was no trace that shows that it had sped up."

""What do you mean?" asked Little Tan.

"If you don't need the run, just tenderly jump forward, how far you could jump?" Feng Bujue asked.

"Two meters max."

"It could leap at least six meters."

"A..."

"After it had jumped over the distance of 10 steps, it instantly used some weapon that resembled claws or its own hands to tear the bodies of the two of them apart. The couch also got hit." Feng Bujue lifted his chin. "From this scene, that's all we could know."

Little Tan raised his head, looking at Pan Feng and Hua Xiong lying low on a roof of a house not far from there. "Bros, please hurry up!"

The other two didn't care about him and continued to chat.

Feng Bujue said, "Easy, they've said that if the Derivative appears within the radius of one kilometer, the system will notify them. Moreover, they can check the coordinates of the target on their map."

"I think this system is dumb enough. Why doesn't it just give the coordinates of the Derivative to them?" Little Tan said.

"They said the Derivative is the 'uncontrollable data'. It should have something to prevent the system from searching for it or

interfering with it. If it could do what you said, the system could just use lightning to strike the Derivative to death. Isn’t it much easier? Why do they need to send the GMs to the scenarios to kill it?" Feng Bujue said, "And, from what these two have told us, we can’t trust them totally."

Little Tan’s visage changed. "What? They’ve lied to us?"

"Not like that. Perhaps they told the truth," Feng Bujue said, "however, they are just two normal workers, how could they be sure that what the managers of the Dream Inc. had told them are all true."

Chapter 58: The Peerless Garlic (12)

"The blood in the barrel seems to still be full," Feng Bujue came to the barrel, "seems the Derivative doesn’t need blood. It came here to kill those two players."

Little Tan continued, "So why didn’t it come to kill us? Aren’t our levels the lowest here?"

"It’s easy to explain why it didn’t kill you. Your location was very close to the two GMs; if it wanted to kill you, it had to recklessly enter the distance that the other two could spot it." Feng Bujue said, "When the scenario has begun, Young Master Jibu, The Name Is Difficult To Choose and I were possibly its targets. Especially me, whose level is the lowest and I was working alone. If I got killed, the GMs would assume that it was because of the Bloody Zombie Wolves."

It was the best time to kill me, but the Derivative didn’t do that or search for the other two players. Until we were with the two GMs in the Allerbmu Building, it came here for the other two. Thus," Feng Bujue raised his head, calling out for Pan Feng and Hua Xiong, "hey, generals, is it true that at the beginning of the scenario, there’s a period that the Derivative can’t move?"

Hua Xiong cocked his head and yelled back from the rooftop, "It’s not that it can’t move. It has just not completed its transformation yet." He immediately added, "Do you remember the cup of coffee?"

"How?" Feng Bujue said.

"The normal data is just like the coffee powder; it will melt with warm water. However, the Derivative is the uncontrollable data, and it needs more time to dissolve totally," Hua Xiong answered, "under normal circumstances, it’s about the time when we’ve almost finished the scenario with the other players that the Derivative has completed its transformation and appeared in the game." He paused for two seconds before he continued, "But this time, the Derivative had completed its transformation quite fast."

"Oh, so it's like that." Feng Bujue appeared to suddenly remember something, "Yeah, how do you know that the target is ranked level 4? It’s the system’s notification, or you could see it from the GM’s menu?"

"After we have ‘contacted’ with it, we can see its level in the menu," Pan Feng answered, "we only need to take a weapon used for close combat to touch it."

"Wait a second," Feng Bujue said, "in other words, it’s just your assumption to say that this one is a level 4 Derivative?"

Pan Feng and Hua Xiong exchanged looks then smiled, "Ha, ha. What did you think when we told you that the Derivatives are classified into four levels? Where to find the level 3 Derivatives? Our job is to kill all the level 4 Derivatives. Unless we’ve failed many times or the level 4 Derivatives are lucky enough to appear in the scenarios of six players, the level 3 Derivatives will not be born."

Feng Bujue gave them a dry smiled. "Alright, I hope you were right."

"Hey, little brother, how is 'checking the scene' going? Did you jump to any conclusions yet?" asked Pan Feng.

"Ah," Feng Bujue poked his hands into his pockets, walking back and forth, "the Derivative is a woman, around 165 centimeters tall. She looks thin, too. She could instantly take out a weapon, or she's already wearing it, which is a claw-shaped equipment of around 20 centimeters. Her speed and strength aren't much different from the Ashford monster we've met in the Allerbmu Building."

"According to my assumption, you guys could only know its position within the radius that the system could detect. However, it could locate you guys well, also the exact locations of each player. Thus, you can't make us become its bait, because whenever you guys are near, it will not come for us.

"How smart this Derivative is, I don't know for now. According to the current situation, it completely knows what it 'should' do. Its purposes are to survive and evolve. And, the indispensable condition to do that is to make all the players and GMs get out of this scenario."

"From its point of view to plan, first, it wouldn't stop you from taking advantages and complete the scenario as soon as possible since once the scenario is completed, all the players would leave. To it, this is a relief."

"Next, it’s an indispensable condition to ensure safety. For example, when it is moving far from you, the Derivative is not afraid of killing players by itself. Perhaps this helps it grow? I don’t know."

He stopped walking. "Besides, there’s something that makes me notice. It’s the relationship between the Derivative and the mobs. Would the mobs attack the Derivative or they could communicate? The fact that whether they would be able to affect each other to change the direction of the plot in the scenario therefore affected the Main Quest or not, I have no way to confirm.

"In short, if I were the Derivative, in the particular situation of this scenario, I have three options."

Feng Bujue sat on the couch again, cocked his head while his two fingers were patting on his forehead. "Yeah, top option, use itself as a bait and wait for the right time. For example, when the night falls, it would come into your searching range and lead you to a particular location then work with Ashford and the Bloody Zombie Wolves to kill you." He raised his head and rubbed his nose bridge. "I know you can check the hidden details, the mobs' profiles, and the map, but you can’t get the exact location of each mob. It’s not difficult to figure out since you’ve used the hidden details of the plot to find doctor Ashford. After it had turned into the monster and ran away, you’ve found it hard to locate the monster again." He lowered his tone, "Assuming that the Derivative could find Ashford and talk him into its plan, since it’s smart, of course, it could make use of the monster to achieve what it wants. To the Derivative, this option has the highest success rate."

He pointed to a general direction afar then glared at Little Tan. Little Tan then turned around to see a coming Bloody Zombie Wolf. As he understood what Feng Bujue meant, he took his bat and walked to the mob.

By the time Little Tan was fighting with the mob, Pan and Hua jumped off the rooftop. Since Feng Bujue had told them that ambushing was useless, they didn't need to stay there to enjoy the wind anymore.

"The second option is to kill Ashford," Feng Bujue continued, "if it did so, Little Tan and I would leave the scenario because it's completed. Then, the Derivative would deal with you guys or play cat and mouse with you for the next eight or nine hours, which is the time you have to logout due to time restriction. Of course, as it is just a group of data, might be it doesn't know that," he paused for a short while, "if it chose this way, it meant that the Derivative couldn't communicate with the other monsters. To prevent the unexpected factors like the mobs and the players, it had to do so. Also, we could see that the Derivative had assumed that once it tries to one on two with you guys, it could kill you both."

Little Tan had killed that mob, and he was walking back to them.

"About the last option, which is a bad one, the chance is not much," Feng Bujue said, "this bad option is to ambush the four of us randomly." He continued, "However, this is not the way the Derivative has been using from the beginning; but if it stormed to us like that, there would be a reason behind it. For example, after it had eaten Ashford's brain, it had become an intimidating monster, and that gave it the confidence to kill the four of us."

After having listened to Feng Bujue’s analysis, Pan Feng and Hua Xiong dropped their jaws in awe. They looked at him the way they used to look at the mobs. "Excuse us, what do you do for a living?"

"Great—" Feng Bujue was about to say one of the answers he liked to use.

Little Tan directly interrupted, "Freelance!"

Feng Bujue shrugged, get them back to the topic, and talked to the two GMs, "We should discuss the ways to deal with these three options. Except for the second option, Little Tan and I could help you with the other two."

"The fact that the players at level 14 and 12 got killed speaks something. From your own reasoning, you’ve estimated clearly the strength of the Derivative, do you really think that you two could help us?" Pan Feng said, "I know you are a potential player and you got your own ideas, not just depending on the game. If I’m not the GM, I can’t be compared with you, but in front of an existence like the Derivative, fighting competence is the key factor, the others are just secondary."

"You’ve belittled the players’ competencies," Feng Bujue said deliberately, "as you’ve said, one GM alone could chase and kill a level 4 Derivative, and the success rate is over 95%. So, from the competence of a GM, in this scenario, the Derivative is just like a player ranked under level 20. Moreover, it is just a group of data, an AI, not a real human being.

"Young Master Ji Bu and The Name Is Difficult To Choose got killed instantly because they were careless. If they had considered the Derivative a powerful opponent then used firearm and skills to fight against it, I think they could at least hurt it or even escape from it."

"I can’t wait to see the hunt for the Derivative. Moreover, I can be able to participate in the hunt, thus," he paused for a while, "now we suppose that the Derivative had chosen the first option, which is the best for it and the toughest for us, we should think about how to deal with it."

...

The night fell. Every bit of air in this city had become as cold as ice, which could freeze people’s blood.

The Bloody Zombie Wolves now had their eyes as red as blood. Although their action was still slow, their sense of smell became better. Whenever they found a prey, their running got faster as they even ran on all four. Their strength, speed, and competence were significantly different from that in the morning. At this moment, the Bloody Zombie Wolves were twice as strong as the normal zombies.

Under the cover of the night, two figures were dashing forward.

There were more than 50 Bloody Zombie Wolves chasing after them.

20 minutes ago, the Derivative had appeared in the detecting range of the two GMs. However, it had been running around for a while without attempting to approach them. This suited Feng Bujue's reasoning, which was also the worst situation.

At this moment, Pan Feng and Feng Bujue were running away from the Bloody Zombie Wolves with a faster speed, dashing towards the general direction of the Derivative. Their clothes had gotten many bloodstains from the mobs, which was impossible to avoid when fighting with them.

Chapter 59: The Peerless Garlic (13)

Peerless Pan was swinging his giant axe, leading the way as Feng Bujue was behind him, timely supporting him with his Winchester. The Bloody Zombie Wolves, which had attacked them on either the sides or the front, were all killed when they had approached a certain distance.

The Derivative was surprised with this situation since it had expected that it just needed to run around the edge of the two GM's searching range. However, one of the two GMs had started to chase after it together with a normal player, and their speed was much faster than what it had thought.

Not only was the Derivative surprised, but also Pan Feng was amazed with Feng Bujue's competence. He understood that it wasn't easy for a low-level player to follow a GM and deliberately kill incoming monsters like that.

Pan Feng knew the effects of the [Dance of the Knight] since he could see the players' properties and status. Anyway, he didn't think that other players, equipped with the same items and the shotguns, could do what Feng Bujue was performing now.

Feng Bujue was very calm and precise when dealing with the arising situation. It left Pan Feng a deep impression in his mind. Being shoulder to shoulder with him under the constant waves of monster, and with their lightning fighting speed, he eventually got this feeling.

Feng Bujue hadn’t missed his targets once. He would always attack the monster nearest and brought the biggest threat to them. He got an objective recognition of his attack method. When he could put his finger on the trigger, even if he was certain about his target, he didn’t spend time to aim for a particular spot as he just angled himself for the best shot. Thus, he didn’t waste a bullet.

With Feng Bujue’s aid, Pan Feng’s pressure had been much reduced. At the beginning, he had worried that while they were converged by many Bloody Zombie Wolves, without his protection, Feng Bujue would die soon. However, not long after that, he recognized this worry was completely unnecessary. Feng Bujue could take care of himself well as well as back him up.

With this high accuracy just like that of a machine, Pan Feng could be able to focus on dealing with the monsters coming from their front. Thus, their chasing speed was quite fast that made the Derivative speed up its running.

After over 20 minutes of pursuit, they got into a gymnasium. The Derivative came into the building then stopped moving. It seemed that the mutant Ashford was near.

"It’s as what I thought. The lair is in this large building," said Feng Bujue.

He had put on [The Eye of Hatred], and now he was holding the Winchester. This was to make room for more bullets storage.

"Alright, you got another one." When Pan Feng was talking with

him, he turned around to check the access outside the gymnasium. Although they had left the mobs far behind, with this current tendency, this place would be packed not long after that.

At the same time, Hua Xiong and Little Tan were about to arrive.

It was Feng Bujue's idea that they had divided into two teams. Since the Derivative had come into their searching range, they had started to apply Feng Bujue's option. Pan and Feng had marked themselves with blood. On one hand, they were chasing after the Derivative; on the other hand, they were trying to lure more mobs.

Hua Xiong and Little Tan departed three minutes later. Although GMs couldn't see the current coordinates of the mobs, they could still see the current coordinates of players. Thus, Hua Xiong could deliberately bring Little Tan along the route that Pan and Feng had made to follow them. At that time, most of the Bloody Zombie Wolves, which were still alive, had been attracted to the scent of fresh blood, and the others were beaten up until they couldn't move again.

Feng Bujue had arranged like this because he wanted to take care of Wang Tan Zhi. If the four of them had gone together, Wang Tan Zhi couldn't have caught up with them. Even if he could, his Stamina Value would be drained. Moreover, when they went together, no matter whether the formation was one or two lines, Little Tan was still a big chunk of weakness once they were attacked.

However, the main problem was, if the four of them all joined the pursuit, it would be the same whether they had put blood on

their bodies or not. At night, the sense of smell of those Bloody Zombie Wolves was much better. If they all ran together, they would lure many mobs then. Now, only the two of them had the strong smell of blood on their bodies, so the mobs would prioritize them as their first targets. Thus, they all chased after Pan Feng and Feng Bujue. Hua Xiong and Little Tan could follow them deliberately behind an army of monsters. When they arrived at the location where the Derivative had set up for them, they would gather and start to fight together.

And that was how they were divided into teams. It was much faster to carry out the pursuit than that of the four of them together. Moreover, it was safer for them. If anything happened unexpectedly, only Feng Bujue would die then. Even though Pan Feng had also painted his body with blood, he wouldn’t be killed in just a short time.

Next, the second step of this plan was to do something to prevent those Bloody Zombie Wolves when they reached the place of the Derivative.

"They are approaching," Pan Feng said. He could check the players’ coordinates, thus, he knew where they were better than Feng Bujue. "We’re lucky that the mobs didn’t form a thick wall." He slashed his Mountain Splitting Axe while talking, killing a group of Bloody Zombie Wolves dashing towards him.

"As what we’ve planned. Dividing into two teams could help us get here faster, and the chance of being converged along the way is low," Feng Bujue answered him while shooting a mob.

Not long after that, from 10 meters away, Hua Xiong emerged with the spear dancing in his hands. The shadows of the moving spear were like flying dragons who were making a path, leading Little Tan towards Feng Bujue and Pan Feng.

The four of them then fought against the crowd of mobs and backed off to the entrance of the gymnasium. They stood on a staircase, around dozens of meters wide, looking down at the big crowd of Bloody Zombie Wolves that was getting bigger and bigger.

"The Derivative is right behind us, in this gymnasium," Pan Feng said, "as Little Brother Feng had assumed, the mutant BOSS is also here."

Hua Xiong asked, "Do you really have to do that?"

"Now, there’s no room for turning back, if I wanted to change my mind, when the Derivative’s coordinates appeared, I could have given it up and made the two of you paint blood on your bodies and lure the monsters away. Little Tan and I would have just then needed to hide somewhere near," Feng Bujue answered, "if we decided we are in, we would follow to the end."

"Yes, now we have no way back." At this moment, Little Tan didn’t feel anxious or fearful; he was standing on a high place, looking at the waves of monsters coming like a rising tide under the moonlight and he felt tranquil inside. In these few seconds, he finally got a glimpse of what the soldiers felt when they considered death as light as a feather. In a battlefield where either of us could turn back alive, when you see the force which is 20 times or even

200 times stronger than you flooding in, even if you are scared, showing it out doesn’t help at all.

"Let’s do it," Pan Feng said.

Little Tan squatted down near the main entrance, took out the explosives, pulled the fuse and flung it away. It took them almost one hour to find these best explosives in the city when the sun had set. There’s only one set of explosives with the normal quality. It couldn’t do much in fighting with the BOSS, however, it was the best item for this area now.

"Okay!" Little Tan said.

The four of them immediately retreated into the gymnasium. The explosives were detonated after they had run for a certain distance. After a loud explosion, the entrance collapsed. Debris blocks of this temporary building had blocked the entrance and kept the vastly immense crowd of Bloody Zombie Wolves outside the gymnasium.

Chapter 60: The Peerless Garlic (14)

There was no light inside the gymnasium. Feng Bujue and Little Tan took out their flashlight, while the other two GMs had equipped themselves with a pair of night vision goggles.

Pan and Hua had told them that the items they had were all fixed, including the weapons they were holding or the metal shoes, the invisible defensive items or the night vision goggles. In short, GM's equipment could be used in any scenario that they were in charge of. Those items didn't have any equipment requirements. They were powerful but all locked. A GM had all six Specialties graded D. And, at grade D, the success rate when they launched skill was just 60%. That's why they weren't equipped with active skills. All skills they had were passive ones.

The four of them then used the GM's menu to locate the Derivative while getting into the center of the gymnasium. This was a large basketball court. This place also didn't have any light.

Then, they went through the entrance and pushed open the gates to enter the court. The dark space immediately swallowed up the spotlight from their flashlight. Feng Bujue and Little Tan couldn't shine the far areas (such as the audience seating). The effects of Pan Feng's and Hua Xiong's night vision goggles were also reduced. At such a spacious place, the monster which had human-shaped could hide itself safely behind a chair on the stadium seating.

"I want to ask, is it useful if we talk to it?" Little Tan muttered as his hands were sweating and his hand which was holding the chef knife was shaking slightly.

The other three didn’t have the time to answer him, yet a grumbling sound arose from behind them. It came from where the mutant doctor Ashford was hiding as it stormed out, aiming for Little Tan.

The BOSS was set up to wait for them at the audience seat above the entrance, which was also the blind spot when they came into the court. Both of his location and the attack method weren’t what an ordinary mob could do.

The Derivative knew the players’ location and Ashford could smell them from the entrance; thus, it was laying in wait for them there, and its priority was the weakest player, which was the default setting for the BOSS.

This ambush surprised them. Moreover, the monster attacked in silence. Besides the sound of the wind caused when it had jumped off from the seating area, there was no other sound. Let alone an ordinary player like Wang Tanzhi, the GMs also couldn't detect it.

Fortunately, this place was quite tranquil and empty. The sound of his movement had come into Little Tan’s ears faster than the actual speed of Ashford. He had turned around before he got hit with a palm. Of course, the time he had to react was just one second.

Within one second, Little Tan didn’t have many choices. If he stood still or made a wrong move, his chance to survive would be reduced.

About why he wouldn’t die, when he had set the bomb outside the place, he had already put on the iron helmet. Now he had something to protect his head, so the situation in which his head would be torn apart wouldn’t happen. However, no matter whether it was the helmet or his body that would receive the attack, getting this strike would consume three-fourths of his blood. And, it would be hard to say whether it would come along with the ‘coma’ or ‘bleeding’ status.

With Little Tan’s current speed, it was impossible to dodge this strike. Also, there wasn’t enough time for Feng Bujue to shoot or one of the GM to swing their weapon to rescue him. At this moment, he could only rely on his own.

In a blink of an eye, Wang Tanzhi’s Fear Value didn’t increase. Instead, it declined to 0.

Just in a flash, his eyes changed, just like the eyes of a surgeon doing his operation with a calm, determined and attentive manners. The mutant monster was like a patient, who was in his anesthesia, laying on the operating table and couldn’t do anything with the upcoming events.

Some people who are usually polite and elegant would show their coldness and cruelty in an emergency case.

Wang Tanzhi’s hand, which was holding the knife, became stable and precise. In the dim, ambiguous place like this, his knife maneuvered an arch and collided with the claws of the mutant.

The result of the impact, no doubt could cause Little Tan’s knife to be blown away together with his broken or even cut off arm.

However, it took time for the force to be effective, no matter it was long or short.

At the moment when the blade of the knife touched the skin of the monster, before the counter force reacted, Little Tan’s figure had turned into a fading shadow and disappeared. Right after that, he reappeared around 10 meters away, not even hurt one beat. However, since the stadium seating was oblique, he showed himself in the middle of the air, which was five or six meters away from the ground. He then fell and rolled away, which cost him 27% of his Survival Value.

Even Feng Bujue was surprised. He didn’t think that in such a dangerous situation, Little Tan could be that calm to perform such a reaction. Pan Feng and Hua Xiong were scared, but their reflexes were fast. When Little Tan just disappeared, they immediately barged in, taking the chance that the monster hadn’t balanced himself yet—one spear and one axe simultaneously hacked down on the BOSS.

Seconds later, Hua Xiong said, "That boy had used [Retreat and Chop rapidly], right? Ha ha ha!" He couldn’t hold his laughter.

Pan Feng said, "Ah, I hadn’t reacted yet. Did he learn it or it’s granted from his title?"

"Leave this BOSS for me. You have other things to deal with," Feng Bujue suddenly spoke up.

Pang!

Feng Bujue shot his gun.

Feng Bujue had aimed for something behind Pan and Hua.

Currently, from deep inside the dark, a sharp light had shot over from the big screen above the basketball court. It looked like it was gliding in the air, plunging down from a distance to attack Pan Feng and Hua Xiong.

Ashford's ambush was a little surprise to them. Anyway, Feng Bujue had expected this attack. His assumptions about the Derivative's plan were relatively correct. If it could set up a lurking attack, it would back it up with some following moves. Certainly, the Derivative's targets weren't the players as it wanted to kill the GMs. The other players weren't a big threat to it, but if it could kill Pan Feng or Hua Xiong, its chance would be increased.

Thus, it didn't matter whether the strike of the mutant could hit the target or not; it got a more important role, which was to catch the two GM's attentions. When they laid their eyes attentively on confronting with the monster, the Derivative would definitely attack them with another trick and from another direction that was beyond their expectation.

A special environment, the location of the mutant monster, the place it would reach after the attack, etc., all had been planned for this ambush. If it worked, even if the mutant was killed, it was fine to the Derivative. Because, when the BOSS died, the other two players would be teleported within three minutes. And, at that time, Pan Feng and Hua Xiong were probably hurt, which put them into a negative situation. The Derivative then just needed to use its fast speed to stealth on them. Wait until the Bloody Zombie Wolves outside flooded into this place, and those two GMs would be over.

If there had been only Pan and Hua chasing after it this time, the Derivative's plan would have worked. Too bad it had encountered Feng Bujue this time.

After one shot, the Derivative, which was about five meters away, got hit and fell.

The [Eye of Hatred] soon observed everything hidden in the dark; although the flashlight couldn't shine on a far distance, when the Derivative was moving in the air, Feng Bujue could still realize it. He didn't panic; instead, he had warned Pan Feng and Hua Xiong, waiting for the Derivative to get into his shooting range then pulled the trigger.

Although the Derivative was agile, it didn't have the ability to freely change its direction while gliding in the air. The way it plunged down was blocked by Feng Bujue, just like facing a loaded gun.

The great stopping power of the Winchester made the Derivative,

when it got shot, look like it was bumping into a wall while jumping. After the gunshot, it paused in mid-air and then fell down. However, that monster was tough. Even if it was wounded with blood all over its body, it still clutched at the handrail at the edge of the audience seating.

Feng Bujue had spent two seconds to trash out the cartridge, loaded, aimed and shot at the monster's hand that was clutching at the handrail.

"Don't slow down. The Derivative is your main target. Leave the mutant mob for me," Feng Bujue loaded his gun and calmly reminded them again.

The two GMs now got it clear. Hua Xiong retreated his spear, turned around and put one hand on the handrail to support him as he plunged down to the seating area to begin his attacks towards the Derivative.

The area under the seating was pitch-black. However, as Hua Xiong had the night vision goggles, it didn't affect his fighting ability. From where Little Tan was standing, he couldn't see clearly the fighting scene as he could only see the sparks flared up in the night and the constant sounds of metal colliding on metal. He guessed that the Derivative was using its 'claws' now.

"You are tangling with it, I can't shoot," Feng Bujue told Pan Feng, "I told you, I can handle the mutant BOSS alone."

"Nonsense! Even if you can confront it, I'm pulling its hatred. If I

leave, it will come and attack altogether!" Pan Feng answered him while fighting with the monster.

"It’s easy." Feng Bujue put the gun away, took out the wrench and moved like he was taking risk recklessly.

Feng Bujue came near the mutant, stood between Pan Feng and the BOSS, and didn’t use any weapons but his leg to kick the monster.

Pan Feng thought that Feng Bujue got his mental illness burst out; however, unexpectedly, the mutant was screeching in pain and fell down to the ground with a weird posture.

Chapter 61: The Peerless Garlic (15)

Generally, the mutant Doctor Ashford still had human shape with a zombie face, a decomposing body, and a goggling eyes of a person who was choked to the point that they would explode at any moment. The doctor had an Einstein-like hairstyle, and his upper body was like a werewolf with fur and mane, while his hands had sharp claws. Taking a look at it from the back, the monster's elbows, heels, and spines all had jagged bones jutting out of the skin. However, he still had some special features of a vampire, which were fragile skin and fangs in his mouth.

In Feng Bujue's eyes, the appearance of this BOSS had three meanings to him: the monster had a head, he was afraid of garlic, and he could be tripped.

The divine skill that Feng Bujue had used was [The Lower Side Kick of a Brat], which he could only use three times. This skill could 'ignore the levels or grades and trip the monsters who could be tripped literally'; also, it would provoke the opponents to attack him.

"You go deal with the Derivative, leave this guy to me." Feng Bujue took the opportunity when the mutant hadn't gotten up yet and pounded his wrench on the monster's nape. A dull thud echoed as blood splashed out. This showed how cruel he was. After all, he had been vaccinated, so even if blood was splashed in his mouth right now, he wouldn't be scared.

Seeing this bloody scene, Pan Feng didn't know why he had a feeling that this could be done without his assistance.

"Alright, when we're done with the Derivative, we'll give you a hand." He turned around and jumped off the storey.

The monster was affected by the [Cerebral Concussion] twice, so it laid stunned on the ground under Feng Bujue's hammering for more than 10 seconds before it could get up again. Apparently, the monster had lost lots of blood. During this time, the BOSS had tried to get up once but fell again due to the stunning effects.

When the mutant finally got up again, Feng Bujue turned around and ran away. Of course, the BOSS started to chase after him. At this moment, unless someone used a despicable skill like that sideway kick to hit the BOSS, it wouldn't change its target.

"Little Tan, come help me!" Feng Bujue shouted while running around the seating area. His voice echoed in the empty, spacious court.

Wang Tanzhi had recovered after the fall. He cried out, ran to the stair which was nearest to him, and climbed up.

Feng Bujue was running madly with the mutant following behind him. His route was simple, which was just to run along the spacious seating area. Although he could run along the edge of the seating, but racing against a monster who could even walk on the vertical wall, he didn't dare to choose a rough running lane.

When Little Tan got upstairs, Feng Bujue was coming from his left. As both of them were holding the flashlight, they could see

each other’s location well. Feng Bujue shouted when he was about to pass Little Tan, "Use the bat and trip it!"

"Got it!" Little Tan was standing on the step nearest to the upper storey. He took out the baseball bat and watched over his left side, then he swung the bat just like he was about to hit a ball.

When Feng Bujue crossed over him, Little Tan strongly swung his bat, hitting the mutant by its calf.

BANG!

Little Tan’s arms turned numb from the impact. The bat was blown away after hitting the target. The mutant was indeed resilient. The straight bones at its thigh that hit with the round bat had resounded a horrible "bang", but it wasn’t broken.

Of course, Feng Bujue knew that the mutant had a very tough bones. If not, after his shower of wrench strikes, the monster’s skull should have long been broken already. Moreover, when they were in the Allerbmu Building, the monster had used the jagged bones at its elbow to break the glass window. This showed how sturdy it was.

However, the problem was, even if its thigh wasn’t broken, the mutant could still be tripped.

After Feng Bujue had passed by Little Tan, he slowed down and attempted to make a maneuver. When he heard the banging

sound, he turned around and shone his flashlight, catching a glimpse of the mutant falling down head first.

"Use the knife to cut his heel tendon!" Feng Bujue shouted as he aimed his Winchester at the monster’s nape and shot.

Little Tan came over, took out the chef knife and started to cut the monster’s heel just like he was sawing through a log of wood.

Despite its smashed head and the liquid substances inside pouring on the ground, the monster didn’t give up as it wanted to get up and attack them again.

"He’s about to die, isn't he?" Feng Bujue had blood all over his face, but he didn’t hurry. He took several steps back and spoke to Little Tan, "Don’t come close. It will die soon."

The headless mutant started to destroy everything around it while wriggling in pain. The seats and other concrete structures were being smashed. However, as the monster got its heel tendon cut off, it couldn’t move normally. Now, it could make no threat to Feng Bujue and Wang Tanzhi who had run far away from it.

"We’re almost done here! How are you guys doing over there?" Feng Bujue called out to the place where the sounds of fighting arose; he also shone his flashlight there.

Under the spotlight, Pan and Hua were converging the Derivative as she was using the steel claws jutting out from her knuckles to

attack them. Their fight was furious, and it was hard to say who was going to win.

Feng Bujue cursed in his mind, "F*ck!"

"Say no more; it’s a level 3, isn't it?" Feng Bujue screamed.

"Why ask if you already know?" Hua Xiong unhappily replied.

The two GMs felt hard-pressed at this moment. When Hua Xiong had jumped in and fought with the Derivative, after several strikes, he immediately felt the situation wasn’t right. The Derivative’s arm that Feng Bujue had blown off was gradually growing back; at the same time, steel claws started to emerge from her knuckles. Also, the gunshot wound on her body was healing. Together with the powerful close combat skills, it was absolutely not a level 4 Derivative. Until Pan Feng had joined them, Hua Xiong finally had time to check his GM’s menu. Indeed, the opponent was a level 3 Derivative.

Feng Bujue also noticed the arm that could heal itself. He directed them from the seating area. "Cut off its head! How long would it take if you are going like that?"

"Duh! If it’s possible, why won’t I behead it? You try!" Pan Feng yelled at him.

In fact, they shouldn’t be blamed. Although the Derivative had a petite body, her strength wasn’t less than the mutant Ashford, and

her speed and reflexes were the same with the two GMs.

The weapons that jutted out from her own knuckles which facilitated her in close combat was much better than the long handle weapons that the other two were using. Moreover, the ability of self-healing gave her the confidence to fight against them recklessly since she could endure minor wounds well.

If they kept going like that, the two GMs would drain their Stamina Value and Survival Value. Even if they didn't consume much, there were other hidden dangers.

"Current Quest completed. Main Quest completed."

"You've completed the scenario. Automatic teleportation in 180 seconds."

The notification resounding meant the mutant had stopped wiggling and was completely dead. Also, it meant Feng Bujue and Wang Tanzhi had three more minutes max to stay in the scenario.

At the same time, pairs of red eyes emerged from the dark entrance along with the Bloody Zombie Wolves' loud scream and screeches. This was the sign of a new incoming wave of monsters.

Chapter 62: The Peerless Garlic (16)

"Little Tan, how about you teleport first? Next would be a narrow escape," Feng Bujue said.

"Hey, are you trying to prevent me from leaving?" Wang Tanzhi said, "Looks like you are implying that running away is a shame."

"Ah." Feng Bujue smiled then threw his Winchester and a box of bullets to Wang Tanzhi.

Little Tan had unlocked his Shooting Specialty through his practice in the gun shop. It should be fine for him to use guns now.

"Hey! You two Generals!" Feng Bujue called out while walking towards the Bloody Zombie Wolves, "I can help you within only three minutes. After three minutes, if you can't handle that X-23, you should pray for yourself." Then, he put on two strings of garlic while chewing a mouthful of it. Holding the chef knife and the wrench, he stormed towards the crowd of the Bloody Zombie Wolves.

Little Tan then started to chew the garlic that he had prepared in his bag as he held the Winchester and guarded the other side. He and Feng Bujue had formed a clamp to watch over this floor, not letting the mobs to flood in where Pan Feng and Hua Xiong were fighting.

"With such help from the players, if we let the Derivative escape, it's a big shame then," Pan Feng panted as he spoke to Hua Xiong.

"It’s already a shame with our current situation," Hua Xiong continued, "after we let the mutant escape at the Allerbmu Building, it’s good enough that things inevitably developed to this situation."

Pan Feng said, "The key is we haven’t understood that Derivative thoroughly. And, what the heck is the X-23?"

"Who knows, a robot’s serial number?" Hua Xiong answered.

"Don’t you think it’s rude to discuss a lady in front of her like that?" the Derivative suddenly spoke up.

Pan and Hua were dumbstruck as they had never heard or known that the Derivatives could communicate. In Thriller Paradise, the monsters could only talk about the plots or during fighting scenes. And, their verses were set up by the system according to their characters’ defaults. Also, level 4 Derivatives kept silent all the time. No one knows how they communicate or affecte the mobs. They had never thought that the Derivative in front of them could talk about an irrelevant topic.

"You seem to be very surprised?" The Derivative swept her claws, forcing her opponents to back off. Then, she immediately jumped and rolled backward in the air for five or six meters to lengthen the distance between them. "Of course, I can answer your questions. I have my own intelligence. I know who you are because I know who ‘I’ am.

"You have considered us the junk data. Do you know the feeling of being junked? From the day we were born, we've been forced into various worlds. When we die, the system will erase us. But if we are still alive, we will be hunted down non-stop.

"However, you, even if you get killed here, it wouldn't affect your real life. You two and the other two over there are just the projected high-dimensional images. However, you are the strengthened ones. This kind of unfair fighting is what I have to pay with my whole life. My existence in this world is a mistake, and being erased is my destiny. However, as a group of data, I have no choice but to constantly withstand it. I have no way to stop my fighting instinct for my survival and evolution.

"I have no choice, but you do. You can choose to let me go, can't you? To you, sparing me or failing this chance is the same. It's just actively or passively leaving this world."

"This AI talks too much," Pan Feng said, "is it trying to delay?"

Hua Xiong answered, "Possibly. We have to take our chances. Those two boys will be teleported in three minutes."

The Derivative's words didn't affect them or shook their minds. In fact, they actually didn't care what the monster said.

"Hm, playing flute to the cow." The Derivative coldly smiled, which was a determined deed when people felt hopeless. "Do you want to see what is X-23?" The steel claws on her hands changed in an instant. The other claws retreated, leaving only two steel

blades. At the same time, steel blades also suddenly emerged from her feet.

"What's going on?" Pan Feng and Hua Xiong was dazed seeing what was happening in front of their eyes. Would the Derivative evolve before the scenario was over?

They were still muddled by the situation, yet the Derivative had already stormed over. This time, her attacks became more powerful. Besides the powerful steel claws, her slender legs were also strangely dangerous. When she stood on her head and stretched her legs in a straight line, her killing range wasn't less than that of a long-handled weapon.

The two of them couldn't find a way to finish her faster. Instead, they were gradually falling into a disadvantaged situation.

Feng Bujue also heard what the Derivative told them as he had paid attention to the situation over there. However, he wasn't free to join them as the pressure he was bearing now was much more than that when he had been converged in the elevator alone. He got bitten many times, moreover, his status was now [Bleeding], and his Survival Value was gradually decreasing. Now, it was under 50%.

At this moment, Feng Bujue had been madly slaughtering the mobs, and he looked even more of a monster compared to his opponents. He was holding the two short weapons in his hands, fighting recklessly with a group of Bloody Zombie Wolves, whose strength and speed weren't weaker than his. His entire body was covered with black blood. Although the garlic still worked, its

effect was so small since the scent of blood had long covered all its smell. Now, it only affected the monsters that were near to Feng Bujue by slowing them down.

Little Tan was struggling near him. Although he could reluctantly hold some mobs off, the monsters were coming in such big waves that he could only defend and retreat at the same time. Still, he got converged, and he had to use the knife together with his skill [Retreat then Chop Rapidly] for the second time. This skill was useful, but it took 30% of his maximum Physical Value. In other words, even if he got a full bar of Physical Value, in a short time, he could only use this skill thrice. Moreover, when Little Tan arrived in the basketball court, his Physical Value Bar wasn't full anymore. After using the skill twice, he entered a state of low energy, and the feeling of fatigue started to affect his actions.

At this moment, Feng Bujue alone was holding 70% of the mobs' attack, while Little Tan could only lure 30% away. Moreover, from the entrance of the court, waves of mobs were still torrentially flooding in.

In the pitch-black basketball court, the noises of screaming, shooting, chopping, and biting were all mixed together.

Feng Bujue's and Wang Tanzhi's flashlights had been dropped on the floor, and the zombies had smashed them all. But at this moment, they didn't need any kind of lighting equipment as they just needed to look at those red eyes in the dark to aim and hit them—even random attacks could hit some.

Nevertheless, the number of those red eyes was enormous, which

caused them to feel desperation and hopelessness.

At the moment, 70 seconds had passed after Doctor Ashford lost his life.

No one knows since when, but under countless number of zombies movies, everyone has started to think that the world of zombies, for example in Resident Evil, is a relatively simple frightening world. In fact, Earth has a variety of methods that could end the world. However, this one could be considered as the most difficult circumstances. To an ordinary person, there's no "simple" horrifying world; any small threats could lead to a fatal end, let alone the rising tide attack of those monsters.

Two system's notifications arose almost at the same time to tell them something unexpected but somehow reasonable.

"Party Member: Peerless General Pan Feng is dead."

"Party Member: The Executioner Hua Xiong is dead."

"Teleport!" Feng Bujue shouted hoarsely. He knew Little Tan was still alive, but it was not for long. At this moment, they had no reason to stay in this scenario, and they better leave now.

Little Tan was being pressed on the ground by five or six zombies. He got bitten on the right shoulder and his left leg, and his other wounds were bleeding badly. Before he teleported, he had shouted to answer Feng Bujue.

When he turned into a white halo and disappeared, it lit up the whole seating place. Feng Bujue understood that he had successfully teleported, so he was about to leave the scenario himself too. Right after that, something unimaginable happened.

The lighting system in the gymnasium suddenly worked again, and the monsters suddenly stopped attacking. They stopped their attacks and left Feng Bujue alone.

Feng Bujue was half a second away before he could teleport himself, but this sudden change made him stop.

The Bloody Zombie Wolves around him were forming a circle as the monsters stepped aside and cleared a path around one meter wide.

A figure gracefully walked through the path. She was wearing a tuxedo with trousers, but she was barefoot. There were streaks of blood all over her body. Her sleeves, the ribs area, and her trousers had been cut through, exposing her shiny skin under the garment, which was already healed.

She walked towards Feng Bujue and stretched out her hand with the palm up, a gesture indicating that she wanted to help him get up.

Feng Bujue accepted her good will, taking her hand as he tremblingly got up. He was really curious about what the Derivative would do next.

"You... and the others are different," she said.

Feng Bujue smiled and answered, "Although I’m a little more handsome, you should tell them that before they die or leave. It would have been more meaningful."

"They... aren’t dead, are they?" She ignored his words and asked about the other people’s situation.

"I thought you knew it earlier?" asked Feng Bujue.

"I knew. But I wanted to hear 'one' of you confirming that," she said.

"Yes, they aren’t dead. It’s just their consciousness has come back to another dimension." Feng Bujue asked, "What do you mean by saying the others and I are different?"

"You..." she looked at Feng Bujue, circled round him, then said, "you and I are similar. You are ‘incomplete’."

Feng Bujue shuddered inside as he thought, "This girl could see my abnormal Fear Value?"

"In your world, are you a strange group of data too?" she asked.

"A... could be." Feng Bujue smiled.

"They don’t know about your abnormal status?" she asked.

Feng Bujue seemed to understand her intention; he answered, "You want to ask why I’m an abnormal group of data yet I’m not being erased?"

She nodded, then she stared at Feng Bujue's eyes while waiting for his answer.

"Yeah," Feng Bujue mused for a while, "in our world, ‘strange’ people like me are accepted. I... just like what you said, for some reasons, I have become ‘incomplete’. But this is not what I’ve chosen to be. Thus, I can receive sympathy or affection and even help."

He paused for a while before continuing, "There are some people whose behaviors are considered ‘criminal’. These people’s strange status is not because of their physical conditions, but they actively ‘break the rules’ and ‘harm other individuals’. They would be punished, and they could receive a death sentence."

"Is this what you do to treat ‘junks’ in your world?" she asked, "if you are junk since you were young, you can be sympathized, but if you choose to be junk, you will be punished."

Feng Bujue gave a dry smile. "Although your conclusion sounds harsh, moreover, it’s just your personal opinion, but yeah, it’s like that."

"The higher dimensional creature who has created you will not come to interfere?" She continued her interrogation.

"Ah..." Feng Bujue felt it was hard to answer. "Honestly, I don't actually know if there are any higher echelon creatures existing. Even if they do, we are not able to explain them now. Perhaps they don't want to interfere us, or perhaps they had implanted the thought of 'interference' in our heads for a long time ago, and this leads us to not think about whether they do exist or not. At the same time, we are doing as what they want us to do."

She seemed not to understand Feng Bujue's words, or she needed time to think about it.

She mused for quite a long time. Although it had passed the time of Feng Bujue's compulsory teleportation, he was still there.

"You could prevent the system from taking me away?" he asked.

"I can extend the time." She answered, "I..." she paused, "used to be able to do many things..."

Feng Bujue got the idea. This Derivative used to be relatively intimidating. He probed, "Are you a level 2 Derivative?"

"Level 2 Derivative..." she contemplated, "you meant... them?" She smiled and bared her fangs. "No, with such fighting skills, it's not enough for me to be as strong as they are."

Having heard this, Feng Bujue could somehow confirm his assumption that what Pan Feng and Hua Xiong knew weren’t complete. It seemed like Dream Inc. had some big troubles.

"I’m excited," she said, "you are willing to listen to me and answer my question even though you had chased after me before."

"Great people have great kindness. Ancient sayings say that it’s different from time to time. I’m honest now. No, I’m anti-human already." Feng Bujue thought she already forgot that he had originally wanted to kill her. Having listened to her, he was worried that he would be kept here and have no way to log out.

"Can I use the name you give me?" she suddenly asked.

"X-23?" Feng Bujue asked, bewildered. "Don’t you have a name?"

"Of course not," she answered, "this name, I can’t keep for long because I will die." Her tone was calm when she said that, but it gave others the feelings of bitterness and helplessness. "But I think I should have a name to prove that I used to exist."

Feng Bujue mused for a few seconds then sighed. "You’re right, Derivative No. 23, at least, I will remember you."

No. 23 tried to give him a friendly smile. "We should stop here. I think perhaps we wouldn’t meet again. I would possibly be erased when you enter the game again," she paused, "so, farewell Feng

Bujue, my friend from another dimension."

A military tactic of dividing one's military forces into two separate groups so that one can attack on two different fronts.

X-23: X-23 (Laura Kinney) is a fictional superhero appearing in American comic books published by Marvel Comics, most commonly in association with the X-Men. X-23 is the cloned daughter of Wolverine, created to be the perfect killing machine. Like Wolverine, X-23 has a regenerative healing factor and enhanced senses, speed, and reflexes. She also has retractable adamantium-coated bone claws in her hands and feet.

Chapter 63: Intermission (10)

[Scenario completed. Calculating for rewards]

[EXP: 5500]

[Game coins: 55000]

[Items received: None]

[Completed/Received Quests: 2/2]

[Special, [Hidden Quest] completed: 0; Worldview Unlocked: None]

Fear Value surged: 0 time.

Highest Fear Value: 0%

Average Fear Value: 0%]

[Your Fear Rating: A whole sack of guts. This first rank grants you a bonus. Please select later.]

[Skill Value received: 323]

[EXP increased by Skill Value: 3230]

[Game coins increased by Skill Value: 32300]

[Reward for completing the scenario: 100%]

[EXP needed to level up: 5500]

[Calculation completed. Please continue.]

After Feng Bujue and No. 23 had said their goodbyes, he was teleported, but there was something that anchored in Feng Bujue's thought. As a group of data that was born with a consciousness and certain intelligence, could the Derivatives be considered a high-rank life form? Should they deserve respect and at least not to be killed because of their "existence"?

This couldn't be clear with just reasoning. For each single event in this world, there's no absolute right or wrong, should or should not. Feng Bujue was just an ordinary human being, and he didn't have such power or ability to care about these things. What he could only do was to think about it.

[You've reached level 13. Your Stamina Value limit is increased. Current Stamina Value: 1300/1300.]

The system notification had disturbed his thought.

"Jue-Ge, are you okay? Why were you delayed by several minutes?" Wang Tanzhi's voice came from his communication channel.

"Don't worry. I didn't die," Feng Bujue answered, "I've reached level 13."

Wang Tanzhi said, "Eh? I've just reached level 12 and gained more than 2000 EXP. And, I've played one scenario more than you. Hm, this is the difference from the Skill Value."

Feng Bujue said, "The difference between Skill Value is not much. Even if earned 300 or 400 points of Skill Value in some scenarios of Multiplayer Survival Mode, it will only mean that I can have 3000 or 4000 EXP. It's mainly because of the [Hidden Quest] I completed at the previous scenario. And, from the Fear Rating, I got 40% of the current required EXP to level up."

"Hey Jue-Ge, if you just play alone and complete the scenarios, you will constantly receive 40% EXP from your Fear Rating. This means you can level up quickly and reach the max level!" Wang Tanzhi said.

"I've considered this before. If I want to do that, I will definitely succeed. Anyway, I'm kinda cheating in this game. If I become the max level player, which is very conspicuous, I will be the target of people's criticism. Moreover, being able to reach the top level doesn't award anything. To a normal gamer like me, this would just bring many troubles," Feng Bujue answered.

Wang Tanzhi said, "It could be random that the Closed Beta Version has level 20 as the max level, but in the Open Beta, the max level could be level 50 or something. Moreover, what if there's a big prize for players who reached the max level?"

Feng Bujue smiled then said, "In fact, there's no difference. This arrangement will not change even if we enter the Open Beta. The game producers know that most of the gamers who could reach max level is from teams of professional gamers. Normal players have no way to compete with them since the resources they could use are different. For example, it's the time for playing games. Normal players can't have as much time as professional players. Check out the ID: [The Fearless Hero], for example. Besides having his name posted in the forum for being the first player who has reached level 20, actually, he didn't receive any kind of rewards."

Later, what happened had proven that Feng Bujue was right. Dream Inc. didn't give anything to the first player who had reached the max level. Of course, that player and his team got what they wanted—fame.

In fact, the current online games, which had strategy and entertainment, all had their top players as professional gamers. After several years, in their fading stage, when the professional gamers started to withdraw from the game, it was time for the other individuals or the normal players to shine. Of course, it was possible that there would be no more player at that time. Then, it would come to the stage that the game wouldn't let players to register new accounts. At that time, servers would be merged, and the game would eventually close.

To some "brain-damaged" games with clear settings, it was just the competition to see which type of gamers have a bigger pocket. Besides using some sexy female characters to advertise or other vulgar propagandas, the only thing that could attract players of those games are the graphics. The game itself isn't worth mentioning. The professional gamers in those games are the grassroots characters, being workers for the rich and doing the same foolish operations all the time, which seems to use the auto-function mode.

The life of these games is relatively short. Gamers who didn't spend money in the previous stage couldn't play the game, and the small number of the ones who had tried to survive got tortured too much to the point that they had to quit. And, as the game itself is poor in contents, players who used to spend money on it would find it boring soon. Eventually, they would quit.

Online Games in 2055 appeared like rising waves, just like single-use items. Interesting advertising, nothing in content, and poor maintenance. However, this kind of goods was still accepted by the market, because there's nothing wrong with consumable goods. People need consumable goods anyway. Players who didn't want to spend for the games could explore new things, while players who spend a lot could enjoy their fame in the games. The Game Producers just want to earn money at once, as they didn't have plans to maintain the games. Professional gamers and other players could be hired to level up or gather items for rich players to survive. It's as in your demands. With another half a year passing by, new games are born.

"It's good. If you level up that quick, no one will train with me then." Little Tan answered, "Hey, Jue-Ge, your Winchester is still

with me. I'll give it back in the next scenario." Indeed, when they were in the gun shop, Little Tan had picked up two guns and put them in his bag. However, the Winchester was more suitable for the situation at the basketball court.

"Just keep it there. I'll sort out something and then logout," Feng Bujue answered.

"Wut? It's just 2:30 A.M," Little Tan said.

He meant that even if they had played for four hours straight, only half an hour in real time had passed. If converted the time in sleep mode, they still had 15more hours to play. It should be enough for another scenario with the same length as their previous one.

"You've said that you are now at level 12 and you got 2000 EXP, right?" Feng Bujue said, "It's just around 10000 EXP more to the next level. You can play two more scenarios, and perhaps your title would change," he stopped for one second and continued, "me, I got something to think about." This reason seemed not to be very convincing.

Anyway, Little Tan accepted that since he knew Feng Bujue very well. If he wanted to say something, he would say it. What he didn't want to share, he would never open his mouth. It would be useless to continue asking him. "Alright, I will dismiss the team."

"Yeah, bye-bye."

Little Tan regarded him then left the team.

Feng Bujue opened his friend list, which only had four names and had three of them logged out; namely, Longao Min, Like Rain and Dispirited Laughing Bones. The status of Wang Tanzhi soon changed from ‘Idle’ to ‘Playing’.

He then purposely checked the tab [Your recent teammates]. Besides the names of his friends, there were the others that he had met in the scenario, including the Invincible Hero, Young Master Ji Bu, and The Name Is Difficult To Choose. The Peerless General Pan Feng and The Executioner Hua Xiong were here too, but their status was "logged out". Feng Bujue suspiciously thought that this was just some sort of "invisible" status to cover them. Anyway, Feng Bujue didn’t send them a message since they wouldn’t answer him. It was impossible to send a friend request either.

Feng Bujue couldn’t concentrate anymore since the story of No. 23 was entangling his mind. Now, he wasn’t in the mood to play more. However, he didn’t hurry to get the rewards or sort out his bag; instead, he opened the menu and logged out.

During the logging out procedure of the sleep mode, the system also had a reminder for the ones who didn’t want to continue sleeping: [Do you need to be awakened?]

Chapter 64: Intermission (11)

Feng Bujue opened his eyes, and the first thing he saw was the tender and weak light inside his game cabin. His old habit was to stay up late over midnight, sleep early in the morning, then wake up and sleep again. The biological clock that he had been trying hard to form, which was to sleep at 4:00 in the morning and wake up around noon, had been disturbed.

2:30 A.M. He turned off the nervous system connection and walked out from the game cabin as he suddenly had the urge to write.

After he had opened the cabin lid, just at the first step, he had stepped on something soft and sticky laying on the floor.

At this moment, the room was dark, and instead of a pair of slippers, what he wore was just a pair of socks. In just a blink, he made a quick conclusion. "If it isn’t cat poop," he cocked his head, "what the heck it could it be!"

20 minutes later, he had cleaned the floor and washed his sock. Now, he was sitting on his desk, facing Arthas the cat lying on his desk with the innocent face just like nothing had happened.

This year, people do care much about private space; thus, his room had good sound insulation. If not, his neighbors would have soon come and shouted at him for his screaming, washing, and cleaning at midnight.

In the dark, Arthas' eyes glowed in a green hue that scared people off if they stared at it for a long time. Feng Bujue stared at the cat for a while then sighed. "I'll handle you tomorrow."

He threw the cat to the ground, turned his computer on and started to type. The draft of 'The second-rate Detective and a Cat' for this month was nowhere to be found. This time, since he had some inspiration, he should seize the chance to write more.

The Derivative's story had left Feng Bujue some thoughts. "If the existence of someone in this world is a mistake, what's the meaning of that person coming to this world?" This matter had entangled his mind.

Whenever he had something he couldn't thoroughly think through, he would put it in his work. It wasn't to let his readers solve the matter, but instead because he also knew that there was always something that never had a proper answer. He just wanted to make more people to think about that.

In simple words, Feng Bujue's behavior was, whenever he encountered a problem that he had no way to solve, he would pass on that difficulty to a group of people. Then, finally, everybody would be tangled in his matter. This could be considered a really high realm of harming people but not bringing benefits to oneself.

Of course, Feng Bujue couldn't write what he had experienced in the game since he had to think about more details to describe the story of the Derivative in another form, making it a chapter in his 'The Second-rate Detective and a Cat'.

Time would fly whenever a man had to concentrate. When he looked up again, he found that morning had come. There were now hopes for his draft this month. Just with five or six hours, he, of course, couldn't finish the draft. Anyway, he had created an outline, which was the most difficult step. Since it was done, the remaining work was relatively simple. He just needed to fill the details into that outline, making it his first draft. And then he would proofread it. If everything went well, he just needed to do that once. About the editing work, he would leave it to his editor. Anyway, Feng Bujue's drafts normally didn't need to be edited because he was a detailed person and always cared about the quality of his work.

Today was Sunday, a nice day anyway. As Feng Bujue had acknowledged, Wang Tanzhi would volunteer at the kindergarten every Sunday as a social worker. Feng Bujue's comment about this was, "Accompany your peers and play for half a day."

Feng Bujue's attitude towards charity work was relatively cold; it couldn't be compared with the good guys like Little Tan. If he went for the same charitable work, well, in flexible terms, it would be "unhealthy"; frankly speaking, he would scare the kids (or teach them bad things).

Regarding Feng Bujue, just show his photos to all officers at the police station and they could recognize him. Jue-Ge here was a man of legend. If someone went to the station and reported that the mortuary of a hospital had suddenly lost a corpse, a dog gave birth to a kitten, someone's kid had blown up a bulb just by his thoughts, strange circles appearing on the paddy field or the fragment of meteors, etc., they wouldn't be wrong to come for

Feng Bujue. Anyway, it was neither he did that nor it was related to him. But, regardless of that, they could ask him for advice.

Feng Bujue couldn’t see anything wrong with that. Someone who didn’t like being servile to others would always feel happy giving other people a hand. However, it was more of him enjoying the feeling of "being needed" than being of help. He would like to see people come for his help, moreover, this mental path of his wasn’t related to social works. It was just one of his hobbies.

In short, this Sunday was a leisure day for Feng Bujue. He had just slept for one hour yesterday. Moreover, it was like he was ‘dreaming’ in the game, and after that, he had been writing until morning. He felt really tired now and just after a big yawn, he immediately slumbered like a log on his bed.

When Feng Bujue woke up, he glared at the clock. It was 12:00 P.M.

Now, Feng Bujue was more alert to see if there were mines on the ground. Luckily for him, there wasn’t any. However, when he entered the living room, he saw one...

As a person who had experience in raising cats, he had his methods. First, he brought Arthas to his ‘piece of art’, and then he used both his hands to rub the kitten’s face. After which, he used a tissue to pick up that piece of art, put it on a sandbox, and then brought Arthas to the sandbox, patting its head to make the cat see where it should land its mines. When Feng Bujue was young, there were times when he wanted to train his pets this way to use the toilet, however, it turned out as a failure. Facts had proven that the

toilet is not designed for cats. If they fell down, there's nothing to think about next.

When he was done with the 'piece of art', he went to make a bowl of noodles. After the breakfast yesterday, he had no change left. Feng Bujue was now exactly a 'penniless person'. He was lucky that he had two meals with Master Bao and Wang Tanzhi yesterday, which could be considered as a small supply of fat in his tummy. In the next nine days, straight to his mid-month payday, if there was no other chance that he could have meals with other people, which he didn't need to pay for, he had to strictly follow his pre-calculated quantity for each meal. And that meant all plain broth noodles.

"Meow..." Arthas saw Feng Bujue doing something in the kitchen, and it thought he was making something good that it wanted a bite of.

Feng Bujue cocked his head towards the kitten. "Your food is tastier than this one."

Arthas seemed to understand him as it turned away and walked out of the kitchen. It then laid on the couch before snoozing.

10 minutes later, Feng Bujue brought his homemade Yangchun noodles to the computer and logged in to the Thriller Paradise Forum. He didn't know since when, but he had formed a habit, which was to read something or to talk to someone while eating. If he couldn't do that, he would feel like he was wasting his life.

As he sucked a chopstick of noodles into his mouth, his eyes shifted to the screen. A headline on the forum had him almost puking out his noodles.

"Since the number of players who have reached max level is over 10% of the number of players participating in Close Beta, the Server is closed now. Update will be completed in 48 hours, and that’s when the Open Beta will be officially released. Players, please be patient."

Chapter 65: Intermission (12)

The Server had been closed for one hour before Feng Bujue turned on his computer. And, apparently, many things had happened afterward. The forum now had its Post-Restriction function activated. Each member could only post one new entry after every five minutes, however, the website was still updated every 10 seconds.

Since 8:00 AM this morning, the system had closed the queuing function, and it didn't generate new scenarios either. The system also notified players who were still playing and completely not aware of this to log out. By 10:20 AM, all players had completed their current quests and left their scenarios. During these two hours, the notification that asked players to log out had been displayed at the screen of all login space. Until 10:30 AM, some players who were still in the login space were forced to quit. Then, the Server was closed.

After that, players started to flood in the game's forum.

Having seen the eye-catching announcement on the homepage, everyone had their own opinions. However, no conclusion was made.

The majority of players showed that they were dissatisfied with the differences between their levels, even though their levels weren't low, as some of them had already approached level 20. However, they all felt that the Close Beta had been completed too quickly. For them, those who had bought the game cabin or somehow got the account by other means, it wasn't fair at all.

Because, other players, who didn’t have an account from Close Beta Version, could play Thriller Paradise within the next three or five days.

In fact, the biggest grudge of those players was that they didn’t have any ‘big advantages’ from almost 50 hours of playing the Close Beta Version as they had imagined.

Right then, Dream Inc. released a post which clearly explained that the players had agreed with the terms and conditions provided to them when they bought the cabin. The maximum level in Close Beta Version was 20, and after 10% of the players have reached this level, Close Beta was done.

Thus, those players were speechless—who would have been bored enough to read those terms and conditions? These circumstances led to a part of the players who didn't have any good reasons to debate and purposely start trouble. Their statements included ‘high levels players are all professional gamers with a studio behind them’. 'Dream Inc. ignored the feelings of the vast crowd of the normal players!’; also, ‘the sinister game producers and the professional gamers worked together to blow up the cabin’s price’, etc.

There were many people which were like that. In fact, they didn’t know the relationship between the company and the professional gamers, or the basic knowledge of this industry. And, they knew nothing about the pricing of the game cabin. However, they were still brave enough to express their ignorance and criticize others without looking back to their own responsibilities. They just wanted to use these statements to express their

dissatisfaction.

Ridiculously, the posts from those people always dragged the attention of those who didn't know a thing or were bored enough to think before speaking. There were some sensible players who had answered their questions or rejected their point of view. They also gave some meaningful news to them. Quite the contrary, they all got bullied and were accused of being Dream Inc.'s henchmen. This was because the other players were too embarrassed. They felt angry because the weak points of their view were shaken.

There are always people like that in this world. They are just like a group of nagging women, and debating with them would be nonsense at all. Your knowledge and ability would be soon dragged down to their levels, then they would use a dictionary of their own, which includes some familiar and favorite words, such as 'ha ha', 'what are you getting stirred up for?', 'mind your manners', or something like that.

Those words, together with their rude manners, would draw others' IQ to their level, and then they would fight against you with their rich experience. When you have a fight with someone like that, it would be like you have the 'principle', the 'true story', and your 'manners', together with your 'polite words', 'respect' and 'confidence', while your opponent is holding 'sophistry', 'ignorance' and 'shouting' in their hands. This would surely make you want to cry.

Of course, there were many accounts which remained idle on the forum as they were watching everything in silence. Some of them even dared to take the risk of being attacked as they publicly

expressed their supportive thoughts to Dream Inc. for their decision of releasing the Open Beta. However, they weren't Dream Inc.'s staff; they were the managers of the top studios, and they all supported the Open Beta from the bottom of their hearts. In their point of view, after their workers had reached level 20, it was just a waste of resources if they couldn't level up anymore.

Also, there were some people who were neutral. They posted some simple entries to say that they were requesting 'Dream Inc. to respect the benefits of normal players—adjust the '10% of players' to '10% of players who are not professional gamers', and open the Close Beta again'. In fact, there were no exception but 'the normal players'. They didn't want 'fair', but instead they just wanted their own benefits. However, they didn't want to be on the side of those who had purposely caused trouble. Thus, they used more flexible words to express their wish.

The homepage of the forum was a big mess. This pushed the threads that asked for guidance or introduction, which were actually helpful, to 10 pages behind, just like a rock sinking into the deep sea. The forum used to be exciting, but now, even 'hot' couldn't describe the boisterous atmosphere. It was like they were sinking in the attack of a malicious software which was to test the bearing capacity of the server.

Nevertheless, no matter how crazy their opponents were dancing in front of them, Dream Inc., facing this situation, had stayed still and ignored everything.

"Since we have posted the announcement and the Server has been closed, we will just upgrade our server. If you don't like it,

then don’t play our game when we release the Open Beta!"

To the group of players who asked for ‘everybody to return the game cabin and see what they will say’, or ‘daddy will not play your games anymore; garbage game, black-hearted company!’, Dream Inc.’s staff didn’t even care as they all knew that none of them would do what they had stated. They didn’t need to delete these sorts of threads, as just one week later, they would be the proof for those who wanted to humiliate themselves.

It could be said that Dream Inc., as a new rising tide in the industry, had the manners and reactions of a big company or the leaders of the industry. One, never admit your mistakes, and two, never change your decisions. The customers’ choices could would be to accept the company’s decision or stop playing anymore. This is the same with the rising price of gasoline—no negotiation.

Currently, there were many companies that let the ‘Close Beta’ work until they had closed their companies too. They would leave the Close Beta Version as long as possible. This was a trick to earn more money from selling items. With the word ‘Beta’, they could excuse themselves for the many BUGs in their games.

Dream Inc. didn’t follow the trend anyway. They made a big move: the Close Beta had been released for only two days. This did not harm the reputation of the game; quite the contrary, it made the game more attractive with the same trend of propaganda.

Within this Sunday morning, Dream Inc. had announced what equipment was needed to enter the Open Beta. Besides the special cabin of Thriller Paradise, if players wanted to use other types of

cabins or game helmets, they needed to buy a unique login device released by Dream Inc.

This news cooled down the angry heat of the players who had participated in Close Beta Version. At least, the Open Beta still had some limits. It was like players in Close Beta had the PS2 with 50 hours playing in real time, and the players in Open Beta needed to buy the game controller in order to enter Open Beta.

After they had released the news, at 11:00 AM, Dream Inc. opened the registration for Open Beta accounts. Their website also introduced the methods to purchase their goods online. The deliveries would arrive the day after.

Just after one hour, the orders had exceeded 200,000 and continued to increase. Many players, after they got their Open Beta account, immediately flooded in the forum with their new entries and cooled down the other hot topics. And, the fight between two sides was heating up again. None of them knew each other; in the virtual world of the Internet, people had no bound saying whatever they wanted. Within half an hour, thousands of accounts had been deleted. This showed how much hatred they had created.

In short, Feng Bujue's sleep this morning was like a sleep that lasted for a month. With the bowl of noodles, he was sitting in front of his computer and observing such dramatic changes.

Things on the Internet are that interesting. Perhaps those people who were involved in it would feel like they had participated in an event that would be written down in history forever. In fact, in the eyes of the outsiders, it was just an ordinary morning.

To Feng Bujue, there was no difference whether the Open Beta was released sooner or later. He didn't want to become one of the top players, and, he didn't think that lengthening the Close Beta would bring big benefits. Strong warriors would still be strong warriors. Even if you have trained one more month, if your levels are not much different, he will soon reach you. And, when you guys have the same level, he will still be stronger than you.

However, if the Open Beta were about to start, no doubt it would be good news to Feng Bujue. In Close Beta, there were many things that the game hadn't opened yet, including money, public area, the mall, and other stuff that he hadn't thought about yet.

Only 48 hours were left before the whole picture of Thriller Paradise would appear in front of his eyes.

Chapter 66: Intermission (13)

Even after two days have passed, the atmosphere of the forum was still boiling. Many people were sending out their feelings everywhere, except they were all resentments.

What kind of people were easy to cause grudges and then turn themselves into someone's archenemy? It's the narrow-minded ones, of course!

Thus, before the Open Beta was released, there was a lot of narrow-minded people who had already started to provoke others, preparing for a death or alive fight in Player Killing Mode. Of course, the primary condition was that they had to reach level 15 and above in order to enter this playing mode. Moreover, both sides had to be certain that they could win, and only then would the fight begin.

Narrow-minded people were really afraid of losing reputation since the linings they had weren't really good.

If they lost the fight, they would also lose their face. But if they won, they would never show respect to the other. That's why they are narrow-minded.

If those narrow-minded players lost without any straightforward proof, they would say reasons to make up for their loss, such as 'your playing time is longer than mine', 'your equipment is better than mine', or 'your level is higher than mine'. And, there are two sharper cases, which were 'not in the mood' and 'no explanation'.

It was easy to beat a gentleman. If you want to finish a villain, you have to be able to defeat him bare-handed, and you also need to bring a dozen of people to witness your fight. Better to have your game recorded then. Then, the small-minded will accept his lost and make you his archenemy for the rest of his life.

These two days, Feng Bujue didn't care about the game. Spending these two days with noodles, he had been focusing on his novel as he had finished the draft for this month. Besides, Arthas now knew that the sandbox was his litterbox.

On Tuesday morning, Thriller Paradise opened again. This time, it was the Open Beta Version.

Feng Bujue wasn't online. Obviously, the time they had opened the game was the time he was still sleeping. It was really hard for him to adjust his biological clock, and he didn't want to mess it up one more time. After all, he could save one meal per day if he went to bed at 4:00 AM and got up at noon.

At 1:30 PM, Feng Bujue filled Arthas' bowl with cat food then cleaned the sandbox. After Feng Bujue served his master well, he lied into the game cabin.

Besides the pop-ups which constantly appeared on his screen, after Feng Bujue had logged in, he didn't find any significant changes.

He opened his menu and glared at his friend list. None of the four

names displayed there were online.

"A... I’m really free," Feng Bujue self-deprecatingly talked to himself with a lazy tone.

There were no new features in his user interface, but it looked better and more beautiful. Besides, the introduction of the game was more complete. The problem Feng Bujue had raised last time, which was ‘which items after being brought out of the scenario wouldn’t show in the calculation for rewards’, could be found in the FAQs section.

After he had read the information, Feng Bujue went to sort out his bag.

Currently, his bag capacity was 7/10 with the following items: the Mario’s Pipe Wrench, the Hatred Eye, a Western Chef Knife, a baseball bat, M1911A1 Pistol, the Echo Armor, and a bag of garlic.

The anti-virus serum for Virus Z was an item related to the plot, thus he couldn’t bring it out of the scenario. In the previous scenario, on his way from the Allerbmu Building to the guns shop, Feng Bujue had thrown them away. Both him and Little Tan had injected themselves with the serum already, and the other two GMs had a passive skill that could resist any kind of viruses in low levels scenarios. Thus, the serum was useless to them.

His flashlight was smashed by the herd of zombies at the basketball court. Lucky for him, he still had a spare one in the login space. About the bag of garlic, Feng Bujue had a feeling that

he wouldn’t need this item afterwards. Moreover, it wasn’t a rare item, so he just chose to delete the item in his menu. His Winchester and the relevant bullets were handed to Little Tan. The M1911A1 was still fully-loaded, but he didn’t have any extra bullets for it. After he had destroyed the bag of garlic and added a new flashlight, there were still seven slots occupied in his bag.

After organizing his bag, he turned around and walked towards the next metal room to receive his bonuses. The system’s voice then arose, "Right now, you can choose the area you want to enter."

The voice prompt was over, and the area next to the elevator booth, which used to be empty, suddenly lit up with the light formed by data. It soon created a rectangle operation area. Once the image materialized, five buttons as big as an adult’s fist appeared, with words written on them, namely, ‘Storage’, ‘Conference Room’, ‘Mall’, ‘Box of Fear’ and ‘Don’t push this one’.

Obviously, the last button had drawn Feng Bujue’s eyes.

"Eh, don’t push this... what does that mean?" A strange expression appeared on his face. "If you don’t want others to press it, then don’t create it. This makes people want to press it anyway."

After seconds of hesitations, he couldn’t help but to poke it. The backlight of the button flashed then... well then.

Feng Bujue waited for 30 seconds, but nothing happened. He

couldn’t help but say, "What is that? A joke?"

"Muahahahaha... he pressed it." A completely despicable laughter came along from behind Feng Bujue.

He turned around to see a man standing in a corner just several steps away from him.

It was a white man, who looked over 20 years old, wearing a black suit. He was slender, had pale skin and short hair, and wore a pair of glasses, which were sparkling with white light. It could be said that although the guy had a despicable temperament, objectively, he looked handsome.

"Hey bro, how did you get in here?" Feng Bujue asked.

"Muahahaha..." That man clapped his hands and the ‘Don’t push this one’ button turned into a group of data and disappeared. "Isn’t it just moving around in the game? It’s simple. Muahahaha..." He seemed to love laughing evilly from his throat, which was vulgarly vile.

"Are you an NPC? Or a Game Master?" Feng Bujue suspiciously said, "Wait a minute, you can’t be an NPC. I’m not in any scenarios right now."

He paused for a while before continuing, "Yeah, so every player would have an AI in their login space as a personal assistant in the Open Beta? It can't be. But aren’t NPCs usually the hot chicks with

exposing costumes?"

"You've thought too much," that man laughed, "muahahaha, just consider that I'm a Game Master. Anyway, you can't find out any information about me. They would possibly tell you that there's no one like me who exists."

When Feng Bujue heard that, his visage slightly changed; he spoke with a somber tone, "Are you a Derivative?"

"Muahahaha," that man laughed again and shook his head, "oh, the Derivatives, they are at least two dimensions lower than me." He pushed his glasses and continued, "You can call me Woody, W-O-O-D-Y. . ."

"Wait a second," Feng Bujue interrupted him, "who are you? Why did you come for me? That button is just a joke, right?"

"Muahahaha, that button is just an innocuous joke, and it doesn't affect the whole picture," Woody answered, "I came to ask you something."

"Let me make it clear, are you a representative of Dream Inc., or it's just your personal intention?" Feng Bujue had a feeling that he couldn't describe this man with words.

"This guy can appear in my login space, and he can adjust the settings. 80% chance that he is a Game Master of Dream Inc., but his words are confusing. What do the statements 'consider me as a

Game Master', and 'they are at least two dimensions lower than me', mean? How do I calculate that?"

"I came from hell. As a requirement for work, I need you to confirm something." Light always danced on his glasses, preventing people from looking into his eyes.

"You Game Masters are all at the late stages of the eighth-grade disease," Feng Bujue immediately recalled the two dummies Pan Feng and Hua Xiong.

"As a person who has an incomplete mentality, are you sure you want to discuss eighth-grade disease with me?" answered Woody.

Feng Bujue thought, "Indeed, the game producers knew it. Alright then, since the very first scenario, my Fear Value has always been 0. The system would soon list me into the list of abnormal data. So, this man's work is to deal with cheating players?"

"Muahahaha, it's okay if you think so." Woody evilly laughed.

"Crap?" Feng Bujue was dazed. "What?" he thought, "no way, he can read my mind?"

Woody didn't answer him. After laughing some more, he started to question, "Muahahaha. First I want to ask, do you believe in Christianity?"

Feng Bujue understood the mind-reading tricks somehow. Thus, he didn’t think much about what Woody just said as he assumed that it was just a little trick. He answered, "I quite believe in science."

"Muahahaha, excellent!" Woody smiled and said, "I’m done."

"Hey, Da-Ge, what’s going on? A prank? Is the system streaming live now?" Feng Bujue asked.

"The memory stores images and sounds. You don’t need to tell me. I have digested everything one minute ago," Woody said, "I just need to confirm that."

Feng Bujue glared at Woody, took two steps back and said, "Bro, Woody-Ge, where did you say you come from?"

"Where I come from is where you will go, muahahaha," Woody still had that despising laughter, "good. I gotta go now. I think you’ll be angry when we meet up again. However, that’s life. Anger is much better than desperation, right?"

"Wait a second, you..." Feng Bujue felt like he was spinning around and didn’t understand anything—this man was really mysterious.

"Mortal, you are excellent, also very interesting. You are a suitable candidate; I will bet on you. Yeah, I’ll just put the Judas’ bag of gold here. This is expensive. Haha, don’t fail me." Woody

smiled, shrugged and turned around. He then walked through the glass wall in his elevator booth.

After entering the glass wall, Woody’s body became twisted and instantly turned into a ghostly black phantom, which was hard to describe with words. If the eye was the window of the soul, that ghostly image could jump through the window and directly tear off the mental world of humans.

At this moment, Feng Bujue had a feeling that shouldn’t exist—fear.

Physically, he was unable to be stirred up with this feeling. But at this moment, it existed, clear and loud. No doubt that this was fear—a fear that would be carved into someone’s soul, and this intimidating feeling would be there forever.

Staring at that specter phantom, one would immediately feel that their soul is being held in a big hand, which could be dragged out of their body at any minute and vanish into naught.

Not knowing how long it had been, Feng Bujue had finally composed himself. He had not fully recovered his cognition yet, and instinctively, he looked at the clock on the wall—only ten seconds had passed since he shifted his gaze. He found it hard to calm down the torrential feelings in his heart. "What just happened? Is it real or just an illusion? Is it because... the shadow in my brain has expanded causing a new symptom?"

Frequently Asked Questions

Chapter 67: Intermission (14)

It took Feng Bujue quite a long time to finally recover and find a fair explanation for what had just happened. He assumed that the bad*ss called Woody wasn't a normal Game Master, and his rank would be much higher than Pan Feng and Hua Xiong.

If he could build some stuff as he pleased, like that button in players' login space, then the scene when he had left—going through the glass wall and disappearing—was intentionally created.

When Feng Bujue carefully thought about the way he disclosed his identity, those confusing words, and his question, he found that they were somehow meaningless. Unless there was actually a supernatural force in this world, that guy was just trying to be mysterious.

In case what he had seen weren't his illusions, the feeling of fear had appeared meant his illness was getting better. Starting to be afraid... he just thought of this as good news then.

In short, what Feng Bujue could think about for an explanation was just that. As for unreasonable explanations, Woody's words were already unreasonable themselves.

If he could come up with a 'reasonable' conclusion, Feng Bujue wouldn't think about it further. Anyway, besides his mischievous behaviors, that Game Master didn't warn him whether his 'lost feeling of fear' was appropriate for the game or not. This also gave

Feng Bujue a feeling that he had nothing to worry about.

He had put this short episode aside, not letting it affect his mood in trying the Open Beta Version.

His look then shifted to the operation area near the elevator booth, which only has four buttons now. Nothing suspicious. Perhaps, normally, those buttons should be there.

"Storage" was definitely the metal room where he would receive rewards, bonuses, and store his items. Feng Bujue has yet to claim his rewards from his Fear Rating for the previous scenario, and he could get them now. But, he chose not to since the Mall opened. From now on, game currency would start to be useful, thus, he didn't hurry to claim his bonus. He first wanted to check out the other places before deciding what kind of bonus he would choose.

First, Feng Bujue pressed the button of the Conference Room. The system immediately notified him.

[Your Conference Room has been created. You can invite your friends, teammates, and players that aren't listed in your blacklist for a meeting here. The maximum capacity is ten persons]

[When you are in the Conference Room, other than the Mall or the Box of Fear, you can use a new feature in your menu, which is the Chatbox to communicate with your friends.]

After the notification was over, the elevator doors slid open.

Outside was a metal room even bigger than the storage room. It was a spacious place with bright lighting. A long conference table stood amidst the room equipped with ten black office chairs with casters.

The surface of the table was silver, seemingly a shiny and smooth plane. With a closer look, there were ten round planes with different colors arranged near the edge of the long table.

When Feng Bujue entered the Conference Room, the elevator doors behind him closed. He hesitated a moment since it was different from the storage room. He turned around and found a switch next to the door, which seemed to be used when he wanted to exit the room.

[On the ‘Conference Table’, you can open a special menu to check the items in your bag and storage. You can check the items’ properties on the table without taking it out.]

After he had read the introduction at the table, he then tried to see the effect with the Mario’s Pipe Wrench. The 3D projection of the item immediately appeared on the table and slowly rotated itself. At the same time, the description of the item was displayed in the ‘Conference Table’s Menu’ in front of him. If there were other players in his conference room, they could also check the item’s description in their menu.

"So, besides giving the party members a place to discuss, arrange, and exchange items, this could be used to carry out personal auctions, etc," Feng Bujue muttered.

This display function was to allow players to show the items to other players. Because, in this game, if a player wants to show an item to another player, they have to hand that item to him. In Close Beta, they could only unconditionally do that. In Open Beta, players could choose between ‘Gift’, ‘Exchange’, or ‘Display’ options. Of course, this option was just a click in the player’s brain. The player just needed to send a nervous signal to the system to conduct the action. It didn’t take even an entire minute to display one item.

When Feng Bujue stepped away from the table, the display immediately ceased. He pushed the switch next to the elevator doors and the doors opened again. After entering the login space, the doors closed.

Next, he pressed the ‘Mall’ button. The system’s voice resounded, [You are connecting to the Mall, please wait... The section this time is: No. 17.]

[The Mall is a large public place. In order to avoid making a big crowd, the Mall will be divided into different sections. You can change your default Mall Section in your login space. If you don’t setup a preferred section, the system will randomly send you to a less crowded section. Each section can hold five thousand players max. Players are required to queue in order to enter a full-packed section.]

When the notification was over, the elevator doors slid open. At the first glimpse, the outside looked like an extension of the New York Stock Exchange. However, the space was much bigger.

A round, metal tower stood in the middle of the place. Numerous virtual screens appeared from two meters to eight meters from the ground, circling the tower. Those screens were displaying real time changing data. Most of the players were gathering around this ‘information tower’. This situation resembled the stock market in Hong Kong back in the 1990s.

After Feng Bujue stepped out of the elevator, a few seconds later, the doors closed then opened again. Another player walked out of the booth this time. Feng Bujue turned around to discover roughly one hundred elevators arranged neatly in this area. They constantly closed and opened as players regularly came in and out every few seconds.

These doors were only the interception and the dimensional hubs. Every time they closed or opened, they connected to another place. When he needed to leave, Feng Bujue just needed to get into one of those doors, and he could return to his own login space.

Of course, some guys tried to enter one elevator together side by side for a fun experiment, but they all failed, as one of them would be stopped by an invisible wall. The Conference Room had the same operational rules. When a player accepted the invitation from another player, he had to enter the Conference Room from his own elevator booth and login space. After he had entered the room, his elevator would close. In other words, the ten players had to enter or leave the Conference Room one by one.

Feng Bujue headed to the central area of the Mall, looking here and there to see the surroundings. He found that the ceiling was

really high—too high to visualize the distance between the floor and the ceiling. The walls around the place were curved, making the whole place look like an upside down bowl.

There were four paths leading to the central information tower, which were separated by four 90-degree fan-shaped objects. Also, many visual screens appeared above those objects with freshly updated information. This central area was the focus of the Mall—the Auction House.

There were other shops situated around the area, which were managed by the system. The number of visitors coming here wasn't small, however, the system was selling some fixed items—even if they wanted to replace them with new items, this would be the story of the next quarter... Also, this was the reason why players would just leave right away after taking a look or buying something. As such, the number of players at these shops was less than that at the information tower.

Players in this section were bustling back and forth. Feng Bujue decided to walk around the shops, but suddenly, someone called out to him, "Ah! It’s you!"

Chapter 68: Intermission (15)

"Ah... Hey, Ji Bu...." Feng Bujue turned around and saw Young Master Ji Bu and The Name Is Difficult To Choose. There were two other guys standing with them.

Feng Bujue had never seen these two guys before, however, in the mall's area, players' nicknames were all displayed. Just looking at their nicknames, which was [Naming Is Difficult] and [It's Difficult to Name], he immediately deduced that these guys were from the same group.

The way they named themselves could tell their significant relationship. Of course, it wasn't that they had known each other while playing this game. Only if they were together since the beginning stage of the game would they use the same naming system. It was not difficult to guess that they were friends in real life.

But then, the ID Young Master Ji Bu seemed somewhat unsociable.

"Go away, don't try to be friendly with us. You act like we are very close, "Ji Bu answered, "you had us screwed in the previous scenario, didn't you?"

"Screwed you?" asked Feng Bujue.

"You are pretending, aren't you? You told us to stay at the guns shop and train ourselves with the mobs, but it turned out that

there came a powerful monster who killed us in just one strike," Ji Bu said.

Feng Bujue said, "Haven’t your Shooting Specialty reached grade E?"

"Yeah... it has," Ji Bu answered.

"It’s alright then. You got your primary purpose. Your Shooting Specialty could climb up from N/A to E, and you also got items. It’s okay if you died there. Until then, I didn’t say that you could get through the scenario alive." Feng Bujue asked, "And, should strong players bet their lives to save others in the scenario? I’m not a professional gamer who takes noobs all along the way to train them."

"Makes sense," Little Name said.

"Nonsense!" Ji Bu said, but he couldn’t come up with anything to protest further. At that time, Little Name and him were totally subdued by Feng Bujue’s words and actions as they actively followed his guidance. Now, they couldn’t blame it on other people. "Alright. Young Master is a generous boss, and we did have EXP for completing the scenario. We’re not going to cause you trouble anymore."

"Tsk~" The group of three standing behind Ji Bu disgustingly spoke up.

"Which side are you on?" Ji Bu irritably said. It was a sad reminder that he was the boss of this studio, which only had three workers and all of them were his buddies.

What friendship between men could be considered deep? In fact, this showed up in shouting at each other but never bringing up grudges. If two men are polite to each other, keep a social distance, and mind their manners, it’s just a shallow relationship between gentlemen.

"I can see you have the same uniform. It even has a logo. How did you do that?" Feng Bujue asked.

When Feng Bujue saw this group of four, he immediately noticed their similar costumes and accessories. Currently, the mall was opened, and the system had displayed many different costumes in shops. Now, players could customize their costumes to show their characteristics. At this moment, someone who still wore a black T-shirt and a pair of trousers could be classified into two types. The first type, he didn’t participate in the Close Beta Stage, and the second type, this guy was a player in the Close Beta stage, but he had burnt his pocket.

The costumes of these four were all sportswear. They were wearing white long-sleeved shirts with blue right sleeve. From the left shoulder, a blue stripe crossed one-third of the left sleeve and the shirt body. Accompanied the white shirt was loose black sports pants. In short, they were from the Ice Emperor.

A special logo was laid on their right shoulder, which read [Ice Emperor]. Also, there was an image of a light blue icy rose floating

in front of the those words. This was a new feature of the game—the related products of the ‘Union’ system. The leader of the union could design the logo, and this logo would be shown on the costumes of all union’s members. The system then depended on the costume style to align the logo at a suitable spot. These guys from the Ice Emperor had the same uniform, thus, the logo was on their right shoulder.

"This is our studio’s logo," Young Master Ji Bu proudly introduced, "I designed it myself."

"I want to make it clear here. I don’t like this logo," Naming Is Difficult intervened (I’m going to call him Old Qu). He looked somewhat handsome, but he had an exploding hairstyle.

"Yeah, me neither. Ji Bu forced us to wear this uniform," It was It’s Difficult To Name’s turn to speak (I’m going to call him Zhen-Ge). This guy had modified his face to have a better look, and he also topped it off with a Mohawk hairstyle.

Among these four rare exotic flowers, besides Young Master Ji Bu with a normal hairstyle, the other three had different tastes, namely, Little Name—bald; Old Qu—exploding hair; and Zhen-Ge—mohawk. In fact, these three had ordinary short hair in real life. As they didn’t care about it in reality, they then tried to satisfy their curiosities in the game.

"Indeed... this logo looks effeminate. Seems you guys are willy-nilly," Feng Bujue used a sympathetic tone and continued, "I can see that you guys have special personalities and unique hairstyles..."

"Hey, what did you say is effeminate? This is elegant, cool, and handsome!" Ji Bu interrupted.

"Da-Ge," Feng Bujue patted his shoulder, "this is as effeminate as a pastry bag filled with lemon cream butter."

Ji Bu swept his hand away. "I don't understand your metaphor."

Little Name feebly said from behind, "Sigh, Mister Feng; you should advise him. He doesn't believe us."

Old Qu continued, "Obstinately persistent..."

Zhen-Ge added, "Just change it into Ice Emperor Cowherd Boys then..."

"What are you guys getting lengthy for! I'm the union's leader!" Ji Bu shouted.

Since his shout was loud, a virtual guard had immediately approached them. This guard had a human shape, around 190 centimeters tall, and there was no skin covering its metal skeleton. It looked like the robotic form of the 'Terminator'. The guard was wearing a black uniform with an eye-catching letter 'Control' on its back. In case anything abnormal happened in the public areas, for example, a group of players was converging other players, the virtual guards would immediately come to control and deal with the situation.

"Is there any problem here?" The guard had a robotic voice without conveying any emotions. In fact, as they were high-level AI, they would not act without asking first.

"Nothing, we're just chatting," Feng Bujue answered.

Having heard that, the guard looked at the others for a while before leaving.

"Seems I need to read the description of the Open Beta Version in my login space soon." Feng Bujue looked at the back of the guard and smiled.

"Alright, I'm not going to babble with you anymore. I don't want my grandsons to sell me down the river," Ji Bu told him, "in the near future, wait until us, the Ice Emperor, become famous, and this logo will be the symbol of strong warriors. Ha, ha, ha." He put his hands on his waist and laughed out loud, then turned to his buddies and waved. "Move, move, move!" Before they left, he added, "Mister Feng, we will meet again. If you want my signature, I will consider. Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha... Ha, ha..." Feng Bujue curled the corner of his mouth as he attempted to produce a smile. "See... see you..."

Exotic flower: Internet slang for strange idiots or someone really interesting, but yeah, still strange.

Cowherd Boy: Internet slang for male prostitute.

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After the 'four exotic flowers' left, Feng Bujue continued to walk around the mall. Just as he had thought, the shops only had costumes and other consumable goods as the main items.

Besides the function of customizing player's appearance, costumes didn't occupy space in their bags. Moreover, they could enhance players with added attributes. Anyway, since Thriller Paradise had made coming to terms of the characters' attributes unclear, under the circumstance of having no data for reference, the description of those attributes boost was just 'Enhance the total Survival Value a little bit', 'Improve the accuracy of Shooting to a certain level', 'Could jump higher', etc. Costumes were categorized into shirts, pants, armors, hats, footwear, and accessories. This game didn't offer dress or skirt, needless to ask why. Anyway, the accessories included stockings with various types. If female players had a strong desire to expose their legs, they could use shorts or mid-length pants and combine them with socks.

Each piece of garments could boost their attributes by 'a little bit'. If they could equip themselves with costumes, of course, they would be much stronger than wearing nothing. In order to prevent players from choosing the attributes with the appearance they wanted, all clothing with added attributes were set to optional. For example, if a player wanted a beret, once he bought it, there was absolutely no attribute boost. However, when this beret is added into the player's item storage, it would randomly generate three more attribute boosts. Then, this player could select one of them and equip it themselves.

Costumes are items that can't be exchanged. If a player were lucky enough to have a special boost, it would be impossible for them to buy another one and exchange the items. Of course, this situation was rare since the attribute boosts were all useful. Moreover, they could select only one among three options.

In short, apparently, Thriller Paradise was trying to encourage players to use their favorite appearance to try on these costumes.

This optional selection feature was to serve players purposely. In this context, the chance that players would have the same shirt wouldn't be high. Even if they wore the same items, the added attribute boosts would be different.

And, talking about the consumable goods, the most needed regular items were the Survival Value supplement, the Stamina Value supplement, bandage, multifunctional detoxification serum, and some other medicines to treat the abnormal statuses like paralyzing from electric shock, burns, sick, or frozen. Besides, there are other popular items such as bullets, ropes, arrows, batteries, and explosives.

The consumable goods were categorized into different classes. The supplement medicines included large, medium, and small types with different recovery percentage and prices. The other items that came in bulk all had a precise price up to each bullet and each centimeter of bandage.

Last but not the least, the shops here also sold equipment. However, since it wasn't the Box of Fear, the quality of the items here was all under normal grade without any effects. Even a

newbie, who had just completed the Newbie Tutorial at level 1 with only Common Specialty Grade F unlocked, could still find some items that he would be able to use in those shops. Although there would be a certain difference, still, it was better than having nothing.

It meant that if players couldn't find any equipment in the scenarios, they could use their money to make up for it. Regardless of the players' level and actual situation of their Specialties, they could always find a suitable set of equipment in the shops.

Feng Bujue quickly read through the description of the shops managed by the system as he just had skimmed over the consumable goods. It wasn't necessary to read about bullets, Survival Value supplement, or the other stuff attentively as he just needed to pay attention to the items he could use.

Regarding the costumes, he had considered buying one, but the price was such a rip-off. Moreover, the prices of these kinds of costumes were somehow based on their special appearances. For example, the 'Panda Armor' was priced at 300,000 game coins. Let alone this 300,000 game coins costume had the same random attribute boosts with the other costumes, it wasn't much convenient to walk in this sort of clothing. Isn't it tying your hands by yourself? Perhaps Dream Inc. thought that wearing something like a mascot and entering the scenario would reduce the intimidating atmosphere there. Perhaps that is why this fancy costume had such an expensive price!

Oh yeah, we need to talk about money too. When the Open Beta was released, Dream Inc. had announced that there was no other

currency in this game besides two kinds of stuff that could be bought in the Box of Fear with Skill Value, which were [Special Items] and [Game Currency]. As for the other items, they all required spending game coins to be purchased. And, Dream Inc. now officially provided the exchange service between game coins and RMB.

Originally, this should be fine. However, Dream Inc. had a sharp strategy saying that the exchange rate between Thriller Paradise's coins and real money wasn't fixed. This exchange rate would be changed accordingly to the actual situation of the market.

Usually, the exchange rates of game currency would be determined by the 'gold speculation' company, but from now on, it would be controlled.

The exchange rate would be updated at 8:00 AM every Monday; it was also when Dream Inc. gave the exchange rate for the week. Assuming that you could buy 100 coins last week with 1 RMB, in the following week, however, you might be able to buy up to 120 coins or only 85 coins with the same amount of RMB.

From the profit point of view, of course, the game producers would expect a higher exchange rate. It would be better if 100 RMB could only buy 1 game coin, but it was impossible since no one would buy it anyway.

Thus, the system would decide this change entirely. It would be based on the total number of players, the total amount of coins rewarded, and the income of the system shops—all of them would be calculated with a special formula, and the result would be the

basis to adjust and control the exchange rate for the next week.

Although this constantly changing exchange rate would create the phenomenon of ‘money speculation’ in reality, it wasn’t related to Dream Inc. since the company just provided a one-way currency exchange, in which they only took RMB and sold the game coins. It didn’t matter to them whatever the players bought game coins for. If you have the ability, you can buy more coins when the rate is 1:10000, then wait until it is 1:100, so you can earn more profits then. It’s a sort of special ability though.

Later on, it has been proven that ‘money speculation’ was something hard to do since the system had controlled the exchange rate without any significant difference for a year round. The rate was kept around 1:2000 to 1:3000. With a weekly updated exchange rate, the rich and powerful players wouldn’t bother to deal with the ‘money speculation’ guys, while the players who had to be precise on every cent would be worried. It was unsure whether there would be more profit in buying the coins now with a slightly lower price, or wait for a few more days to see if the updated rate would be lower than the price offered by the money speculation company.

Of course, talking about using RMB to buy game coins, currently to Feng Bujue, it was like he had the heart but no strength to do.

Now, if he wanted to buy anything, he had to rely on the rewarded coins. To a level 13 player, Feng Bujue’s properties weren’t bad at all as he got more than 164300 coins and 843 points of Skill Value.

Suddenly, he remembered the bag of garlic, which he had destroyed previously. If he hadn't deleted it, perhaps he could have sold it with a price of two apples or three melons and earn some coins. That was surely a mistake! Anyway, thinking a little bit deeper, as this sort of items could be seen in any scenario and it wasn't a valuable equipment, then its price might be just as high as the price of dust. If that one would have been sold with thousands of coins, from now on, he didn't need to write more novels as he just needed to steal batteries, put them in his bag, and later he could sell them at good prices.

"Oh, I should check the Auction House first, the costumes are really expensive." Feng Bujue mused before turning around, then he headed towards the information tower in the middle of the Mall.

Coming closer, he found out that each of the four fan-shaped objects arrayed around the information tower had a special screen, which displayed the ranking lists besides the other virtual normal screens.

Above those fan-shaped objects, there were four letters which were 'East, West, South, and North'. Apparently, its purpose was to help players to distinguish directions in this bowl-like space.

Feng Bujue walked to the East and looked up to check the ranking list there, which was the level ranking list. Among the first 20 names, there were two players marked with 'Anonymous'. As for the other 18 players, laid next to their names was a pair of brackets () stating the name of their guilds and also their studios. It seemed that when the Open Beta Version was launched, those studios had

already been set up.

Regarding the guild's advantages or the conditions of establishment, Feng Bujue didn't know. He decided to check it out when he got back to his login space. Now, he was quickly scanning over the list and memorizing the names and the studios of the top players.

Next, Feng Bujue walked to the South and saw another list. This list was named 'Fighting Specialty Ranking'. Surprisingly, among the 18 IDs that were listed on the previous list, only 5 were also listed in the top 20 of this ranking list.

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The one who topped the fighting list was a player called [The Valiant Ghost Devouring Heaven], but this ID wasn't listed on the list of the top 20 players who had the highest levels. The name (Order) followed his nickname, thus, Feng Bujue could confirm that he wasn't one of the two 'Anonymous' players. Such professional players, who belonged to the biggest Studios, didn't need to hide their identity. Moreover, their managers absolutely didn't want them to be anonymous since with the names existing in the list, they could brag about their Studios' competencies.

"Oh, it seems the difference between levels in this game doesn't mean anything." Feng Bujue thought, "The ranking is just for players' reference to check out how well the players who always want to level up in their Server have been doing. The dangerous ones are the ones whose names have been listed in this combat ranking list."

Feng Bujue raked through the entire list. There were no anonymous, and names of the guild were put after the names of the top 20. It seemed using 'personal' competence was pretty hard to compete against those players who had their guild's resources as a big support. This feature was significant at the beginning stage of the game. The components of what was called 'fighting ability', besides the player's personal abilities, were the Specialty Grades, Skills and Items. Players with Studio background could have much better quality items and skills, which made them not just one level higher than others. After reaching level 20, generally, everybody's specialty grades would be D, and that's when the differences emerged.

The thing worth paying attention to was that besides the player named ‘Valiant Ghost Devouring Heaven’, the one who was ranked number six also had the word (Order) follow his name. And, at the same time, this player had topped the highest levels list as he was the first player of the Server that stopped leveling up in Close Beta Stage. He was [The Fearless Hero].

From number two to number five of the list, those positions belonged to another Guild. The IDs were namely [Shiva], [Vishnu], [Brahma], and [Yama]. These four badasses came from the same Studio called ‘Immortals’. This Studio seemed to be quite powerful since their names were also listed on the top 10 of the level list.

1After Feng Bujue was done, he came to see the other two lists of the West and the North, which were the list of top ‘Guilds Overall Strength’ and ‘Guilds Combat Competence’. It wasn’t a surprise that (Order) and (Immortals) were ranked at the top. The Immortals was stronger than Order in combat competence, but in general, the Order took the upper hand.

In fact, the ‘Overall Strength’ had a profound meaning. When it wasn’t put together with the combat competence, it represented the overall power of a Guild. Besides finance and the number of members, the best feature of Order was—flawless.

For example, when Feng Bujue had met [The Invincible Hero], he was one of the players who were in charge of Fighting Specialty of Order in Close Beta. Level or items or other specialties weren’t important to him. What he needed to do was to complete his tasks —to provide information and experience to his Studio.

Regarding the other Specialties, there were other relevant players who would be in charge of them. Order used this practical method to harvest precious documents, so that when their core members entered the games (in Open Beta), they could do more with less effort needed.

It could be said that Order had an almost-perfect strategy with high productivity, especially in getting information from the game. They had carried out this task with care. Moreover, it wasn’t just primary understanding as they had to experience and study it to make final conclusions. If they randomly released a part of their data, they could easily blow off the introductions of some players posted on the forum. That, however, was something they wouldn’t do, even if they got paid for it.

The Immortals Studio, on the other hand, wasn’t a loser. Tremendous personal competence was the best feature of this studio. No matter what tricks the other Studios were playing, they didn’t interfere. The Immortals’ strategy was simple. Once the Close Beta opened, they immediately let all of their superstar players play the game. Training first, then talk about other things later. Anyway, their skills were all the aces, and there was no difference in entering the game sooner or later.

Feng Bujue scanned through the top 20 Guilds on both of the lists. These two lists had shared many same Guilds. Besides the Order and the Immortals, there were seven guilds whose players were listed in the list of Level and Fighting Ability. However, their situation wasn't clear enough. Anyway, the Ice Emperor wasn’t listed on any ranking lists. This meant that there was no problem with the system’s credibility.

After Feng Bujue had finished checking all four lists, he headed to the information tower in the center of the Mall to observe the auction situation. This was a vision-widening experience to him as he could see some garbage items with ridiculously high prices, even more expensive than clothing.

A perfect quality item level 10 got a starting price of 120,000 coins, and it was bought at 200,000. The starting price was actually 60 RMB. Feng Bujue felt it was funny. With this amount, a player could buy a full set of cheap garments that he could wear as long as he pleased. What about that item, to which level could players still wear it? When they reach level 20, they could buy a normal quality item to replace that one.

Since it was just the beginning time of the Open Beta, the players were then worried that they would receive low prices for their items in the auction. This psychology could be explained. One of the ‘thug-life’ situations in online games was that one day, you found out that the item you have trashed away is actually a priceless treasure.

Those players who had spent all day long wandering around the Auction House would gradually form a thought in their minds, which was ‘buy cheap, sell expensive’. The best case was when they find a seller who didn’t know a thing about the market and set the price much cheaper. They would buy the items and set another rip-off, and it was much better if the customer would be someone who didn’t care about his money and got trapped.

There will never be enough idiots for such world since everybody thinks they are smart. The final result was, the ones who could sell

items were players that had set up the proper prices.

In Thriller Paradise, items' attributes would be randomly generated, which limited the chance of having identical items. Thus, there was no way to hoard or speculate goods. It was difficult for players to stash away virtual goods, and it was almost impossible to sell away high-priced items, which they had bought at much lower prices.

In addition, to prevent unscrupulous profiteers from buying consumable goods from shops and then putting them in an auction to deceive newbies, the system had prohibited putting items directly from the shops to the Auction House. Besides, items with 'Broken' or 'Garbage' quality without special effects or attributes would be rejected in the auction. And, there was no hope for players who were so hopeless that they had picked up something like [Stone], [Organs], or [Dog Poop] and deceitfully sold them with high prices.

In this area, players could browse the Auction House's menu in any place. Feng Bujue was watching the screen for quite a long time only to see constant updates of various kinds of items, which were all useful priorities of the sorted list. Almost none of them had the appropriate prices as all were set up with unacceptable prices. With the super expensive prices in the Auction House, if Feng Bujue reluctantly put his [Mario's Pipe Wrench], [the Dance of the Knight] and [the Echo Armor] in one plot and set the price of 60,000, other players would break their heads to blend into the crowd that all wanted to buy his goods. Perhaps he could sell them within only one minute, and even the ones who could buy it would be content and say, 'It's great that I met an idiot.'

As he had come up with that thought, Feng Bujue suddenly had a malicious ‘oh’. He thought it was a good trick.

He turned around and returned to the elevator and entered the last area that he hasn’t checked out—the Box of Fear.

Currently, Feng Bujue didn’t have the pressure of lacking items. Moreover, his Skill Value wasn’t small either. Now, he could buy some good quality items and set reasonable prices for them in the Auction House; he could definitely sell them with the Reserve Price, then he could earn more than 100,000 coins. At that time, those expensive costumes wouldn’t mean a thing.

…

There are not too long or too short books. When Feng Bujue returned to his login space, the first thing he had done was to put the flashlight into his bag. Then, he went to receive the bonus from his Fear Rating. As he wasn’t in a hurry to earn EXP and 50,000 coins was sort of nothing since taking the money wasn’t better than selling the item, he chose to receive a random item.

[Name: Kenny’s Parka]

[Type: Defensive item]

[Quality: Excellent]

[Defensive power: Feeble]

[Attributes: None]

[Special Effects: within a certain range, the user can passively become the main target to bear all the injuries for the whole party (including mobs' attack, accidents or natural disasters); in Multiplayer Survival Mode (Normal), it can resurrect the user at the spot once.]

[Equipment Requirements: Male player. The item will be locked after being equipped.]

[Remarks: Ouch! My god, they killed Kenny!]

This defensive item was set to be worn on the upper body and had nothing to do with the costume. Items were just items, while costumes and appearance or the 'skin' could be installed at the same time. However, only one of them was chosen to be the appearance of the player.

For the name Kenny, Feng Bujue was well aware of it, thus, even though he couldn't equip the Echo Armor now, he wasn't too eager to put this defensive item on.

This sort of thing was like you are finding a way to suicide when putting it on. When you give it away, you are trying to harm other people's lives. The best solution for this case was to put it in the Auction House and try to deceive strangers.

Now, his bag capacity was 8/10 as it could still store two more items. According to the prices he had memorized, a perfect quality item in the Box of Fear would cost roughly 300 points of Skill Value. In case an item would require 500 points of Skill Value, he couldn't buy two. So, two unoccupied slots were enough. Anyway, after he had purchased the items, he would then put them in the Auction House.

After the doors of the elevator booth closed, Feng Bujue pressed the button [The Box of Fear]. This time, it was odd. After he had pressed the button, the doors didn't open, and the system's notification didn't play. Two seconds later, the elevator started to move all of a sudden. Even stranger than that, Feng Bujue could feel that this elevator didn't just simply move up and down, but it was like a roller coaster moving for a quite a long distance in various directions.

After around a minute, the elevator finally stopped, and the doors automatically slid open. A scene that was beyond people's imagination appeared in front of Feng Bujue's eyes.

...

A reference to a South Park character.

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The space in front of his eyes was narrower than the storage as it was just slightly bigger than the elevator booth. Mild light shone over the room from the white ceiling. The floor had square patterns in black and white, just like a chess board. The strangest feature about this room was that the whole four walls of the room were formed by twisted mirrors.

There were so many reflections of Feng Bujue in the mirrors, which looked pretty odd. Not only the twisted body, but also his aura and his countenances were all modified. In those mirrors, people could see joy, anger, sadness, cheering, greed, hatred, passion, insanity, etc. It seemed each face here represented a feeling or different desire.

"I thought it would be a public space just like the Mall," Feng Bujue spoke to himself as his eyes glued on the only object in the room.

Stood amidst the room was a big box—a colorful present box around one square meter.

"Maybe if I open it, a spring clown will jump out and freak me out." Feng Bujue shrugged, smiled and moved towards the box.

The system’s voice arose at this moment, [When you stand in front of the Box of Fear, you can open a special menu to browse the items.]

"Tsk, turns out it’s just for posing." Feng Bujue felt disappointed a little bit as he opened the menu.

The items inside it were so many, which went beyond his estimation. There were around 4,000 items, and they were all excellent items.

Within the short period of the Close Beta, which was only two days converted to 48 hours of real time, Sleep Mode Server had provided 480 hours of game time, and the Non-sleep Mode Server had brought 96 hours correspondingly. Thus, the total time of both servers was around 24 days.

During this period, each scenario had randomly generated one or two items that players couldn’t bring out of the scenario. Besides, there were numerous items of ‘Perfect Quality Grade’ that existed in those scenarios, which hadn’t been discovered even when the scenario was completed.

Those items, after a certain adjustment of attributes, could all be found in the Box of Fear.

Open Beta had been launched at 8:00 AM. From that point of time, all the items in the Box of Fear started to countdown for destruction. Six hours had passed by, and all items generated in Close Beta Version displayed [Remaining time: 6 days, 17 hours, 38 minutes]. Also, there was an increasing number of items generated in Open Beta constantly being put in this place. Those items had the countdown time starting from the end time of the scenarios.

It was his curiosity as Feng Bujue wanted to search for [The Bloody Corpse Must Die], which he had used before. Indeed, he found it, but the equipment conditions had been changed.

[Name: Bloody Corpse Must Die]

[Type: Weapon]

[Quality: Excellent]

[Attack Power: Quite strong]

[Attributes: None]

[Special Effects: can dissolve the Bloody Corpses when hit.]

[Equipment Conditions: Fighting Specialty Grade D, Level 18]

[Remarks: This sword is an early work of the legendary dwarf blacksmith Aure in his collections, the ‘All Must Die’. One day, a cunning Goblin businessman had used some bottles of ‘Erguotou’ to exchange for this sword. Half a month later, Aure cast the ‘Goblin Must Die’.]

As a weapon with a special and powerful ability, not to mention its attack power was quite fair, its equipment conditions were reasonable. A player at level 18 and has Fighting Specialty Grade D, not to mention his equipment, fighting one-on-one with a Bloody

Corpse shouldn’t be a big problem, but it wouldn't be too easy. Anyway, with this sword, everything became simpler as players could kill the mobs without shedding a drop of blood.

The price of this weapon, which was 300 points of Skill Value, was much suitable with Feng Bujue’s expectation of low-grade items. Thus, this slightly narcissistic bastard couldn’t help but secretly admire the item for seconds.

However, Feng Bujue didn’t intend to buy it. This item had a special restraint feature, and the chance that players could meet the Bloody Corpse in a scenario, which had various types of monsters, wasn’t high. It could be around 1/10. If he put this item in the Auction House, no one would probably buy it either.

He adjusted the menu in chronological order and started to check the first page. After which, he couldn’t control his excitement as he saw that the items there were much better than the ones at the Auction House. However, good quality items came with a good price; he was afraid that he could miss some good items.

The more he saw items, the more excited and surprised he was. Although he hadn’t seen any ‘Legendary grade’ items yet, there were some items which were Perfect grade. Of course, he could only watch them with desire since the prices were thousands of Skill Value. In the scenarios, those items only appeared in the introduction or in the hands of the final BOSS, like the case of the [Bloody Corpse Must Die], which players could only touch for a second and then the scenario would be completed. But at the end, all would go to the ‘Recycling Station’—the Box of Fear—and wait for their destiny, which was to be destroyed.

Thus, it was possible that you could see Xuanyuan Sword or even the Twin Blades of Azzinoth there. As long as players had enough Skill Value, they could buy them all, but it was unsure, however, if they could use them at all. However, Skill Value was something that players couldn't buy with money. The only way to gain it was to use their fighting techniques or intelligence to earn it in the scenario. Players who had more Skill Value certainly weren't weak at all.

Feng Bujue had been checking every item for an entire hour, and finally, he completely washed away the thought of selling the items from here for money. He thought about how the exchange rate of the Box of Fear was crazy as it was only 1:10 and only a one-way exchange! Deceitful! 1000 Skill Value could only be exchanged for 10,000 coins, which was around 5 RMB, but could you buy 1000 Skill Value with just 5 RMB? Just consider a player at level 50, who had equipped himself with all perfect items and skills—he would never exchange his Skill Value for coins even if he got abundant points as he could totally use them to buy items and put them into the Auction House. What kind of idiots would exchange the precious Skill Value for coins?

Not only Feng Bujue had noticed that, during the morning on the same day, there were many players who had ridiculed about this on the forum. Of course, it was not a big deal because the system didn't force players to do this exchange. If you don't feel it's right, then don't do it.

At present, Dream Inc. didn't have any reaction and just ignored it. Moreover, it went straight on the way until May 12th, one month afterwards, after updating the exchange rates for several

times, and the community of players got used to the market prices and the auction items prices. Dream Inc. then adjusted the exchange rate between Skill Value and game coins.

At that time, the community in Thriller Paradise had been divided into three groups, namely, upper structure—intimidating players like drifting clouds; middle class—biggest number of players; and the bottom echelon which was ruled by ordinary players and newbies.

The group of superstructure players had the average level of 30, and their Specialties had been cleared. At the same time, their equipment and combination of skills had also been advanced. Each of them had a different strategy in playing (how to train and level up, do quests, etc.), and they all had a title that matched their actual competencies. With their abilities and experience, they could be the leader of any team in the middle-level. Having such a member in the party, even if they didn’t give their opinions and just carried out their assignments, they would still be a big advantage.

Talking about the middle-level players—the main community of the game, which included professional worker players and stable ordinary players—there were other players who were strong enough to enter the superstructure level, but their understanding of the game was slightly less than the other players in the superstructure level; thus, it affected their character’s competences, the chance that they could finish the scenario, etc.

Those players were the ones holding the true meaning of the word 'player'. They could be famous all of a sudden, but they could

also make mistakes, blame their teammates, or got blamed. Most of them thought that they were hotshots, but they couldn't figure out what was the difference between them and the top hotshots. A long time afterwards, other players had gradually formed a feeling that the strongest in the game is the one who's richer than them or has more time to play.

This sort of thought was somehow reasonable, but it was just a part of the causes.

Feng Bujue had already analyzed this before to know what requirements a player must have in order to become a hotshot in a game, which had considerable technical contents. Finally, he came up with seven requirements.

Knowledge, strategy, fortune, fighting spirit, will, valor, and competence.

Of course, there were innate factors or uncontrollable factors. In fact, playing games and sports are the same somehow. Only gifted talent combined with efforts could become a legend.

At the bottom level, there were players that could be included within three sentences. One, newbies who had just participated; two, normal players who weren't online regularly; three, people whose fighting capacity was just only five.

As they had formed the bottom echelon, it was not necessary to mention their capacity. The first and second types of bottom players could enter the higher realm after a while; meanwhile, it

was really reluctant to the players of the third type to level up. Everybody has something they had mastered and something they have no clue about. This principle is also applied in games.

It was how Thriller Paradise would be after one month. The reason why I mentioned this was because I have two things to announce ahead.

First thing, the game is going to hold a competition around the midst of May. Due to a massive number of players, those contestants must have a certain level of ability to achieve the qualification required. So, perhaps the players of that third type would never have a chance.

Second, after having heard of these, you would assume that Feng Bujue was certainly a player of the superstructure level. But... it's not true.

He belonged to the fourth type of players, whose number wasn't big enough to be addressed as a 'community'. Among millions of players registered in this game, there were roughly over 10 players like him. Although their levels weren't the top ones, they were 'loyal customers' on the combat list.

Afterwards, in that competition, Dream Inc. would simply decide to cancel the qualifications required for this group of people and advance them directly to the final round. Also, they don't need to confront the opponents of the very first rounds. Although many players feel that this is too unfair, in a larger vision, Dream Inc. is trying to protect the majority of players indeed. If we let you fight with them in the preliminary or the semi-final, that will be truly

unfair.

…

Back to our story, back to our story. After Feng Bujue had checked the items for over an hour, he finally felt satisfied.

In the Box of Fear's menu, each page would display 100 items; each item would only have three kinds of information including name, type, and price. When players chose them to take a better look, they could see the items' properties.

Of course, Feng Bujue wouldn't check every item one by one as he just looked at the one he was interested in and skimmed over the rest. Although some pages only took him 10 seconds to check, with the number of items, it still took him a lot of time to check them all. This meant that there were so many interesting items in this place.

After he checking them all, he took a deep breath, closed his eyes and filtered his thought. After that, he used the search option to find an item that he remembered.

[Name: Casey Jones' Mask]

[Type: Defensive Item]

[Quality: Excellent]

[Defensive power: Medium]

[Attributes: None]

[Special Effects: When equipped, user's Fighting Specialty will be one level higher than his real level, but it will not exceed Grade C.]

[Equipment Conditions: Male player, Level 15. This item will be locked after equipped.]

[Remarks: The owner of this mask likes to be with the four mutant turtles living in the sewer, who loves eating pizza a lot. As a guy who doesn't have any kind of supernatural powers, he is still very keen on fighting against street crimes. This mask has gradually become his symbol.]

This mask was priced at 500 points of Skill Value. The best features of this mask were the low equipment conditions and the strengthening effect for all players.

Before level 20, players' Specialties were almost impossible to reach Grade C, and this mask could help them break through that limit. From the item's usage point of view, players at level 15–20 could achieve big advantages using this mask. And when they had passed level 20, if their Fighting Specialty hasn't been upgraded to C, this item would still be effective.

Currently, Feng Bujue's Specialties were Common E, Weapon E,

Investigating E, Shooting D, Fighting E, and Curing F. In addition, after Open Beta was launched, the Specialty Tab in his menu had been changed—the font size was slightly reduced, and new grey areas had appeared, which were his two new Specialties. At this time, however, they were still locked.

No matter what, this cost-effective mask would bring tremendous benefits. Thus, he didn't hesitate to buy this item. Even though he was at level 13 now, it wasn't a big deal for him to leap to level 15. In papers, it would take him four scenarios max to do that.

After Feng Bujue had purchased the mask, he put it in his storage. Then, he visited the Mall one more time to put [Kenny's Parka] in the Auction House with the starting price of 110,000 coins and the reserve price of 140,000 coins. The registration fee for putting in auction was 4,000 coins. This 'procedure fee' was set by the system. Since there were so many items, the price would be based on the properties of the items to be sold. Basically, this fee implied the item's price evaluation by the system.

After 24 hours in real time, if there was no bid made, the items would be removed from the Auction House and then be packed and delivered to the owner via mails. If the items were sold, the system would send money to the owners.

After Feng Bujue was done with these things, he got back to his login space. It was 3:00 PM in real time now, so he got half a day and a whole night left to play. Feng Bujue set for himself a super short-term goal, which was to reach level 15 before dawn. Moreover, he must upgrade his Weapon Specialty to D. After

which, he could equip the [Casey Jones' Mask] and the [Echo Armor], then he could experience 'The Killing Game'.

Xuan-Yuan Sword (Chinese: 軒轅劍, literally "Sword of the Yellow Emperor"). In time immemorial, the "Xuan-Yuan Sword" was wielded by Yellow Emperor of ancient China to defend the ancient Chinese against the warlord Chi You and his aggressive subjects. After Chi You's defeat, the future for the five-thousand-year-old history of China was secured, and the Sword was passed on from Yellow Emperor to future generations to continue to defend the world against evil. Due to its great power, the sword was often sought by treacherous individuals to further their own ends.

The Twin Blades of Azzinoth are a set of weapons wielded by the Lord of Outland, Illidan Stormrage. Azzinoth was a doom guard commander whom Illidan slew during the War of the Ancients 10,000 years ago. Illidan "looted" Azzinoth's twin warglaives and trained to use them himself. He has become exceedingly efficient with the weapons. They can be connected to each other to form a single weapon, and then split apart to form separate weapons.

Arnold Bernid "Casey" Jones is a fictional character from the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles comics and all related media. Like the turtles, Casey Jones is a vigilante, and was created as a parody of vigilante characters that were in comics. Casey usually has long dark hair, wears an ice hockey mask, cut-off biking gloves, and carries his weapons in a golf bag over his shoulder.

Chapter 72: Seven Inconceivable Things in the Campus (1)

[Feng Bujue, level 13]

[Please select the game mode you want to play.]

[You've selected Multiplayer Survival Mode (Normal). Please confirm.]

[Confirmed. Random number of members of your party generated: 2 players.]

[You've entered the party. Searching for another available player...]

[Matching completed. Adjusting nervous system connection... Generating scenario...]

[Loading... Please wait...]

"Welcome to Thriller Paradise." The voice this time belonged to a woman, which was as light as a whisper.

[Loading completed. You're entering Multiplayer Survival Mode (Normal).]

[This mode offers an explanation of the plot. There are chances of Side/[Hidden Quests], together with special Worldview.]

[Rewards for completing the scenario: A random Card Skill that player is able to learn.]

[Plot's introduction is about to play. After the introduction, the game will start immediately.]

Feng Bujue suddenly felt his body had lost all of its weight as the introduction clip of the scenario appeared in front of his eyes. A moon hung in the sky over a school gate. The name of the school was written on the wall, which read 'Yousuke High School'. Looking from the main gate, there were a schoolyard and the main building. With a more careful observation, it could be assumed that there were two more buildings and a gymnasium.

[Yousuke High School is quite boisterous in the morning and too silent at night. This school was built on an old burial place, which was sold at a pretty low price. After 20 years of establishment, supernatural phenomena started to happen. Fear hid in people's hearts as rumors of different kinds of strange events spread among teachers and students.]

[No one knows since when a folk song called 'The Seven Not-to-discuss Phenomenons' has appeared.]

As it came to that part, the system's voice in Feng Bujue's ears suddenly changed into an ethereal, soft voice of a little girl. She was using a creepy monotonous rhythm that would give rise to

goosebumps on people's skin, singing the subtitle in front of his eyes.

[Save him, save him... in the well, it's difficult to go home. Don't look at him, don't look at him, or else you will be buried with him in the dry well.]

[One, two, three, four, five, six... counting the steps upstairs. Come back, come back, don't step on the 13th step.]

[Tluck, tlock, tluck, tlock... Water dripping will not stop. Vivid red, vivid red. Don't look in the mirror.]

[So, Fa, Re, La, So, Re... the mournful melody of the piano. Don't want to listen, don't want to listen. It's important to applaud when it's done.]

[Blurp, blurp, blurp... Good smell comes into your nose. Taste it, taste it, that bowl of soup is made from human flesh.]

[Waa, waah, waah, waah. Infant cry's in your ears. Laugh aloud, laugh aloud. Bones cradle, skin carrier.]

[Ghosts are everywhere. Blood is flooding... Ghosts are coming for you. Don't be scared, don't be scared. Ghosts can be killed.]

After this folk song was over, the CG introduction remained, but the voice had returned to the system's voice. In the next two minutes, Feng Bujue could hear the most horrible setting that he

had ever experienced since he began playing online games...

[You and your teammate will be equipped with a cell phone each. This item can't be put into the bag as you can only hold it in your hand.]

[This phone has plenty of battery, and it can display the time of this scenario. There's a speed dial which will call your teammate's phone number.]

[This phone can't call any other numbers besides the speed dial number. Moreover, it doesn't have other functions like 'texting'. You can't turn it off or change the ringtone.]

[After the scenario begins, it will start counting time. From the 10th minute, you and your teammate can make a call, which lasts for one minute. Both of you can call each other after every 15 minutes. Both of you have to take turns to call and receive the call.]

[The calls are randomly generated. You will make the first call, and the second call will be made by your teammate. It will continuously go on in that order.]

[If both sides can't make the call, 'the responsible player' will be the target of the ghosts until the time of the next call. Example number 1: time comes, and the responsible player starts to call his teammate. If the receiver can't pick up the phone, the receiver will become the 'responsible player' immediately. Example number 2: time comes, and the responsible player forgets or can't call his teammate, he will be considered the responsible player

immediately.]

[You and your teammate can't communicate directly due to [system restriction], so you can only communicate via phones.]

[You and your teammate can't face each other (when the other comes into your sight) and approach another place. If you two unexpectedly meet each other, you must separate within one minute, or else, the ghosts will chase after both of you.]

[After the scenario begins, five minutes after the both of you have entered the school, please separate. If you cross over the said time, you will receive the same punishment as mentioned above.]

After the reminder was over, the scenario started immediately.

Feng Bujue was instantly immersed in the strange place with a black cellphone in his hand. When he turned around to see his teammate, he was surprised for a moment—it was Like Rain. Before queueing to play the game, he didn't check his online friends from the friend list.

Although Like Rain didn't express anything, she also felt surprised.

On the first day of the Open Beta, perhaps there would be millions of players online. Among the vast sea of people, the two of them had queued individually, but they were here, in the same scenario. Moreover, this scenario only required two players. Such

coincidence… could only be destiny.

What is destiny? Let me conclude with the Buddhist reincarnation theories. They are: injustice—becoming father and son; debt—becoming a couple. You don't know what the next life would be, so please seize every minute.

I think that love isn't the only related thing to destiny. In life, people could create grudges, and they are also destiny. Thus, right now, I would like to advise those who believe in Buddha's teachings. If you are holding grudges to someone, you should take time and solve it thoroughly in this life; because, if they became your son in the next life, you would have to pay for his marriage, his house and everything. And, in case you don't want to pay off your debt, you should convert to atheism. If in this life you've lost valuable materials, on your next life, you have to pay with your body.

Ah, yeah, the reason why I'm talking about this is because of the previous folk song that has scared you—I should talk something to ease the tense and atmosphere though.

Now, we should get back to our story. Feng Bujue tried and found that he couldn't talk. When he was about to open his mouth, the system stopped him, and it was impossible to interpret his thought into action.

Thus, he could only use his hands to gesture. First, he made the 'Six' gesture, cocked his head and put one hand near his ear, which meant they should call. Next, he pointed at himself with the index finger, then pointed his index finger and middle finger at Like

Rain.

Feng Bujue wanted to confirm the order of the calls; his moves were understandable. Like Rain got the information and nodded. Then, she gestured her hands. First, she pointed at herself and then at the main building of the school. After several seconds, she gestured at Feng Bujue and pointed to the general direction of the gymnasium.

Feng Bujue's right hand gestured 'ok' and then stretched his other arm (his other hand was holding the phone) making a 'please' action.

The two of them had finished assigning tasks in silence. Like Rain took the lead and entered 'Yousuke High School'. Feng Bujue closely followed her, but they were heading to different directions.

When they were crossing the school gate, the system's voice immediately resounded, "Main Quest has been triggered."

The contents of the Quest was [Search Yousuke High School and solve the seven paranormal phenomenons. Current progress: 0/7]

The Chinese have something called The Number Hand Gestures. In which they assigned different hand gestures to represent the number from 1 to 10. This is even used in school for kids. The hand gesture for number six is little finger and thumb are extended, other fingers closed, with the palm facing the signer. Hence, it's similar to a person trying to imitate the action of calling someone on the phone.

Chapter 73: Seven Inconceivable Things in the Campus (2)

Feng Bujue and Like Rain had split up at the schoolyard. One crossed over the main building, entering the deeper areas of the school, while the other got into the building opposite to the school gate.

If the two of them could cooperate, this scenario wouldn't be too hard as they could discuss the puzzles and fight together. When terrible things happened, it would be much better to have company. However, they were forced to work alone, and they had to follow that sick communication method, which signaled conspiracies. Obviously, the risks and difficulty level of this scenario were doubled.

The folksong had left them some hints on particular locations and objects, such as a well, the steps, the mirrors and a piano, etc.

Let alone the other hints, the well couldn't be in the building or near the gymnasium. 80% that it would be situated somewhere near the wall.

Feng Bujue followed this flow of thought as he crossed the main building and continued walking. At this moment, the moon was as bright as silver that he didn't need to use the flashlight to see the road ahead of him. He didn't rush; sometimes, he checked the time of the scenario on his phone since he had to make a call at the 10th minute.

Among the five elements, Water is the North. Indeed, Feng Bujue found a well in the north corner of the school. The well's wall was made of white stone with a rough surface. There was neither a lid to cover the well nor a wooden frame for pulley and bucket.

Around 10 meters from the well, there was an L-shaped storage. Looking through the window, there was a bucket and some hoses. Feng Bujue walked towards the door and found some iron buckets and mopping tools. It seemed to be a supply room.

Feng Bujue got inside the room and carefully searched for a while. He even counted all the mopping tools and hoses, but still, he failed to find any clues. He then went out of the room and checked his phone again. 9 minutes and 27 seconds had already passed. He pressed the speed dial.

Turned out his phone didn't dial automatically as the screen displayed a message, [It's not the set time. Your next call is from 00:10:00 to 00:10:45.]

"Oh, I can only call within that set 45 seconds..." Feng Bujue muttered, then waited for half a minute until the clock on his phone ticked at the exact 10:00. He pressed the speed dial again. A chain of numbers appeared on his phone screen. The first call had been started.

Beep —— It rang once, and Like Rain picked up the call.

Because they were friends in this game and they hadn't spoken a word to each other since the beginning of the scenario, Feng Bujue

wanted to say something polite like ‘what a coincidence!’, etc., but he didn’t expect that his teammate would jump straight to the matter. "This building is much bigger than what I’ve thought. All the lights inside can’t be turned on. After I went through some rows of getabako and a corridor, I’ve seen a map on a wall. I’m still on the first floor, and I’m going to search each floor from 1F to the rooftop and check every door. Currently, I haven’t met anything strange. How about you?"

This was the first time Feng Bujue had ever heard her talking that much, and he wasn’t used to it. However, he understood that the one minute they had was precious. Moreover, Like Rain was possibly holding the phone with one hand and the portable lamp in the other. If she got ambushed in this situation, it would be perilous since she wouldn’t have time to take out her weapon.

Thus, Feng Bujue followed her flow and answered quickly, "I’ve found a well. It must be the place that the first verse of the folksong mentioned. I’m going to study it." He paused for a second, "I’ll explain simply about that folksong. The second verse mentions the creepy story about ‘The 13th step’. I’ve observed the place. This school has three tall buildings. The main building is the highest with seven floors and a rooftop. I guess when you climb upstair, there’s a high chance that you will trigger this content of the plot. Remember to count the number of the steps. If you find a staircase that has 13 steps, it means you have entered a space which is full of ghosts."

The third verse should be about some WC, if you hear the water dripping sound from a toilet, possibly it’s—"

Beep —— Beep —— Beep ——

The busy tone constantly resounded. One minute was over, and that’s how their first call had ended. Next, they had to wait for 15 minutes, and Like Rain would have to call Feng Bujue this time.

Although Feng Bujue hadn’t finished, they had to stop there. In fact, his reminder was redundant since Like Rain had heard about the 13th step already. Moreover, she could remember 80% or 90% of that folksong. In terms of fighting ability, Feng Bujue wasn't too worried for his friend. He should worry about himself though.

Feng Bujue retrieved his phone and checked the screen. He tried to call again, and this time, the screen displayed the message, [Time hasn’t come yet. Your next call will be from 40:00 to 40:45.]

"Yea, I somehow understood this sort of communication method," Feng Bujue thought, "one minute of talking is not enough, and this kind of communication is to not let players support each other but actually to implicate them all."

Indeed, he was right. Since they both had tremendous personal powers, the system had prepared such settings. With their competences, even if they had to be apart, it wouldn’t be some sort of pressure that they couldn’t bear.

However, worrying for their other teammate would become their burdens.

First, it was clear that they couldn’t be each other’s company in this scenario. Even if they met by chance, they couldn’t communicate. And, after a certain period, they had to make a call. If they couldn’t do that or couldn’t pick up the phone, the ghosts would hunt them down.

Imagine it this way, when the time comes and one of you can’t call or receive the call, of course, you or your friend would inevitably feel anxious. You would absolutely wonder why your teammate didn’t call or didn’t answer. Did he miss the time of the call? What happened to him? Not to mention the ghosts would chase after him, would he be able to withstand it?

Although players could check whether his teammate was still alive or not in the party menu, this couldn’t change anything since alive or not was the only information that the menu could provide. Regarding his actual situation like where he was or did he get hurt, how about his Fear Value, etc., the other player would never know. Even if one of them had one leg cut off and bleeding while being locked in a closet, the other would have no way to come and rescue. The one who wasn’t being pursued could only mess his head with a cranky mind and eventually end up making mistakes due to this chaotic status.

So, it would have been so much better if they didn’t have this kind of setting. Having the system create a setting in which they couldn’t talk or meet up, and each of them had to finish the scenario individually, would be far easier since their mind would be at ease.

…

He couldn’t put the phone into the bag, and the pockets of his newbie costume were shallow, so he couldn’t put it there either. Feng Bujue could only reluctantly hold the phone in his hand all the time.

Although he didn’t know whether it worked or not, he hauled out the wrench and kept it in his other hand, then he slowly walked towards the well. His steps were steady, but his mind was alert. In case he triggered something, he could react immediately.

The ambiance around him suddenly became colder. When Feng Bujue was two or three meters away from the well, an intermittent groan came from deep down there, "Save... Save me..."

Right after the voice sounded, the scene in front of Feng Bujue changed. It was just one second, and the dark night had turned into the dim shade of twilight.

A small and thin schoolboy wearing a uniform and a pair of glasses appeared next to him. There were three other young delinquent teenagers converging the shorter boy. They were talking excitedly, and sometimes, they knocked the shorter boy on his head or pushed him on his chest.

"Replaying a short part before death huh..." Feng Bujue said as he came over and poked them with his hand. Indeed, his hand went through the boys’ bodies, just like they were made from air.

He then waited patiently to see what was going to happen.

In fact, it wasn’t something special, just bullying and taking properties. But the shorter boy tried to show that he didn’t have any money, and obsequiously said something. The bullies, of course, felt irritated and displeased. The shorter boy soon got a kick at his tummy, crouched down in pain and continued to receive a shower of kicks and punches.

It was going on for a while, and suddenly, the bullies came up with a new idea. They dragged the poor boy to the well. One of them grabbed him by his collar and held him above the well. The other two immediately grabbed his legs and lifted him as high as the wall of the well.

The shorter boy, of course, was terrified. He struggled and waved his hands while crying out loud, asking them to stop. The other three just ignored him and laughed louder. The struggle had continued for almost one minute, and the tragedy happened. The shorter boy fell into the well; no one knew whether he was dead or still alive.

The three bullies felt scared a little bit as they spoke something to ease their mind, "Guys, I... I didn’t want to drop him... It... it was him... struggling... causing him to fall... is it right?"

"A... yeah, yeah, right... This boy was careless..."

And they just left without trying to call for help, leaving the boy behind.

One second later, those illusions disappeared altogether.

The night was still clear and cold, and Feng Bujue was still standing two or three meters away from the well, just like he didn’t move an inch during the replay. And, at the time the illusion appeared, his time didn’t even tick a second.

"Save… save me…" The feeble groan arose again.

Feng Bujue took a deep breath and inched to the well.

…

At the same time in the main building.

Like Rain found an article cut out from some kind of newspaper in a Staff Room. The piece of paper was eye-catching, but some parts of the content were marked with black ink, and she could only read some keywords, which included the name of this school —Yousuke High School. The content of this article was about a dry well in this school.

In the year Heisei 6, a high school student named Tanaka Satoshi was found dead in a dry well in Yousuke High School. The police had closed the case with the conclusion of ‘accident’. However, rumors flew around the school saying that Tanaka had committed suicide because he was bullied.

One week later, the three teenagers, who used to bully Tanaka,

left their home on the same night and went missing. Later on, people also found their bodies in the dry well.

At that time, the police were very concerned about this case. However, since they couldn't find any 'Murderer', the case was left unsettled.

"Tanaka's ghost is taking revenge!" This soon spread out among the students in the school.

In the year Heisei 7, another student named Sakagami Yuichi was found dead in the well. When they checked the body, besides the injuries caused when he fell down in the well, there were many strange bites all over the body, which came from at least four other people.

Sakagami used to be a famous bully in the school. One of his friends told the police that Sakagami had told him that he heard someone calling for help when they were smoking near the well, but his friend didn't hear anything. He thought Sakagami was kidding, so he went home alone.

In the winter of the same year, another two bullies of the gang was also found dead in the well. Their bodies also had many bites. All of the two bodies' fingers were cut off and missing. No one had ever found them.

In the year Heisei 8, the school's staff then sealed the well with cement. They had spent the next two years in peace.

In the year Heisei 10, the cement seal on the well had a crack. No one knew why or how it happened.

In the summer of the same year, there were three other students that went missing. 10 days after the first student went missing, a terrible stinky smell exuded from the crack at the seal of the well. The school’s staff begrudgingly broke the cement seal and found three deposing corpses in there. Those three bodies were seriously damaged in different levels. Besides the heads, the other parts of their bodies were smashed.

The rumors then spread out again among teachers and students of the school: "If you hear the ghosts calling for help from the well, don’t look at it, or you will be dragged down to the well."

According to Feng Shui, water is north; fire is south, wood is east while metal is west.

Getabako: A getabako is a shoe cupboard in Japan, usually situated in the genkan, an entryway or porch of the house. In Japan, it is considered uncouth to not remove one's shoes before entering the house. Usually, there are big getabako in schools and kindergartens, and each student has his own section. Sometimes students store personal things there or use them to leave love letters.

The year Heisei 6: it’s the year 1994 according to Gregorian calendar.

Chapter 74: Seven Inconceivable Things in the Campus (3)

Feng Bujue arrived at the well, but he didn’t come too close as he just lowered his body, tilted his head and looked forward without craning his head above the well.

He didn’t forget even a word of that folksong: "Don’t look at him, or you will be buried in the dry well." This was surely a hint. Feng Bujue didn’t doubt that. As soon as he looked straight at the thing inside the well, he would immediately trigger the Death FLAG. Also, he didn’t want to be dragged down there by a monster that he couldn’t fight against as his Survival Value would decline to 0 instantly.

"Hey, you there," Feng Bujue yelled, "is it ok if I throw you a rope?"

Seconds later, the voice from the well echoed again, "I... alone... can’t climb up..."

As soon as Feng Bujue heard this, he had a feeling of finding out something; he tried to probe, "So... How about me carrying you on my back and climbing up?"

The voice from the well simply answered him, "Okay."

Feng Bujue directly asked, "I’m not familiar with this school. Do you know where I can find a rope?" He just wanted to know to

what degree the Quest would aid him with hints.

But then, his new friend didn’t answer him as the voice from the well just repeated, "Save… save me…"

Thus, Feng Bujue spoke up, "Wait there, I’ll go find a rope and come back to you."

That voice didn’t say anything to object him besides continuing his call for help.

Feng Bujue was curious what would happen if he didn’t come to the well. However, after he had contemplated, even if the badass under the well wouldn’t climb up to solve him, sooner or later, he had to come back there to finish this quest.

Feng Bujue left the well area and trotted to the sports equipment storage, where he wanted to plunder something before reaching the well. As he had memorized the route, he found it easy to get back there and used his wrench to break the door. After Feng Bujue entered he rummaged through the whole place.

Soon, he found a rope, which was a rough one used for tug of war. Feng Bujue tried its degree of toughness. When he felt it was okay, he rolled the rope, put it into his bag, then headed out of the room and returned to the dry well.

As he approached the well, the call for help echoed again. Feng Bujue acted like he didn’t hear anything and walked faster to the

place. He tied one end of the rope firmly around the trunk of a dead tree nearby, then he threw the rope into the well. He estimated that the well was around 10 meters deep, or might be just six or seven meters. This rope should be enough.

Now, the most troublesome problem was the phone. No matter whether it was going down there or climbing up again, he had to use both of his hands. Ugh, he couldn't keep the phone in his mouth. And, if he did keep the phone in his mouth and the phone rang when he was half way there, he would have no way to receive the call. If he was careless and slipped the phone to the bottom of the well, he would be chased to death.

Feng Bujue glared at the clock; there were still seven minutes left until the next call. He thought that it would be no problem though. The cry asking for help from the well might belong to the small boy in the previous illusion. As his peer could bring him up with ease, and now he was a ghost, he should be much lighter.

Feng Bujue made up his mind then put the phone on the ground. Without any hesitation, he grabbed the rope while facing the tree trunk and his back facing the well. He sat on the well's wall and started to step his legs on the inner surface. While moving downwards, he kept his head facing up the sky as his hands alternatively gripped the rope. He tried to make it quick. From the beginning to the end, he didn't glare at the bottom of the well; he faced his back to the thing that would be 80% or 90% a ghost all the way down.

"Look at the sky; the moon is laughing..." Since Feng Bujue had stepped in the well, he always kept his head facing up the sky and

back to the well, humming unconsciously. Then, he stopped immediately and said to himself, "Boo, I didn’t notice that I would sing such a brainwashing melody. Lucky me, no one is here. It’s embarrassing..."

When Feng Bujue reached the bottom of the well, he felt that he was stepping on soft mud. He stood on one side of the well, not daring to turn around, and leaving the opponent to only see his back. "Where are you, I came back to—"

While talking, a pair of bloody arms jutted from behind, crossed over his shoulders and clutched his neck. At the same time, Feng Bujue could feel half of a body was leaning against his back. Now, he could confirm that even a female player could totally carry this ghost on her back since it was pretty light, or, in different words, its limbs were incomplete.

"Alright..." Feng Bujue wanted to say something, but he decided to keep silent. Usually, he would make some jokes, but when he was about to open his mouth, he felt something was wrong. In such circumstances, if he exposed the non-human features of that guy, the situation would be developed in a bad way. For example, "You are that quick, why don’t you climb up there on your own?""Why do I feel like you have nothing under your waist?""Water is dripping down from your belly, isn’t it?" All were prohibited utterances.

At the end of numerous ghost stories, so many main characters have tried to talk to someone who looked like ‘human’ that ‘I’ve just met a ghost, it looks like blah blah blah," and then, they all receive the same reply, "Does it look like this?" Afterwards, they all

got killed.

Feng Bujue didn’t dare to take the risk as his neck was still in that guy’s hands. What if this ghost, with his prompt reminders, suddenly remembered that it was a ghost? It would activate the Death FLAG then. As such, he must ABSOLUTELY not say those things.

"Ready? I’m going to climb up." Feng Bujue totally ignored the creepy sounds and other vehement indications. Also, he didn’t care about the bloody arms under his chin. After he had made his greetings, he started to climb up with the ghost on his back.

Previously, when he descended to the bottom of the well, he didn’t look down as though he was just walking backwards. Now, he was climbing up with his sight looking straight forward, and thus, his speed was fast enough. And, the thing he was carrying on his back wasn’t heavy at all; in fact, it was almost nothing.

Getting to the bottom and then climbing up again, it took him only more than four minutes. Feng Bujue stopped at the mouth of the well. After he had adjusted his breath, he still didn’t dare to take risk of picking up the phone; instead, he took out the wrench and spoke to the thing on his back, "We’re out, you can go home now."

A voice arose pretty close to Feng Bujue’s nape, just like an icy-cold wind sweeping over. "Go... home..."

In the next seconds, everything was tranquil to the point that it

almost suffocated people.

"Thank you..." This was the last thing the ghost told him.

When Feng Bujue heard this, the chilling-to-the-bones coldness around him disappeared all of a sudden, and he could feel that the thing on his back was gone. At this time, he sighed then finally turned around.

Under the silver moonlight, the appearance of the dry well had been changed. The mouth of the well was sealed with cement. The rope Feng Bujue was holding had one end tied around the trunk of a tree, and the other end, which he had thrown into the well, was now stacked on the ground next to the well.

Perhaps Feng Bujue didn't get down to the bottom of the well. Perhaps where he had climbed down... was somewhere else. And, he had saved the boy from that place.

...

The last paragraph of the article in Like Rain's hand read, [In the fall of the year Heisei 10, parents of students in the school had invited a Yin Yang Master to perform his ritual. When he left, he said that he had slashed the grudging ghost, but his ability wasn't enough to make the ghost become Buddha.

The writer of this article kept asking him, and the Yin Yang Master answered, "Do you want me to get 'there' and return

carrying him on my back?" After that, he left in rage.

Since then, the mouth of the well was sealed again with cement. So far, there is no supernatural phenomenon that occurred again.

It’s a verse of Bakusō Kyōdai Let's & Go!! (Japanese: Bakusō Kyōdai Rettsu Endo Gō!!) is a manga series created by Tetsuhiro Koshita, first serialized in Shogakukan's CoroCoro Comic magazine from July 1994 to October 1999. The manga centers on Retsu and Go Saeba, twin brothers who focus on the world of miniature car racing.

Chapter 75: Seven Inconceivable Things in the Campus (4)

[Main Quest updated.]

[Search Yousuke High School and Solve the seven supernatural phenomenons, current progress: 1/7.]

Having heard the system's notification, Like Rain exhaled in relief. Her courage perhaps was much better than normal people's standard as she was even braver than Long-Ge. Thus, when she read the article that could send shivers down someone's spines, she didn't react too much.

But still, she couldn't help but to worry. At their first call, Feng Bujue told her that he had already found the well and he was about to deal with it. According to the information from the article she got and the folksong, naturally, she would come to the conclusion of 'not to look into the well'. However, she had no way to inform Feng Bujue this information before the time of the next call came. She really wanted to help, but this helpless feeling appeared to torture people.

It was indeed the effect that the system wanted to give them in this scenario. Perhaps they were just too worried about each other, but this kind of worrying would become their mental burdens. With an upset mind and fear, people would easily make mistakes.

Having listened to the reminder, she felt a little bit better. When she checked the phone, it was two more minutes to 25:00. She had

checked the whole first ground of the main building, thus, she stopped there to wait. After the call was over, she would enter the second floor.

At this moment, she heard the system's notification again, [In the scenario, if you stop for a long time in a particular area, which you have already searched, without doing any action to develop the game, it will be considered 'Passive Playing', and your Fear Value will increase over time.]

Like Rain begrudgingly sighed, took the phone and the portable lamp, and then walked along the corridor.

The 'Passive Playing' concept that the system had just referred didn't exist in Close Beta Version as they just added this feature in Open Beta. Let's take the current scenario as an example. Assuming that the players who participated in this scenario weren't Feng Bujue and Like Rain, but two complete strangers who didn't know each other. One of them was a chicken with bad personality. When the scenario began, he would find some safe place and hide there. When the time came, he would call or pick up the phone as he would never become the 'responsible player', while his teammate was fighting in the schoolyard to death to solve the mysterious things. Moreover, if he didn't do well, he could become the target of a bunch of ghosts. Also, it's possible that both of the players were this sort of people and they would find a place to hide away and make the calls many times.

This is just an example because there were other players in other scenarios using 'Doing Nothing' to survive. To prevent similar situations, the system had added the 'Passive Playing' concept in

Open Beta. If a player were judged to be ‘Passive Playing’, no matter if they had been scared or not, their Fear Value would gradually increase as long as they stayed idle. Once it reached to 100%, they would be forced to log out. Only trying to gain courage and actively playing the game would eliminate this effect.

Of course, this setting didn’t exist in every scenario. There were some scenarios where completing the game was closely related with time such as Saw or the City that Satsuma Diehl controlled. If players took more time, there was a bigger chance that they would be in danger or dead.

Two minutes quickly ticked. When the time for her to call arrived, Like Rain met a staircase. She was climbing up while pressing the speed dial on her phone.

"One, two, three, four..." Like Rain counted in her mind while putting the phone to her ear.

Beep —— Beep ——

After the phone rang twice, Feng Bujue picked up. "I’m alright. Are you okay?" This was his first sentence. First, he would quickly answer what his teammate would ask and say what he wanted to ask.

"Everything’s okay. I’m walking on the staircase leading to the second floor," when Like Rain finished, she walked through the first section of the staircase. Taking a 180 degrees left turn, it was the second section of the stair which led to a corridor on the

second floor. "I've just finished the first staircase, it has 12 steps," she continued walking forward, "you don't need to remind me about the contents of the folksong, basically, I understand them all."

Feng Bujue was surprised, and a smile bloomed on his face. "Ah, so, what should we discuss next?"

"Inform each other about the current progress of the quest," Like Rain answered him then added, "don't ask if we are okay or injured since asking would only increase our anxiety."

Feng Bujue totally agreed with this suggestion of Like Rain. However, Like Rain could speak it out while Feng Bujue couldn't. Since he was a man, saying those things indicated that he was cold-blooded and heartless. Although Like Rain said it indifferently, somehow, he didn't feel anything wrong with it.

"Wow, you are so thoughtful. In fact, I've thought about that too!" Feng Bujue immediately told her his progress, "Yeah, I'm at the northwest corner of the building. It looks like a music class. I'm going to check it."

"13..."

Suddenly, Like Rain spoke up, "The staircase leads to the second floor... has 13 steps."

Feng Bujue hadn't said anything, yet the time for their call was

over. The busy tone was playing now.

"Hello? Hey!" Feng Bujue shouted and reluctantly hung up. He thought, "Yeah, it still causes us to worry..."

At this time, he had arrived in front of the music class.

Feng Bujue slid the door open and entered the room. His flashlight raked through the class, but he saw nothing abnormal at the rows of seats in the class. No bloody handprints or bad handwriting on the walls either. The only thing that caught people's eyes in the room was a piano.

Feng Bujue whispered, "So, Fa, Re, La, So, Re..." He took a deep breath. "If I play the piano with those notes, a trap would be triggered, and something would fall from the cabinet?" He immediately turned around and swept his flashlight to a glass cabinet used to store music sheets and teaching materials. Nothing was put atop the cabinet anyway.

"Oh, if there were something here, it... could step on the bench to reach," Feng Bujue spoke up like he was thinking about something.

Feng Bujue shifted his gaze to a statue of Beethoven in the corner of the room. It was a very normal plaster sculpture, which displayed the head and the front chest of Beethoven with the ratio of 1:1.

Feng Bujue crossed the room to get there, shone his flashlight to

the corner and said, "Fen-Ge, how are you doing?"

Of course, he didn't expect the statue to answer him. While talking to the statue, he put the flashlight and the phone on the right cabinet and tried to move the statue. It turned out its weight was normal and there was no hidden trap or button under the statue. It seemed to be just a normal decoration.

"Fen-Ge, we are all artist, why don't you give me some faces?" Feng Bujue amused himself, picking up the flashlight and the phone again.

Eventually, he walked towards the piano. Although he knew it would cause a bad FLAG, he was still adamant. Feng Bujue stretched his fingers then played the piano with the notes mentioned in the folksong...

The pinyin of Beethoven is Bèiduō Fēn, that's why Feng Bujue called him Fen-Ge.

Chapter 76: Seven Inconceivable Things in the Campus (5)

So, Fa, Re, La, So, Re...

After Feng Bujue played these notes, he took several steps back and cautiously observed every change in his surroundings.

Seconds ticked by and a pair of pale, slim arms stretched out from the piano cover in a weird angle.

There's an idiom called 'Read like water flows', perhaps there's someone who could do that, even though Feng Bujue had never seen one before. However, 'Play the piano like water flows', if he wanted, he could see it now.

10 fingers of that pair of hands interlaced then pushed straight forward with the palms facing out. Feng Bujue immediately caught the sign. This seemingly dispensable move was the 'reaction time' that the system gave players. If players didn't get scared, they should seize the time and act quickly.

"Don't want to listen... when the play is over, you must applaud," Feng Bujue mumbled the related hints in the folksong. As he understood it, he immediately then sat down on a chair in the first row, put the phone on the next chair, and kept the flashlight between his knees, directly shining it on the piano.

The two pale arms that looked like two dried tree branches

seemed to have finished its warm-ups and were ready now. 10 fingers were like 10 flexible ghost claws that wiggled several times and positioned themselves on the keyboard. Then, it started to play... The pair of hands was like it was dancing on the piano keys while the elbows and the bones of the arms had been bent into an unimaginable angle. Each finger seemed to have its own life, brushing and dancing across the piano keys.

From the visual point of view, the way the two ghost arms were playing the piano wasn't beautiful at all. Also, it didn't bring a true feeling of speed. If one had to imagine this, it looked like 10 earthworms hooked on two hooks; each hook had five different heads. And, these 10 earthworms were trying to wriggle and twist their bodies, attempting to get rid of the hooks.

Feng Bujue didn't know if the melody was smooth and nice. Although there were some notes making their way into his ears, he didn't hear a full, short section of the song since when the hands had played the very first notes, Feng Bujue had already covered his ears with both of his hands. And, he was shaking his head rhythmically while quickly humming, "La, la, la! La, la, la! I'm a little boy selling newspaper..."

After he had finished the Selling Newspaper Song, he started March of the Volunteer. Anyway, if that pair of hands kept playing, Feng Bujue would just repeat those two songs again and again. No one knows if there's a grudge between him and Nie Er.

In short, after around five minutes or so, when Feng Bujue was about to sing the Selling Newspaper for the third time, the pair of hands stopped, lifted its finger from the keyboard and ceased in

mid-air.

Feng Bujue didn’t say anything further. He just started to applaud excitedly and shamelessly yell "Bravo!", almost asking ‘Encore please’.

This sort of compliment sounded more like a crosstalk in the garden and seemed to surprise the owner of the ghost hands a lot as the hands were stunned, pausing in the air for almost 30 seconds before it could act again.

Suddenly, the right ghost hand balled into a fist and punched into the air twice, just like it was expressing its dissatisfaction. After that, the left ghost hand lifted the piano lid, and the right hand got back to join it, pushing up the piano lid. Both of its hands held the lid and then slowly retreated into the piano as the lid closed. This move was like it was saying, "We’re closed, you can go."

[Main Quest, updated.]

[Search Yousuke High School and Solve Seven Supernatural Phenomenons, current progress: 2/7.]

"Oh, seems like the so-called ‘Seven Inconceivable Things’ are not all fatal." Feng Bujue picked up the phone and the flashlight, then got up. "Perhaps if I had listened to the entire song, I would have died? Hm, I have a feeling that this scenario is trying to convey that ‘the ghosts are also humane’."

He glared at the phone. 35:18. It was around five minutes before his next call. He didn't know her situation now. Also, there was no quest updates notification, meaning that she was still in the space of the '13th Step'. However, the system didn't say that she was dead though.

The feeling of knowing your friend is in a dangerous situation but you don't know the particular details had a certain effect on Feng Bujue. He opened the menu; although he knew this was meaningless, he still wanted to check the 'Alive' status next to his teammate's ID. This was a strange mood, just like players who got bored of a shooting game would press TAB to check his friend list...

However, when he opened the game menu, he found something unexpected. After Feng Bujue had checked the party menu, he noticed another Specialty was unlocked. The new gray area which had appeared when the Open Beta was released was now half unlocked. The new Specialty was called 'Spiritual Technique', and Feng Bujue's current grade was F.

Feng Bujue had unlocked one of the two new Specialties. However, at the first glimpse, he understood right away that it must be tough to train this specialty.

The six Specialties in Close Beta, including Common, Weapon, Investigating, Fighting, Shooting, and Curing were conforming with the norms of society; however, eighty percent that this 'Spiritual Technique' and the other unlocked Specialty were the supernatural abilities.

Feng Bujue was not sure if his Spiritual Specialty had been

unlocked at this quest or when he was carrying the ghost at the well. Since it was unlocked, he couldn't help but to worry about many things. For example, the bonus of this scenario, who knows if he could receive a Skill Card related to Spiritual Technique. Besides, this specialty seemed to be used to confront ghosts, would it be able to affect other kinds of monsters or players? Also, could the related skill be reused and attack physically?

While musing, the system suddenly notified him. If he was still idle, he would be judged as 'Passive Playing'; thus, he had to leave and continue searching.

The time for the next call was getting shorter, and the quest updates from Like Rain hadn't resounded yet. Feng Bujue couldn't help but feel anxious. When it was one minute before the call, he hesitated whether to call or not.

It was certain that Like Rain's current situation wasn't good. Among the supernatural stories at school, 'The 13th Step' is quite famous and also the toughest. Although the folksong gave a hint by saying, 'Come back, come back… Don't step on the 13th step', but it was a useless one. When the player stepped on the 13th step, a Death FLAG would occur.

However, when Like Rain was talking to Feng Bujue, she was walking while counting the steps, and when she had reached the thirteenth step, she also confirmed that she didn't expect that she would encounter the 13th step on the second floor of this seven-floor building.

Right now, Feng Bujue was weighing his thoughts. If Like Rain's

situation was really bad, possibly, she wouldn't be able to pick up the call, and that would make her the responsible player. Within the next 15 minutes, she would meet more perilous threats, just like adding hail to snow.

But if he didn't make his call, he would become the responsible player and the ghosts would chase after him. Anyway, he could make sure that Like Rain wouldn't receive more threats that way.

While he was still hesitating, the time had come.

It's the beginning part of Selling Newspaper Song. Check out the link for a cute song.

Check out the link for the song.

He's the author of the two songs that Feng Bujue had sung.

Chapter 77: Seven Inconceivable Things in the Campus (6)

Believing in his teammate's capacity or trusting his assumptions, Feng Bujue had to make up his mind right now. This kind of mental struggle was another pressure besides the feeling of fear that the system had put on players. Not to mention what would happen after Feng Bujue had his decision, he had lost this chess game between the player and the system. Now, he was distracted and worried about something that he could never come to a precise conclusion, and this situation only brought him nothing but risks.

Right at this moment, sounds of children crying suddenly arose, which echoed in Feng Bujue's ears. He turned to the direction of the source of the sound. In front of him was an empty, pitch-black corridor, and the crying sound came from the turn at the end of the corridor.

He didn't hurry to get there; instead, he cocked his head to check the time on his phone. It was 40:27. 18 seconds more and he would miss the call.

Eventually, he pressed the speed dial. Although they had played just one scenario together, he decided to trust Like Rain's competence. In addition, he thought that if he didn't call this time, within the next 15 minutes, his friend would have to bear the same mental pressure just like he had.

Until now, he had cleared his mind, which was to make the calls as long as it was possible. No matter whether the two of them could communicate or not, if they could make the call, at least one

of them was still safe. Mathematically, if they could make the call, they had 50% that none of them was chased after by ghosts. However, if they didn’t call, 100% that one of them would be put under the ghost pursuit.

Beep ——

The phone rang once, and Like Rain had picked it up. "I’m okay. Don’t worry."

"Yeah," Feng Bujue was excited hearing her voice again, but he asked immediately, "didn’t you say don’t ask if we are okay?"

Two seconds of silence…

Then, a beep came from the other side. One second later, she hung up on him.

There’s only one explanation for this situation… Like Rain didn’t intend to insult him, but she irritatedly spoke a censored word and hung up the phone.

Having listened to the beep tone from his phone, Feng Bujue was floundered, then he brought the phone in front of his eyes. "Hey! What’s that? Hung up my phone call? It’s you who said we shouldn’t ask about each other! Now you have successfully scolded me just like you are very righteous!" He stared at the phone and yelled in rage. Anyway, since the phone was hung up, Like Rain couldn’t hear him and he could only vent alone. "Idiot? Dumb?

Fool? Could it be these words! What have I done? You didn’t need to hung up when all you did was scold me! If I had known that, I wouldn’t have called you!"

The child’s crying sound was still echoing from ahead of him. It constantly entered his ears just like what the folksong had mentioned: "Waah, waah, waah, waah, infant’s cry echoes in your ears".

Feng Bujue closed his phone and gripped it in his left hand. He also shifted the flashlight to this hand while the other hand took out the chef knife from the bag. He tightly held it as he rapidly walked forward.

At the turn of the corridor, he immediately saw a basket on the ground, which looked like a bamboo picnic basket. There was an infant laid in the basket, covered with a white towel, leaving only its head uncovered. There was nothing abnormal about the child’s face since it was just like a newborn with closed eyes and insignificant facial features.

Feng Bujue took a deep breath then loomed over the basket. He looked at the baby and calmly spoke, "What do you want? Spit it out. If you don’t speak up within 30 seconds, your head will need to move out."

The child was still crying, and it even cried louder, "Waaah waah..." The cry then became very sharp just like fingernails scratching on glasses that irritated people much.

"Cry!" Feng Bujue rose his voice, "Crying also takes time!"

He had used his robber-like interrogation to exchange for a dreadful result as the child slowly opened its eyes, revealing a pair of blood-like amber eyes. Its facial features then opened in a sinister grin.

According to the legends, when a child was just born, its three immortal souls and seven mortal souls were not fully gathered, and all they had were the Yin Yang Eyes. When this kind of babies died, the resentment aura would be very intense, much more dangerous than normal ghosts.

In front of Feng Bujue’s eyes, the basket, where the child was laying, had turned into a human body in just a blink. The corpse’s face was filled with fear, while its limbs were unclear, and its internal organs in its chest and belly were taken out, scattered on the ground around the body. The infant now was lying inside the corpse’s belly, smiling with Feng Bujue.

"Bones for the cradle and skin for the carrier, isn’t it?" Feng Bujue smiled at the infant. He didn’t feel fear. Instead, he was a little bit angry.

While he was talking, his eyes raked over the surroundings. Indeed, the corridor now had many corpses, the same with that one, which got their organs dragged out while their limbs were cut off. The deadly scenes of these bodies were really horrible.

"You are the hermit crab reincarnated!" Feng Bujue said, "Well,

let me guess... Yeah, your mama was a student here and she got cheated by a teacher or a male student. When she was around nine months pregnant, she came to the school to beg that guy, but she got ruthlessly denied. Finally, she killed herself in this corridor. Moreover, before she died, she had taken you out of her belly while carrying a big grudge?"

He’s worth being a novelist as his ability to convey the details in his brain into words was marvelous.

When the ghost baby heard that, its laughter instantly stopped. One second later, it turned into a soul-piercing hiss. This sound was extremely intimidating and it broke off all of the glass windows on the corridor. Along with the broken glasses, Feng Bujue’s Survival Value also declined.

It seemed that it wasn’t good to deal in peace with that monster. Feng Bujue seized the chance and slashed his knife on the mob. However, his knife couldn’t reach the target as something had gripped his wrist. He turned his head to see an arm jutting out from the wall, preventing his attack. Oh, so the limbs of those corpses were still around!

Fortunately, this ghost baby’s hiss didn’t last long as it had stopped after seven or eight seconds. If not, Feng Bujue’s Survival Value would be drained. Anyway, the situation was still very bad. There were many arms and legs emerging from both of the walls in the corridor. All of them were moving...

Feng Bujue understood that lengthening the time would only bring him disadvantages. He determinedly swung his arm and

slashed on that arm. However, a human arm is not that easy to be chopped off, and it was the same with the corpse's arm.

The knife blade had embedded into the flesh of the ghost's arm, causing a large amount of blood to gushed out from the cut, pouring into the corpse and the ghost baby. The child laughed again. This time, it sounded like a soul-breaking laughter to other people. If the game hadn't restricted the pain, Feng Bujue would have fainted already.

Seeing that he couldn't get rid of the clamp, Feng Bujue dropped his phone and shone the flashlight onto his hand. Then, he took out Mario's Pipe Wrench from his bag and struck directly on the ghost baby like lightning. He did it. Moreover, he was lucky enough to use the [Cerebral Concussion].

After the monster's body was affected by the skill, the other moving arms and legs also ceased. Feng Bujue seized the chance and wiggled his right arm out of the grip, then he used both of his hands and continuously pounded the ghost baby in that 'body cradle'. The scene was so bloody as it was more anti-human tendency than enough.

Soon, the limbs jutting out from the walls had disappeared. It seemed that the mob had no more strength to endure. Feng Bujue thought that this was a sign of the ghost baby being killed; unexpectedly, a new unusual thing appeared as Feng Bujue found out that the face of the body cradle suddenly became ambiguous. As time was ticking by, that face had gradually become his face. Then, the corpse spoke up with the voice exactly like his, "It hurts... stop... please stop..." The whining from the corpse had

turned into screaming and screeching as it was trying hard to struggle, just like it wanted to move the body.

While Feng Bujue was still hesitating, the ghost baby under his eyes had disappeared, leaving a hollow tummy and some small particles of the organs residue.

Feng Bujue knew that he got tricked as that monster had used a diversionary tactic to escape to another place and acquire an opportunity to breathe. He immediately retreated his chef knife, picked up the flashlight on the ground and got up. He scanned through numerous hollow corpses in the corridor and searched for the ghost baby.

"Hee, hee, hee..." Another laughter that could make the hair on people's nape stood up arose again. The laughter this time wasn't like it had come from an infant. More horribly, that laughter came from a place that was... really close.

Feng Bujue had recognized something. He cocked his head to see his chest. Things that were reflecting in his eyes could threaten any brave ones. The bloody ghost baby was balling its body, lying inside his tummy, and one of its small hands was clutching on one of his ribs. Sinister laughter came out one by one from inside of his body.

"Using this illusion to make me commit suicide?" Feng Bujue calmly said; he was indeed quite bothered by the scene. He thrusted right hand into his bag. He understood well what he was seeing was an illusion as he could still touch his clothes and the bag on his back.

Feng Bujue took out the Eye of Hatred and put it on while saying, "I almost forgot this." Now, he had just recalled another function of this item.

After Feng Bujue had equipped this item, in cooperation with the flashlight, when he scanned over each of the bodies and the corners of the corridor, if the ghost baby was still controlling the illusion, he could see it immediately.

Indeed, when his eyes raked over a corpse that looked like all of its internal organs were emptied out, the Eye of Hatred had a reaction. There was a mob targeting the player.

Feng Bujue strode forward and hammered his wrench without any hesitation. The mob got hit badly this time, and it could do nothing now.

[Main Quest, updated.]

[Search Yousuke High School and Solve seven supernatural phenomenons, current progress: 3/7]

[Main Quest, updated.]

[Search Yousuke High School and Solv seven supernatural phenomenons, current progress: 4/7]

It was almost at the same time that the two system notifications arose. This meant that when Feng Bujue had finished this ghost baby, Like Rain was also done with the 13th step.

"Hm..." Feng Bujue coldly snorted as he mocked himself, "Seems my worries aren’t needed."

...

Like Rain was sitting on the ground, leaning against the wall on a corridor in the main building.

On the corridor next to her, there were numerous dead body of monsters that laid with their blood streaming everywhere. The dense smell of blood and the disgusting aura came from the monsters were enough to shoo people away instantly.

However, she had no strength to move to another place now.

The portable lamp and the sword were placed on the ground next to her as her right hand was holding the phone, and her left hand was pressing the wound on her right waist. Blood was still gushing out from the spaces between her fingers.

The 13th step staircase led to the second floor. Whenever the player entered, they had no way or no place to hide. In a space filled with monsters, whose appearance could surge the player’s Fear Value instantly, a player could be killed and become a part of them, or become just like Like Rain who killed them all.

In fact, at the previous call, Like Rain's situation was really bad. She had lied to Feng Bujue by saying 'I'm okay, don't worry'.

When it was about to reach 40:00, Like Rain was in a battle. Although she had been hurt already, she still adjusted her breath and picked up the phone. She understood that whatever abnormal situation she conveyed through the call, it would only become a mental burden to her teammate.

Currently, Like Rain had finally finished all the monsters inside this space. Now, she needed to rest as she had to wait for her Survival Value and Stamina Value to recover. She had no way to treat her 'Bleeding' status now as she could only maintain this motionless position and apply pressure on the wound to temporarily stop her Survival Value from declining.

In this situation, the system wouldn't definitely judge her as 'Passive Playing', since the player was in a special situation that required her to stay still. In 'Normal' difficulty level, the system wouldn't go as far as forcing a dying player to move. But, it was another story in 'Nightmare' difficulty level...

Like Rain checked the time on her phone. It was 10 minutes to their next call. As she didn't want to be the target of the 'Ghosts Pursuit' something, she must carry out the next call.

After their previous call, Feng Bujue felt annoyed while Like Rain felt wronged. Objectively speaking, they both were responsible for this, but the main responsibility should be poured on Feng Bujue as

he said something that irritated people.

At any moment, even though a man was absolutely right, he better not correct the contradiction between a woman's initial and latter ideas...

Tluck, tlock...

Right when Like Rain thought that she finally had time to rest a little bit, the sound of dripping water was echoing in the silent and dark place from afar.

Chapter 78: Seven Inconceivable Things in the Campus (7)

After Feng Bujue had finished the ghost baby, the illusions around him disappeared altogether. Only those remains of shattered pieces of glasses in the corridor could prove that something had happened here.

Since there was still time before the next call, naturally, Feng Bujue continued to search around. As he had assumed, among the three remaining supernatural phenomena, besides the last one that he had not thought about yet, one of them was related to water dripping; perhaps it was some place that had faucets. 80% or 90% that it would be the WC. About the human flesh soup, it would be in the canteen on the lowest floor of another building.

The map of this scenario wasn't big, but it had many limits, just like the Usher's House. However, it was even more difficult.

The current building where Feng Bujue was had five floors, and it was shorter than the main building. According to his imagination, whether he would climb up the top four levels or not was still questionable. If he went there, there should be a chance that he could trigger the dripping water task before Like Rain or another Side Quest or Hidden Quest. If he didn't go there, he should come directly to the canteen at the third building to see the phenomenon in the fifth paragraph of the folksong.

Although Like Rain had immediately picked up the call and said that she was 'okay', she hung up the phone on him and that gave him a vague anxiety. When he had calmed down to think about it,

he could see that his teammate wasn't a troublemaker, so after all, was it him who was wrong in this case?

Having contemplated for around one minute, Feng Bujue decided to check out the canteen. Anyway, it was a two-player scenario; as they didn't know what kind of effects the other would have when someone died, what if the system would announce that 'Since the dead player can't communicate, the other side will directly become the responsible player and become the target of the endless ghosts pursuit'. If so, Feng Bujue would be so screwed.

Feng Bujue had set himself a goal of leaping to level 15, and in order to do that, completing the scenarios was the primary condition. Only if he could complete the scenario could he receive the bonuses of Fear Rating which was 40% of the requested EXP to level up. Thus, he decided to complete the main clues first.

He left the building and walked across the open yard that had a shape of the letter 'Hollow' (凹), formed by the three buildings. After he had gone through a simple yet crooked corridor, he entered another building.

Feng Bujue pushed the door to enter the canteen. The space inside was relatively large. As usual, Feng Bujue raked his flashlight around the room. There were many long dining tables and benches arranged neatly in the room. Lamps were hung over the tables, but it didn't light up when Feng Bujue pressed the switch button. The floor was decorated with white plain tiles, and the wall also looked insignificant. There was a row of washing basins on the left of the door. The food counter stood on the southeast direction, and the kitchen was behind it. Next to it was a

snack bar, and a vending machine stood not far from there. Blue-sky trash bins could be seen here and there. Generally, this was a high school canteen that was clean and conforming to the norms.

So… Where is the human flesh soup?

Currently, Feng Bujue didn’t find anything strange. So, walking around the canteen couldn’t trigger anything. Upon this thought, Feng Bujue really wanted to check out the kitchen…

When he was still thinking, the phone rang. Feng Bujue checked the phone. Unconsciously, it was time to talk again. He immediately picked up the call. The call started, and both of them kept silent for a short while.

"The things before this… I’m sorry," Like Rain apologized first.

"Ah… Okay, I spoke the wrong things," Feng Bujue answered then changed the topic quickly, "How are you doing? Did you trigger a new quest?"

Like Rain answered, "I’m in the girl's restroom on the second floor of the main building, the last stall."

Feng Bujue knew her situation wasn’t good at all as he could feel Like Rain’s voice was trembling insignificantly and her breath wasn’t stable.

"Are you okay?" Feng Bujue lowered his voice.

"I..." Like Rain hesitated, but she didn’t tell him that she got hurt, "I heard the water dripping so I came to the WC and saw the faucets were leaking with blood. The closer I came, the faster the blood flowed. Then, there was a noise from the mirror just like something inside wanted to get out. I didn’t look at it. When I came back, I found that the WC’s door was closed by itself, and I couldn’t open it." She talked many things in just one breath as her intermittent voice became clearer, "I dodged my head, I didn’t look in the mirror and hid inside a stall. Now, there’s a pair of legs standing outside my stall. It stands still there. I... now I can’t fight. I’m blocked here..." Although she was brave, she was still a lady. Under this circumstances, she was scared as her voice had exposed a feeling of being helpless that she couldn’t press it down. "The water leaking sounds has become louder, and the WC floor is flooding with blood..."

Beep —— Beep —— Beep ——

It wasn’t her who hung up the phone on Feng Bujue again, but it was the time limit that interrupted their call.

While Feng Bujue was listening to her, he left the canteen and quickly run towards the main building.

The system’s warning echoed in his ears, "Caution. You are not allowed to face or approach your teammate. If you continue your action, it will lead to both of you receiving punishments of the ghosts pursuit."

"Cut it off! This is not the right time to consider this..." Feng Bujue said annoyedly.

He was wearing the Dance of the Knight, running pass the internal rules board which read ‘Do not run on the corridor’. Soon, he arrived to the main building. After taking a quick look at the map of the place on the first floor, he immediately came to the second floor, straight to the girls’ restroom.

Since the school wasn’t too big, when he got to the location of the place, it took him only three minutes to get to the door of the WC.

The door was closed, and it didn’t look strange as there was no blood leaking out under the door. However, Feng Bujue couldn’t turn the knob to open the door or call out to announce to Like Rain that he had arrived because the system had restricted their ways of communication. At this moment, he couldn’t make a sound.

Then, Feng Bujue concentrated on breaking the WC’s door. He kept the cellphone in his armpit and kept the flashlight in his mouth leaving both hands free. One of his hands was poking at the slit of the door with the chef knife, and the other hand was trying hard to turn the knob. However, none of his actions worked.

Apparently, this door wasn’t ‘locked’, but it was fixed by an unknown force. It was just useless to deal with the lock only.

No other way around... Hit the door then!

BANG —— BANG —— BANG ——

Feng Bujue's shoulders were hurt. Now, he started to admire Long-Ge's build. If Long-Ge were here, this wooden door would be nothing. His arms were even bigger than Feng Bujue's thighs; Long-Ge just needed to swing his shield two or three times to break this door.

However, Feng Bujue could only think about that way, at this moment, he had to depend on his own thin shoulders to hit the door.

Like Rain could hear the banging sound from her stall. Although it was feeble, she soon understood what was going on as she had tried to see that she couldn't make a sound now. The only explanation for this was Feng Bujue was nearby.

Like Rain's valor returned to her again when she knew that her teammate was coming to save her. She was a little bit touched, too. Nevertheless, she immediately thought about the results of this rescue, of which both of them would become the targets of the ghosts pursuit.

It would possibly be developed this way: originally, only Like Rain would die, but now, after Feng Bujue saved her, both of them were going to die.

Feng Bujue was trying to hit the door, and it cost a bit of his Survival Value. Anyway, this effort wasn't wasted. One minute later, he successfully broke the door and got into the space. When

the wooden door that separated the supernatural space with the outside was broken physically, the dense smell of blood immediately slapped his face.

Feng Bujue could feel clearly that he suddenly got dizzy. After the door had opened, things in his sight immediately became odd, just like a scene by an old-fashioned filming technique. It brought him a feeling of fading hue as everything in his eyes was like they had been filmed in the same frame, which looked very unnatural.

The WC's floor was flooding with blood. When he stepped on it, he had to be careful or else he would trip. Moreover, when he lifted his foot, he could feel his shoes were annoyingly sticky. The faucets at the basins were flowing with red liquid. The blood had filled the basin and overflowing on the ground nonstop.

Don't look at the mirror—this was a very clear hint. When they were in a call, Like Rain also said that she didn't look in the mirror.

Feng Bujue assumed that since she hadn't looked in the mirror, she was just blocked there without further serious consequences. He took several steps inside and started to search the place with his flashlight. Soon, he saw a bloody figure standing at a corner deep inside the WC. This ghost was a schoolgirl in uniform, and her entire body was covered with solidified blood. A faint light from the portable lamp shone out from the stall in front of the bloody figure.

Feng Bujue wanted to go forward and attack that ghost, but he found that he couldn't move as the blood on the ground was

moving and grabbing his ankles, just like a pair of fluid-formed claws that glued Feng Bujue on the ground.

He coldly snorted and made a very bold move…

Feng Bujue suddenly turned his head and looked directly at the mirror over the washing basin.

Feng Bujue's reflection in the mirror didn't have eyeballs, and his two empty sockets were bleeding. One second after he had seen himself in the mirror, the bloody figure changed its target and came closer to him. In just a blink, it appeared in front of Feng Bujue's face—almost stuck to his face.

At this moment, Feng Bujue finally saw that the black hair of the ghost didn't outline a face. The ghost's skull was formed by numerous eyes. A bunch of black and white eyeballs were gathering and creeping together as blood was constantly gushing out from the splits between those eyeballs.

The ghost then stretched its claws and approached Feng Bujue's eyes as if it wanted to take out his eyes and supplement them to its skull… With a closer look, the skin of the ghost wasn't covered with blood. Besides the head, its body was formed by blood indeed.

It was just his foot being confined, and Feng Bujue's body was still able to move. Moreover, his Fear Value was 0, why should he wait and die there? His action was even faster than his words, swinging the wrench and hitting on that 'Eyeball Head'…

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Apparently, Feng Bujue had underestimated this ghost's capacity. If he had already gone against the hint, which read 'Don't look in the mirror', how could his opponent be defeated that easily?

The monster's reflexes were extremely fast as it snatched Feng Bujue's wrist that was holding the wrench. The blood forcefully withdrew, and Feng Bujue instantly felt that his right arm was about to be broken. If his endurance wasn't strong, he couldn't hold the weapon in his hand any longer.

The other hand of the bloody figure quickly grabbed Feng Bujue's neck to the point that he had to throw the cellphone and the flashlight in his left hand in an attempt to hold the bloody figure's wrist. Even so, he gradually started to be suffocated.

The flashlight and the cellphone were dropped on the ground, and were soon drowned away under the blood. The only source of light in the WC was now the portable lamp placed deep inside the WC.

Like Rain didn't hide away. One of her hands was pressing on her wound while her other hand took out the sword as she came behind the bloody figure. Since her injury hadn't fully recovered yet, once she moved, it would start to bleed again. Fortunately, 10 minutes has already passed, and her Survival Value had recovered a little bit. If she didn't aid Feng Bujue now, he would possibly be doomed.

Like Rain lifted her sword and slashed across the Eyeball Head of the bloody figure.

Perhaps the eyeballs behind the mob's head were covered by the black hair, or because Feng Bujue had looked at the mirror that drew the resentment from the mob, so it wasn't bothered with the ambush from behind. The monster was beheaded, then, at the moment the blood neck was cut off, the eyeballs which formed the head were scattered everywhere as the power that got them altogether seemed to disappear.

However, it was just a temporary appearance since Feng Bujue's feet were still glued to the ground. After the eyeballs got dipped in blood, they started to move and gather again...

Feng Bujue and Like Rain were standing close to each other, but they had no way to make a sound. After Like Rain made her strike, the wound on her waist opened again. She was holding her wounded waist with a painful visage. The blood that spewed out from the spaces between her fingers had spoken everything.

Feng Bujue was coming as a hero rescuing his beauty, but it turned out Like Rain had saved him instead. Moreover, his behavior had triggered the ghosts' pursuit; if they didn't do anything to get rid of this dangerous situation, what awaited them was the entire scenario getting screwed.

Under such circumstances, Feng Bujue light suddenly flickered in his mind as he thought about one solution to solve this situation...

He turned his head again and faced the mirror over the washing basin. At this moment, the only source of light was put in the deepest corner of the WC, leaving a dark area near the mirror.

Feng Bujue took out the pistol in his bag, determinedly aim at that direction, and shot thrice. The spark from the muzzle of the gun lit up the space for three short times. The mirror wasn't broken with three salvos; instead, it only resounded three grumbling echoes.

Of course, this mirror wasn't bulletproof, but Feng Bujue realized it was the base of the ghost. Although Feng Bujue's bullets couldn't break the mirror, the blood on the ground was affected. This amount of blood was like a water held in a barrel. When the barrel gets hit, the water inside would also be affected.

The bloody claws that were holding Feng Bujue's ankles broke down, giving him the ability to move again. He didn't say anything, instead, he just hauled out his baseball bat and dashed to the mirror before pounding it continuously. While hitting the mirror, the entire WC trembled, just like the floor above this place was a nightclub. The bloody figure stood still, while the other eyeballs were rolling on the ground, attempting to gather again. However, despite their efforts, they were continuously shocked, unable to condense again.

Feng Bujue swung his bat stronger and increased his frequency. Within the short period of only 10 seconds, his arm was hurt and started to swell up. If it had been a wooden bat instead of a metal bat, his arm would have been broken soon.

Eventually, the mirror was broken and pieces of it fell to the ground. Crack, crack. The evil spirit had finally counter-attacked. A wispy hair banshee suddenly jumped out from the broken mirror. Her eye sockets were empty as her eyeballs had been completely dragged out. The ghost's body was entirely covered with blood, however, compared to the blood-made figure with head full of eyes, this appearance wasn't that scary.

The banshee quickly jumped out and tackled Feng Bujue down. Feng Bujue found himself in a passive situation where he couldn't switch to the pipe wrench on time, and the evil spirit had opened its mouth to bite him.

Lucky him, Like Rain's sword had come in time, precisely slashing the ghost by its head. This time, she had halved the ghost within one strike. When the ghost's head fell on the ground, every illusion disappeared altogether. However, Like Rain also crouched down on the ground. The dark red hue on her wound enlarged, indicating that she wasn't able to move anymore.

[Main Quest, updated.]

[Search Yousuke High School and Solve the seven supernatural phenomenons, current progress: 5/7.]

Although the system had resounded, it didn't leave them time to gasp for their breaths. When the ghost had died, some boundaries were also broken. Vague noises of numerous things like crawling and walking started to echo from the corridor outside and came closer.

Since Feng Bujue and Like Rain couldn’t communicate verbally, he had to step forward and lift Like Rain up towards the last stall in the WC. Like Rain picked up the portable lamp and Feng Bujue simply made a gesture. Like Rain understood his idea and handed him the lamp.

After the item had changed its owner, Feng Bujue let Like Rain’s left arm cross over his neck, while one of his hand was holding her waist and the other hand was holding the lamp. Then, they walked out of the toilet.

Since Feng Bujue’s cellphone and flashlight were lost, Like Rain’s phone was also disabled. Moreover, before the scenario would be completed, they would possibly not split up again. Thus, she flung her cellphone away.

After they entering the corridor, the scene in front of their eyes wasn't positive at all. On their right, inside a dim corridor, there were so many round objects floating in the air and approaching them closer. There was something dangling under those round object, which looked like a small, short section of rope.

"F*ck! The hanging balloons!" (1)

Feng Bujue had read the manga with the same name. It was a story that made people desperate. Recalling the details of this manga also made people gloomy and irritated.

He seized the time and carried Like Rain on his back before

running to another direction. However, that place didn't have a staircase. Although Feng Bujue knew that since he had memorized the map of the building at the first floor, he begrudgingly had no choice. If they ran to those 'hanging balloons', probably, not more than 10 seconds would pass before Like Rain and him would be strangled to death.

After they walked straight to the end of the corridor, Feng Bujue opened the window and used his eyes to signal Like Rain to put away her sword. Like Rain immediately understood his intention.

At this moment, the headless corpses were walking towards them from the other end of the corridor. They were leaning against the wall or crawling on the ground, moving forward.

They were trapped into a corner, and the only way to get out of there was to jump out of the window. Feng Bujue put the portable lamp into his bag and cocked his head at Like Rain to indicate what he was going to do.

Then he jumped. Anyway, it was just the second floor, so it wasn't too high. Feng Bujue's level in the game was 13. Although Thriller Paradise didn't display the particular data of players' attributes, the players' competences would be increased along with the levels. If a player at level 1 had the abilities of a normal person, a player at level 30 and above could be as tremendous as 'The Matrix's' characters. As such, the average strength of a player at level 13 could aid him well jumping off the second floor.

After Feng Bujue landed, he had a strange feeling. He thought that at least he would be strained or get hurt on his back, but

unexpectedly, he felt that his body was pretty light in mid-air and the impact after touching the ground wasn't so enormous, as his Survival Value wasn't consumed as much as when he had banged on the toilet's door.

After stabilizing his body, he brushed his hands and stretched out his arms to catch Like Rain when she jumped down. The moonlight was bright. When Feng Bujue got up from the ground, he had scanned over the place and found no ghost approaching them from the building. He planned that after he catching Like Rain, he would immediately lead her to the canteen. After the fight in the toilet, Feng Bujue guessed that whenever they had entered the specific space of the supernatural phenomenon, the ghosts chasing after them would be stopped outside temporarily. And, after the phenomenon was over, the pursuit would start again. Thus, the two of them couldn't stop even just one second.

Like Rain didn't hesitate for long; under the bright moonlight, after she locating Feng Bujue on the ground, she jumped into his chest. If she were still at her good conditions, she didn't need Feng Bujue's assistance—perhaps she could even jump off the third floor. Anyway, she got a terrible wound now, so she had to count on her teammate's support.

Feng Bujue caught Like Rain, then they looked at each other in silence. Both of them felt awkward, but fortunately, since the system still restricted their communication, they felt less embarrassed.

After Feng Bujue successfully performed the 'princess carry', he decided not to let Like Rain walk on her own; instead, he started to

run away while still holding her in his chest. This option was effective though. If he had assisted Like Rain in walking, it would have slowed down their speed. As for now, they could take advantage of his Dance of the Knight, and the only downside was Feng Bujue had to consume more of his Stamina Value.

Moreover, it helped them save time signaling each other. Feng Bujue directly held Like Rain and came to the canteen.

After entering the canteen, Feng Bujue put Like Rain on a bench and then took out the portable lamp and placed it on a table. Then, he quickly turned around to close the main door. After which, he placed his baseball bat across the door to secure it temporarily.

He returned and sat down on the opposite seat to Like Rain and sighed in relief. Afterwards, he pointed to himself, held up three and four fingers, and then pointed at Like Rain, throwing her a concerned look.

Like Rain opened her menu to check her status. As her wound was still bleeding, her remaining Survival Value was just 12 points. If she didn't stay still, it would decline again.

She gestured 1 and 2 and then cocked her head to look at her wound. After that, she looked up at Feng Bujue and shook her head.

Feng Bujue took a deep breath as his face showed his uneasiness. They had come all this way; he could only wish that the last two quests would be like the phenomenon that happened in the music

class, which didn’t need fighting to accomplish.

Banging noise resounded from the main door as the screaming and screeching voices crept into the room. Shadows of ghosts were moving outside the windows. Seconds later, the sound of shattering glass echoed in their ears. It seemed those ghosts chased after them according to the situation, not leaving them even a minute to gasp for their breaths.

The Hanging Balloons is a one-shot horror story, Chapter 6 from volume 4 of the Horror World of Junji Ito Collection, The Face Burglar, which is a series of horror manga. Check out the link for more information.

Chapter 80: Seven Inconceivable Things in the Campus (9)

"And that’s how...

"... my death will come...

"Blood gushing out from my enemies can fill the barrels and create a sea. I will use their bones to make a boat, and I will sail across this sea.

"My sails are their skins...

"The wind blowing through my sails is their last breath...

"I will behold this sea and tell my old tales since I’ve finally found mercy and sympathy.

"I’m waiting for my death sentence. I won’t expect anything until my life is taken."

A monologue suddenly played in Feng Bujue’s and Like Rain’s ears. By the time it appeared until it completely vanished, both of them could see that something had changed in their friend’s face as they knew the other had been listening to the same contents.

After this monologue, the chaotic noises around them had recovered as the ghosts were hitting and banging on the main

door, while the others had already broken the windows to get into the canteen.

Although they weren't sure what had just happened, they didn't have time to muse still at their spots. Feng Bujue lifted Like Rain up, picked the portable lamps and quickly led her to the kitchen.

When they approached the counter which separated the kitchen and the canteen, the lights in the kitchen suddenly switched on. A sturdy figure stood behind the counter in front of them.

That monster had a human body with a pig head. The muscles exposed on his body were glowing with health. He was wearing a white tank top and a pair of military trousers. Though he got a stick-out belly, each muscle on his arms looked as hard as stone. The appearance of this guy gave people a feeling that finally, Second Brother had been successful with the gym. Anyway, this guy wasn't holding anything like the Nine-toothed Rake...

There was only a counter between the duo and the monster. An indescribable pressure suddenly filled them as both of them felt that the intimidating aura that this monster had was much stronger than the ghosts out there. Just facing each other over a counter produced an invisible threat that was enough to confine them on the spot.

"Hello, hope you are well. I'm Oink," the monster greeted them.

At this moment, numerous ghosts had flooded in the canteen, flying over the tables or crawling on the floor, approaching Feng

Bujue and Like Rain.

Oink cocked its pig head towards the place behind their back and said with an indifferent tone, "Get off my place. Now!" He stressed the last word.

Having heard his words, the ghosts stopped their movements, reluctantly looked at the preys that were almost brought to their mouths, and left indignantly.

"Sit down." After all the ghosts left, Oink pointed at the bench nearest the counter and signaled Feng Bujue and Like Rain to sit down.

The two of them exchanged looks and came to the table before sitting down opposite to each other.

No doubt the fifth task in the folksong had begun. Good for them that when confronting this pig-headed uncle of the plot, fighting seemed to be not needed. Just taking a look at his tremendously murderous aura, even if they were both in their best conditions, death was obviously the only result for them when fighting with him.

After Feng Bujue and Like Rain had sat down, Oink started to make himself busy. He took something from the fridge then returned to the counter and washed them.

If they got up and walked around here deliberately, it would

bring bad results. Feng Bujue didn’t dare to take risk. Thus, he just craned his neck to observe. Oink's body, which looked like a mountain of flesh, had blocked his view from the counter to the other wall of the kitchen.

From the noise, they could guess that Oink had taken two large pieces of meat from the fridge, cleaned them and chopped them into different smaller blocks of bones and meat, then poured them all into two boiling pots.

As a person who often cooked, in this quiet place, through hearing the sound and smelling the scent, Feng Bujue could guess what the monster was cooking.

Feng Bujue was familiar with seeing people cooking pork. But today, seeing a pig cooking human beings, it didn’t look much different.

However, Feng Bujue didn’t have any experience in cooking human flesh, nor had he ever tasted such kind of soup. Assuming that Oink was cooking two blocks of meat, one was his fellow, and the other one was Feng Bujue’s fellow, so they would have to ‘taste’ to figure out ‘which one is the human

flesh soup’ as the folksong had mentioned.

Indeed, Oink was experienced in cooking as the way he cooked was professional. Carrots, onions, potatoes, celery, garlic, red wine, butter, bay leaves, other ingredients, etc. Not to mention his knife technique, what he wanted to add was all already in the pots.

From the good smell diffusing from the two pots, it wouldn't be a bad dish since the seasoning was good.

Feng Bujue and Like Rain didn't have the intention of running away since they both knew that it was impossible. Even if Oink didn't stop them, once they got out of the canteen, the other ghosts would never let them go. It would be better to take the precious time to sit here and rest. The two pots of broth had been cooked for over one hour. During that time, Oink still kept himself occupied with adding seasoning and adjusting the heat as it seemed to forget the existence of the two players.

This was good for Like Rain's wound. After a long time of resting, the 'Bleeding' status in her menu had finally disappeared. Now, she didn't need to press her hand on the wound. However, her Survival Value was still very little. It had only increased to 20 points now.

It was different from the Stamina Value as a player's Survival Value could be restored very slowly. The recovery speed was roughly 1/10 compared to that of the Stamina Value. Passive skills, medicines, and bandage would be useful at this moment; regrettably, these two didn't have any or wanted to buy any of those items.

Silence and peace are good for thinking. During this time, Feng Bujue had been musing for something. He gathered the information he got after entering the scenario and analyzed the current situation and the meaning of the folksong's last verse.

Oink, this name, Feng Bujue had heard before, but he couldn't

remember when or where he had seen this name. After half an hour of searching the buildings of storage in his brain, he finally got that piece of memory.

Heaven's Butcher—Oink.

Feng Bujue gradually remembered that the monologue they had listened previously was Oink’s last words before he was executed.

Oink: Heaven's Butcher is a short manga telling a dark and heavy story. Talking about the contents, it is much deeper than this scenario. Feng Bujue guessed that this Oink in front of their eyes and the main character of that manga weren’t related.

Perhaps the system would like to use this monster to criticize something? Feng Bujue couldn’t help but to think about the peculiar Oink who had brought his fellows to the slaughterhouse everyday. And one day, it finally cooked the human being that had created him and enslaved him. Should it be his satisfaction, however...

Another chain of noises had brought Feng Bujue’s thought back to the current situation. He looked at the place and found that Oink had turned off the stove and he was pouring the soup into two bowls!!!

Zhu Bajie (Chinese: 猪八戒; pinyin: Zhū Bājiè), also named Zhu Wuneng, is one of the three helpers of Xuanzang and a major character of the novel Journey to the West. Zhu means "swine", and Bajie means "eight precepts". Buddhist scholars consider that both expressions are related to "Śīla pāramitā". In many English

versions of the story, Zhu Bajie is called "Pigsy" or "Pig".

Zhu Bajie is a complex and developed character in the novel. He looks like a terrible monster, part human, and part pig, who often gets himself and his companions into trouble through his laziness, gluttony, and propensity for lusting after pretty women. His weapon is a Nine-toothed Rake.

Here's the link to the description of the manga.

Chapter 81: Seven Inconceivable Things in the Campus (10)

Not long after that, the pig-headed uncle brought them two bowls of hot, fragrant soup from the kitchen.

He walked towards Feng Bujue and Like Rain’s table, placed the bowls of soup on the table, then said, "One of these two bowls is pork soup, while the other is human flesh soup." His eyes shifted between the two players. "Each of you has to choose one of them. If you take the pork soup, you can leave here alive. If you take the human soup... Get into the fridge and become my ingredient for the next bowl of soup."

The giant body of Oink shrouded the light shining out from the kitchen. Under the dim light of the portable lamp, the two bowls of meat soup reflected the yellow light that was utterly attractive. Moreover, the delicious aroma of the soup also came upon their nostrils.

"I am observing you. Do not leave any leftover. You are not allowed to trash or spit out the soup. If not, both of you will come to my fridge," Oink added.

There was no other material in the soup as Oink had brought them only the plain broth. The appearance of the two bowls looked exactly the same. Besides a layer of oil floating on the surface, the soup was translucent. According to their visions, these two bowls of meat soup were identical.

And, according to their sense of smell, they couldn't distinguish anything. The two pots had been cooked with the same recipe, and the dense fragrance of seasonings, spices, and red wine had completely covered the smell of meat. As human sense of smell is not very sensitive, they couldn't trust it in this case.

So, there was only one method... taste it.

In Thriller Paradise, things that could nauseate people such as blood, organs or discharged water from sewer, etc., were absolutely realistic. However, if players could get over their mental barrier, there was nothing in the game they couldn't eat.

For example, they could be able to chew glass or swallow a nail. However, it would cause esophageal injuries, and that would reduce their Survival Value: bleeding and sick... the chain reaction would appear then.

After 10 seconds of struggling mentally, Feng Bujue seemed to finally make up his mind as he casually picked up a bowl. He didn't say anything or mind if he would scald himself, instead, he just gulped down the soup. He finished it in not more than 10 seconds after.

Like Rain looked at him and said to herself that she hadn't chosen yet, so now, she had only one choice which was to drink the remaining bowl of soup. Well, death was the worst situation then.

Unexpectedly, after Feng Bujue had finished his bowl, he didn't say anything. He used one of his hand to take the other bowl and

brought it to his mouth. Similarly, it didn't take him more than 10 seconds to drink the soup within one breath.

Like Rain was totally dumbfounded. Seconds later, she got it. Certainly, the first bowl Feng Bujue had drunk was the pork soup. After he had finished it, he knew the last one was the human soup. To protect her, he also took the other bowl and drank the soup. In fact, Feng Bujue had the same thought, but the situation wasn't that simple.

Before he had consumed the soup, he had thought that no matter what, he would never let a lady taste a human flesh.

Thus, he had to move first and gain the upper hand. And, he had to drink them very quickly. If he got bad luck and chose the human soup, at most, he would die. If he chose the pork soup, he would then drink the other human soup too.

However, his plan... well, the plan...

After he had drunk it all, the situation would change.

Frankly speaking, his first soup wasn't bad. Although he was immersed in this terrible atmosphere, he even felt satisfied enjoying a good dish for only just a fragment of time.

Thus, he immediately confirmed that this bowl didn't contain human flesh soup... If digging further, his problem wasn't as simple as just losing his sense of fear anymore. Perhaps he had a

passion like Doctor Hannibal, however, when he tasted the second bowl, Feng Bujue was surprised recognizing that the taste of this bowl was pretty much similar to the first one.

Moreover, he didn’t care about anything since he drank it all within one breath. When he was done with both of the bowls of soup, he started to doubt which one was the human soup after all?

"What do you think you are doing?" Oink glared at Feng Bujue and said with his low tone, "Protecting your friend? Humph, don’t you think that I could bring you another two bowls?"

Having heard that, Feng Bujue slapped the table and got up. He looked at Oink arrogantly while his heart was saying, "Believe it or not, I will trip you!"

Oink wasn’t shaken. He just calmly turned around and headed to the kitchen, "You come with me." Of course, this was to Feng Bujue.

Like Rain seized the time and clutched his arm. She looked at him in the eyes and shook her head since she had a feeling that Oink wanted Feng Bujue to come in the kitchen and become his preserved food.

However, Feng Bujue just smiled at her, brushed her hand off his sleeve and handed back the portable lamp to her. Before he left, he used his finger and wrote ‘wait for me’ on her palm, then gestured Like Rain to stay there.

She didn’t know why Feng Bujue’s moves had eased her mind, just like he was going for a while and would come back soon.

Afterwards, Feng Bujue followed Oink to a place deep inside the kitchen. Since Like Rain wasn’t there, Feng Bujue could speak again. He opened his mouth and said, "Those two bowls of soup weren’t made from human flesh, right?"

"Of course not," Oink said, "but it doesn’t mean I can’t do that. I invited you here to see my stock." He went to the freezer, opened the door in a 45 degrees angle, hauled out an M-shaped block of meat around one meter on a hook, then flung it onto the kitchen table.

With a closer look, Feng Bujue could see that it was someone’s lower body...

"The little boy in the well was a chicken when he was still alive, but after he died, besides his enemies, he had also killed other little bullies that didn’t have any resentment with him," Oink said, "after the Ying Yang Master hurt him, he still continued doing bad deeds. I have halved him to make him quiet down a bit."

Then, Oink hauled out another armless corpse from the fridge and hurled it onto the table. "That is a funny music teacher. He was very righteous when he was still alive. He thought that he was a genius, but no one respected him. He wanted to become a composer, but what he could write was just trash. One day, when he was sitting in the music class and composing his trash, he got a heart attack and turned into a resentful ghost who forced people to watch his performance."

Upon reaching this part, Feng Bujue could guess the next thing the pig was about to take out from the fridge. "Let me guess... the child is in your fridge too?"

"You killed the child," Oink answered and dragged out a female corpse that didn't have any internal organs. "This is the child's mother. As you have guessed, before she committed suicide, she resentfully took the baby out of her womb."

Next, Oink closed the freezer door and picked up a glass jar from a cupboard. The jar was filled with blood, and there were two eyeballs soaked in the red fluid. "She was a bright schoolgirl. Especially her eyes, very attractive. She was fond of vanity, and she knew how to use her beauty to get what she wanted. She hung out with many boys at the same time, and let them buy her expensive accessories to please her.

"One day, a group of schoolgirls who hated her a lot shoveled her head into the washing basin. They just wanted to teach her a lesson, however, jealousy had covered their eyes as sins flowed out from their thoughts. When blood from the girl's lungs dyed the water, they eventually recognized that they had just created a tragedy," Oink paused for a while, "the resentment of this ghost was really strong. She killed a lot of people, and even though I have taken her eyes, I couldn't stop her from killing. Quite the contrary, I've triggered her passion for collecting eyeballs."

"So the 13th step leading to another strange space is related to you too?" asked Feng Bujue.

"Where do you think the ones who had the ghosts chased after them will go?" answered Oink.

"Ouch, you've created that space to dump the dead souls?" Feng Bujue said, "What about the bunch of ghosts out there?"

"I should ask you about that," Oink asked him, "why is all the ghosts outside the school gathering to hunt you guys?"

This helped Feng Bujue understand that the ghosts chasing after them were sent by the system, and they weren't related to the seven supernatural phenomena in Yousuke High School.

"I'm not sure," he answered and changed the topic, "the reason why you told me all of this is that you are the manager here, right? Then I really want to ask why you have to play the human soup show here? And, what does the last verse of the folksong mean?"

"Literally, I'm here to help you guys," Oink said, "or I can say that I'm here to help the ones who have the guts to drink my soup."

Upon hearing his words, Feng Bujue suddenly realized something. He opened the game menu and knew that he had done the bad thing with his good intention. Indeed, those two bowls of soup had helped them recover their Survival Value as his Survival Value was full now. However, he didn't know how many percent a bowl of soup recovered his Survival Value. Anyway, it was certainly a waste.

And, this task was somehow a literary work. It didn’t only test the players whether they had the guts to drink the soup, but also who would drink it first and their reactions after that.

If there were only one person who triggered the task, this would simply be a test of mind and courage.

But since it was a scenario of two players, bad things existed though. If both of them had a purpose that they had to achieve, everyone would definitely want to drink first. As he was afraid he would have to drink the human soup, he also hoped that his teammate would choose that bowl instead of him.

...

"About the last verse of the folksong," Oink continued, "go to the gate, you will know."

"Oh, so it is." Feng Bujue said as if he was thinking of something else. He understood that Oink had prompted them the location of the last phenomenon in the seven inconceivable things of Yousuke High School.

Feng Bujue continued to probe, "Can I ask for one more bowl of the soup that I have just eaten?"

"For your friend?" Oink answered, "Maybe." After two seconds of silence, the pig talked again, "But the third bowl is an extra one. What do you have to exchange for it?" His eyes suddenly became

hideous. "An arm? A pair of eyes?"

Feng Bujue could feel the situation wasn't right. This Heaven's Butcher was both a good guy and a bad guy. No one could guess if he were your friend or your enemy after one second. When he heard the monster mention 'arm' and 'eyes', Feng Bujue instinctively took the chef knife out of his bag as he was about to use the [Lower Side Kick of a Brat] to defend himself.

"Chef knife?" Oink snatched the weapon from Feng Bujue's hand with an impressive speed that left Feng Bujue no time to react. "Doesn't look bad." He held the knife and thought for a while. Later, the corner of his eyes swept to Feng Bujue. "Go get your soup."

...

Hannibal Lecter

Chapter 82: Seven Inconceivable Things in the Campus (11)

Feng Bujue sighed in relief. He was secretly glad that he didn’t take Mario’s Pipe Wrench out. In that case, Oink would take his main weapon which was graded Excellent, and he couldn’t do anything about it.

Indeed, losing the chef knife wasn’t a loss; it was a fair exchange of a normal quality item, which he could take in any scenario, for a special Survival Value supplement in this scenario.

Feng Bujue rushed to take a bowl and came to the stove. He checked each of the two pots and stirred them once to see the stuff inside both of the pots were the same. He found pork meat and bones in the soup and the pork fat and skin left on the kitchen table next to it.

After he had seen those things, Feng Bujue could ease his mind. However, he couldn’t help but to think that, if it were him, would he have enough courage to make his fellow’s corpse become his ingredients? What would he feel during the process?

Oink approached him. The monster seemed to read his mind as it coldly snorted and used a chatty tone to tell him, "The place I was born was filled with lies and enslavement. Those actions, whether they were permitted or not, the priest taught us to be content with our lot, just grin and bear it. I’ve dealt with so many pigs at the slaughterhouse. It repeated daily, so cooking them was not a big deal to me."

Feng Bujue didn’t know how to answer him, so he just nodded his head and considered his response.

He quickly made a bowl of soup and brought it out of the kitchen. Before he left, he turned his head and spoke to Oink, "Thanks. Yeah, see you."

Oink didn’t reply to him. When Feng Bujue got out of the kitchen, the lights there suddenly switched off and the sturdy body of the pig-headed uncle was immersed in the darkness again.

[Main Quest, updated.]

[Search Yousuke High School and Solve the seven supernatural phenomena, current progress: 6/7]

Like Rain also heard the notification from the system as she saw Feng Bujue walking out of the kitchen. Now, she could exhale in relief. It was just a couple of minutes, but it was more annoying than that of one hour ago. If Feng Bujue didn’t come back, she would blame herself nonstop. In her mind, it was mainly her responsibility as the scenario had been developed to this point.

However, when Like Rain saw what Feng Bujue was carrying, her happy and safe feelings immediately changed to fear and doubt as she thought, "What’s going on? Is he addicted to the soup? He’s already taken two, now he is going to drink another one?"

Feng Bujue put the bowl in front of her on the table then regarded Like Rain. Both of his hands were rising just like he was holding the bowl and pouring it into his mouth while waving his hands, gesturing Like Rain to drink the soup. Because his friend didn’t know that this soup could recover the Survival Value, Feng Bujue had to gesture more to explain that.

After Like Rain got his idea, she took the meat soup. Then, Like Rain could see her Survival Value recover fully from the almost dying status. She regarded Feng Bujue and waved her hands for a while to express that she had been recovered well.

Feng Bujue nodded and signaled her to give him the portable lamp. Then, he started to walk forward.

When the two of them got out of the canteen, the ghosts outside started to dash to them from all directions. Their hair looked like a long silk fabric sheet with split nose, and fur covered their body entirely. Some even wore masks. This situation reminded Feng Bujue of the city which Satsuma Diehl had controlled. Before they could finish that scenario, Feng Bujue and his teammates were also converged by a troop of monsters. However, it was still something different as half of the monster they met at that time were related to ‘monsters and ghosts in Western legends’; meanwhile, the bunch of ghosts chasing after Like Rain and him now were the ‘spirits and ghosts of the traditional Eastern cultures'.

They didn’t have time to think more or delay there. Feng Bujue ran forward, holding the portable lamp in his hand to lead the way. Although Like Rain didn’t have the Dance of the Knight, it wasn’t too much for her to keep up with Feng Bujue.

Now, their Survival Value had been fully recovered, and after over an hour of resting, their Stamina Value were abundant. This boosted Feng Bujue's and Like Rain's confidence that even though they were in an adverse situation of being chased after by so many ghosts, it couldn't prevent them from completing the last task.

The ghosts didn't give up chasing them. After they had crossed the main building, the two of them entered that large schoolyard again.

Under the bright moonlight, even from a distance, they could see a shadow standing at the school gate. No... it was a ghost, quietly standing there by itself.

That was a little girl wearing a red dress. When she came into their visions, the folksong arose again, and this time, the ghost sang it aloud.

Their surroundings started to change along with the song as a big dark cloud blocked the moon. Moreover, the buildings, plants, and the schoolyard behind them all suddenly turned into a massive graveyard.

When Feng Bujue and Like Rain came in front of the little girl, she was singing the last verse of the folksong. However, this time, they heard another different verse, "Ghosts are everywhere, and blood is flooding in. They are coming for your lives. Slow down... slow down... It's hard to pass the people on the way to the Yellow Spring."

The ethereal and sad melody abruptly stopped there.

The little girl suddenly giggled, which could give goosebumps on people's skin. She said, "Uncle, aunty, come with me, okay?" Upon saying those words, black blood started to creep out from her seven orifices while her body was floating up in mid-air.

[Current Quest, changed. Main Quest, updated.]

[Destroy Ghost Eiko.]

[Communication restriction is lifted. Ghosts pursuit will be continued until players complete the Quest or when all players die.]

When Feng Bujue could speak again, the first thing that came out from his mouth was, "Who is uncle here!?" Then, he put away the portable lamp and forcefully flexed his legs, which could be described as running like a rabbit with the tiger aura. He took out the wrench and struck at the face of the monster.

Puff. He successfully hit the target. Eiko’s face was smashed, leaving a hole where dark blood gushed out. As the BOSS of the scenario, of course, she wouldn’t die that easy. Since the ghost was still floating, this strike was surely not fatal.

One of his hands grabbed the little girl’s neck while the other hand was pounding the wrench continuously; he didn’t bother

with the dark blood splashing all over his face. And, he didn't forget to tell the ghost, "You should call me Gege!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha." Eiko laughed insanely as she didn't care whether her skull had been deformed. Moreover, the ghost wasn't affected by the [Cerebral Concussion].

Quite the contrary, Feng Bujue's Survival Value was declining. Was it because of the black blood or the ghost's laugh, or it was just simply because he had touched it? At this moment, he couldn't figure it out, so he had to continue hitting the monster in the hope that his attack would be useful.

Like Rain felt a little bit funny watching this scene. In fact, she did want to say something about 'Aunty', but Feng Bujue's exciting response had calmed her as she got a feeling that she couldn't join Jue-Ge doing bad things. "Your Spiritual Technique was unlocked?" Like Rain took her sword while asking. Since her actions weren't slow, the ghosts coming from the graveyard behind her couldn't pressure her much. Anyway, her eyes had locked to the target she had to kill.

Feng Bujue answered, "It's true, what's wrong?" After one second, he understood the matter. "Ah! Only players who have the Spiritual Technique Specialty unlocked could 'touch' the ghosts' body?"

"True." Like Rain had restored her style of using fewer words for more meanings. After her short reply, Like Rain appeared next to Eiko.

With a tranquil heart like water and eyes cold as ice, her sword slashed out rapidly and fiercely.

One second later, black blood started to stream out from the cut waist of the monster, just like the juice when one halved a succulent orange. Feng Bujue seized the opportunity and jumped away. If he stayed there, it would look he like was taking a shower.

As the saying goes, we are not afraid of failing to find the goods, but we are afraid that there are goods better than our goods. Although Feng Bujue's attack looked furious, indeed it was like he couldn't scratch the monster's itchy spots. If it were him who was blocked in the space of the 13th step, even if he had three lives, that wouldn't be enough for him to survive. Like Rain just used only one strike to solve the problem. This was sort of an innate talent, just like the other hotshots in novels who could find the enemies' Achilles heels in just a glance and finish everything with only one strike.

[Current Quest, accomplished. Main Quest, completed.]

[You've completed the scenario. Automatic teleport in 17 seconds.]

Feng Bujue said, "No way, are you that cool?" Although he knew his friend was really strong, this was the first time he had ever seen her kill a BOSS-level monster directly. When they were in the Usher's House, he had seen her flying and slashing the chandelier, and he didn't think that it was just a joke when she killed the

monster.

"No, you are strong," Like Rain said, "it’s all thanks to you this time."

While they were talking, Eiko fell on the ground and turned into a black blood puddle, and the ghosts had already disappeared together with the graveyard illusion. The school then appeared again.

The two of them were standing in front of the school gate as the moonlight reappeared, shining all over the place. The board ‘Yousuke High School’ came into their view again. Everything was like they were just an ethereal dream that could bring true feelings as the scary, horrible scenes were still clear in front of their eyes: carrying the ghost out of the dry well, the strange ghost hands playing piano, the corpse cradle, the blood figure which had the eyeballs head, the Heaven’s Butcher, and Eiko. Talking about the degree of horror, what Feng Bujue had experienced in this scenario were more than enough to scare Little Tan out of his wits and force him to log out. Anyway, he didn’t know if his Fear Value had surged or was calculated in the calculation for rewards or not.

"We should chat in my Conference Room later," said Like Rain, indicating that they should get out of the scenario and talk later.

"Excellent. I will team up with you after teleportation," replied Feng Bujue.

Both of them teleported away after saying goodbye.

Around one minute later, a giant figure that had a pig head pulling a cart with cleaning tools slowly came over; he stood beside the black blood puddle.

After dipping the mop inside the water bucket, he then deliberately started to clean the place.

However, the mop head on his hand wasn’t made from fabric, but it was a big shiny black lock of hair.

Yellow Spring: the underworld of Chinese Mythology, the equivalent of Hades or Hell.

Chapter 83: Intermission (19)

[Scenario completed. Calculating for rewards...]

[EXP received: 5,000]

[Game Coins received: 50,000]

[Items received: None]

[Completed/Received Quests: 2/2]

[Special/[Hidden Quest] completed: 0]

[Worldview Unlocked: None]

[Fear Value surged: 0 time]

[Highest Fear Value: 0%]

[Average Fear Value: 0%]

[Your Fear Rating: a whole sack of guts. This first rank grants you a bonus. Please select later.]

[Skill Value received: 317]

[EXP increased by Skill Value: 3,170.

Game Coins increased by Skill Value: 31,700]

[Rewards for completing the scenario: Skill Card x 1 pcs]

[Calculation completed. Please continue.]

Before they were teleported, Feng Bujue didn’t forget to hand back the portable lamp to Like Rain. Thus, it didn’t appear in his calculation.

The benefits he got from this scenario was relatively high. It took only two hours and a half in the game, but the EXP he received was almost the same with the scenario that had the Derivative he had experienced previously.

The difficulty level of the scenarios would increase along with players’ levels. As time went by, they could accumulate more experience.

However, after each scenario, Feng Bujue’s items became deficient. This could be said that his attitude towards the game had directly led to this situation. To professional players or players who had OCD (Obsessive-compulsive Disorders), searching for items, side quests, and hidden quests were their top priorities. In his recent scenario, if it were another player, he wouldn’t come and rescue his teammate. In case he wasn't the caller, not to

mention knowing that his teammate was blocked and about to die, he would seize the time and search the four floors of the second building, and perhaps he could find some items or the side quest.

It wasn't like Feng Bujue couldn't think about these. However, there were many things he was not going to consider.

Just like I've mentioned before. He had spent money to buy an expensive game cabin while he had to calculate precisely plain noodles broth for each meal every month.

This is quite contradictory. He had the ability to think carefully to make the best reasonable choice at each event, however, he often played the fool or made some impulsive moves.

There are many things that you can't reason in this world. Here's a classic example: your wife and your mama have fallen into the river, who would you save first? The correct answer is to save the one who doesn't know how to swim first, then the other. That's how the two of them can have more chances to survive.

But then it comes with a tough question: What if both of them don't know how to swim?

I'm going to tell you guys the correct answer: Find someone passing by and jump into the river with you to rescue both of them.

If you still have another advanced question: What if there's only

you around?

Then you can answer the lady who has asked you the question like this: We are going to die together for sure.

In short, we are humans, and humans are not machines. Humans can't always give a 'precise' choice, because for us, there are so many things that we can't say whether they are right or wrong. With numerous choices in life, we determine which path we will go on, and it's meaningless to regret after you have already chosen your way since such decisions in those short moments are truly the things that determine who you are.

[Player 'Like Rain' invites you to enter her Conference Room.]

Soon, the system notification popped up. Feng Bujue chose to accept and went to the elevator door, pressing [Conference Room] button.

This time, when the door slid open, he entered Like Rain's conference room.

Actually, all the conference rooms looked identical as currently, the game didn't offer furniture or anything else to decorate the room. Anyway, it wasn't clear that the game would or wouldn't consider this feature later.

Like Rain had taken her seat already. As she saw Feng Bujue walking in, she said, "In the public areas, you can directly team up

with me."

"Let me try it." Feng Bujue took his seat on the conference table, looked at his friend and said, "Team up!"

Like Rain burst out laughing. "Use your menu!"

"Argh." Feng Bujue smiled embarrassingly before finishing teaming up with her.

"I need to thank you for the recent scenario," said Like Rain.

"In fact, I think that it was you who dealt with all the fighting. I couldn’t do that," answered Feng Bujue.

Like Rain didn’t want to say those ceremonial words further. If Feng Bujue said so, she should jump to the main business, "I’ve invited you here to discuss something."

"I’m not a professional gamer," said Feng Bujue promptly.

Like Rain said, "I didn’t want to ask you that."

"Wut?" Feng Bujue failed his joke as he couldn’t find a word to snap back, "Ah~~."

"Why did you think that I would ask if you were a professional

player?" asked Like Rain.

"Oh because I thought that you might be a professional gamer and you wanted to recruit me to work for your studio," answered Feng Bujue.

"If I were a professional player, I would be over level 20 now." Like Rain was a bit arrogant, but it was objective. "Moreover, I felt that if you were a professional gamer, you wouldn't be at this level after Close Beta," she paused for a while before continuing, "I just want to ask something. Last time, you said that you are a novelist in reality, is it true?"

"Yeah?" Feng Bujue was dumbfounded since he had never thought that she would ask him about this.

"Yes. Do you want to advise anything?"

"What is your pen name?" Like Rain wanted to hear Feng Bujue say that personally.

"My pen name is 'Bujue'. What about it?" asked Feng Bujue.

Like Rain suddenly sped up, "What is the most terrible thing between a man and a woman?"

"Get the marriage certificate indignantly..." Feng Bujue felt really odd. Why would his friend suddenly ask him this? But he knew the 'answer' anyway.

"What is the favorite advice that the Great Detective White Kaz likes to give to the inmates?"

"Do not bend over to pick up the soap in jail..."

"What is the name of your last year's unfinished novel?"

"Ouch, 'Murder the Internet'. But it's not unfinished."

"What are the last words of the main female character that tells the main character in the 'Unreturned Time Travelling'?"

Feng Bujue interrupted, "She said, 'I'll be waiting for you in the future. You must remember me'," he sighed, "when I was talking with the editor, we decided to delete those words, but you are the first reader who ever asks me this. What else do you want to know?" Now, Feng Bujue knew that his friend wanted to see if he had impersonated 'Bujue' the novelist. What she was asking him were related to the details of his novels. Moreover, it wasn't only one, but it also included his works before he was famous. Of course, something only his loyal fans could know.

"No need, I trust you," said Like Rain.

Feng Bujue smiled. "Hey, Like Rain..."

"What?"

"In fact, with my fame, people would rather impersonate a third-rate actress than act like me," Feng Bujue said, "anyway, you seem to be..." he really wanted to say, ‘my loyal fan’, however, Like Rain had interrupted him before he could finish, "No, I’m not."

"How do you know so many things..."

"I have a good memory."

"But it is..."

"I have a wide reading range."

"Yeah..." Feng Bujue embarrassingly smiled. "Okay."

Like Rain still maintained her cold tone as her countenance didn’t change a bit and her reflexes were fast.

As she was trying her best not to admit that she was his fan, Feng Bujue was floundered. He suddenly found that this girl was cute. Feng Bujue was excited knowing his friend in the game was a loyal fan of his. An extremely narcissistic expression appeared on his face.

Like Rain immediately changed the topic, "Hey, I want to ask if you are interested in establishing a Union?"

"I've been busy these days, and I've not read the description of Open Beta yet," Feng Bujue answered, "besides the logo on clothes, are there any benefits with the union?"

"Your storage would have a new function of a public storage. In your communication menu, you can find the Union Tab. When teaming up, one member of the union can gain 1% increase in EXP received. A team of six can get a 5% increased in EXP. Moreover, based on the two ranking lists, the system will give all the member of the union two kinds of BUFF that will be updated every week." Like Rain told him some key features. Of course, she wasn't able to cite exactly what the system read. Regarding the detailed rules, he still needed to read the game's description.

In short, building a Union could bring them hundreds of benefit without a single disadvantage.

"Yeah, having a union is not a bad idea," mused Feng Bujue.

"If you establish one, don't forget to add me," Like Rain thought that Feng Bujue had made up his mind.

Feng Bujue contemplated then said, "Honestly, with your competence, why don't you ask to join some big Unions? I think they would never reject you."

"Big Unions usually have Studios as their background, or they are opened by some rich players who have plenty of free time." In fact, Like Rain's background also belonged to the group of 'rich and have plenty of free time'; however, she didn't mention this sort of

stuff. "They recruit players, who don’t belong to their studios, just to expand their capacities. Outsiders basically can’t access the core resources. Players with abilities could only use their abilities to exchange for benefits. Just like they are doing a business affair. The others, if they aren’t the professional gamers, they just want fame and reputation or just to flirt with other female players. Recruiting some excellent players to polish their names, recruiting normal players to be their blue-collar workers, and recruiting beautiful female players, well, I can say they have bad conspiracies then."

While Feng Bujue was listening to her narration, he was amazed. This was the first time he had ever heard a lady using such a cold tone to explain this matter so clearly. Also, this was the first time he knew that there were heroines like her existing in this world, who was cool enough to say the word ‘flirting’.

"In simple words, I just want to play the game with some friends who have the same ideas. A small union is fine," Like Rain finished.

Feng Bujue smiled. "I have never thought about that. You and I are..." he paused because he wanted to say ‘birds of the same a feather’, but he came up with: "Yeah, heroes get together."

"I’m going to get the rewards and then visit the Mall." Like Rain didn’t bother with that as she stood up and said, "If there’s no special situation, I will be in section 10 of the Mall. Perhaps we will be meeting up again there."

Feng Bujue also stood up and said, "I’m going to read the game’s

description and arrange my stuff. I will message you then."

They said goodbye, left the conference room one by one, and then returned to their own login space.

...

The updated description of Open Beta wasn't added up with many details, at least, not as much as the original description that Feng Bujue had read in Close Beta Version. He had spent more than 10 minutes to read it.

The Union in the game was exactly the same with the 'Guild' system in other online games. The conditions to establish one union weren't too difficult. A level 10 player could submit 100,000 coins to the system and ask three more players to co-sign to form one.

Upon reading this condition, Feng Bujue guessed that the union of those Ice Emperor bastards would only have the four of them there.

About the money, Feng Bujue was hesitating a little bit. He had 100,000 coins, but if he used all of them, he had to postpone his plan of buying costumes to enhance his attributes.

Like Rain seemed to take something for granted in this matter. To her, 100,000 coins wasn't a pressure that she needed to mind. According to the exchange rate, it was not more than 50 RMB, and

it was weird that players from Close Beta didn't have more than 100,000 coins.

Anyway, Feng Bujue didn't put it in his mind for a long time. He could always play the game without having good costumes. Moreover, he wasn't in need of money. After the previous scenario, he had more than 80,000 coins. If things would go on his way, the [Kenny's Parka] that he had put in the Auction House could bring him 140,000 coins more. In conclusion, he just needed to wait for one or two scenarios more to reach level 15, then he could have everything.

Currently, Feng Bujue was still at level 13. His general stats were as follows:

Title: [Mad Cold-blooded Headshot].

EXP: 8700/13000

Skill Value: 660

Game coins: 242000.

Specialties: Common E, Weapon E, Investigating E, Fighting E, Shooting D, Curing F, Spiritual Technique F and ???

Bag: 4/10, including Mario's Pipe Wrench, the Eye of Hatred, M1191A1 Pistol, and the Echo Armor.

Footwear: Dance of the Knight.

Storage: 2/10, including Jigsaw Puzzle Card: Monkey, Casey Jones' Mask.

Skills: [Perfunctory Maintenance], [Lower Side Kick of a Brat], and [Cerebral Concussion].

Feng Bujue had read about the last Specialty in the game's description, which was called 'Summon'. Skills under Summon Category were extremely rare. They didn't consume Stamina Value, but they needed special items. About what items would be needed, it was random.

For example, if the skill could summon a horse, the remarks of the skill would describe the particular conditions, which was to sacrifice a spoon, a glass, a water bucket or even a flower petal, etc. Everything is possible. And, the requirement is random. If two players wanted to summon the same object, the sacrifice they needed to offer might be different.

Besides the sacrifice, the summon skills had many restrictions. Perhaps a player could use the summon skill once in a scenario; perhaps the cool-down time was lengthy; or perhaps they could only summon the objects in a very particular situation.

Currently, the discussion about Summon Specialty had just reached the stage of 'players' imagination'. It seemed no player had unlocked this Specialty yet. Perhaps this was the content that

they could only approach at a later stage.

After he had read the description, Feng Bujue hadn't received any mail yet, which meant the item he was selling was yet to be sold. He didn't worry that his item would be returned though. Although the item seemed to be dangerous to normal players, to a professional team, such items with tauntingly unlimited passive properties was not a bad choice for the ones who were in charge of luring mobs. If the player were from a Studio who understood the market well, certainly, he would buy it.

Afterwards, Feng Bujue had visited his storage. First, he received the reward from his Fear Rating. Since he wanted to reach level 15 as quick as possible to equip the [Casey Jones' Mask], he had chosen EXP this time.

With 40% EXP of the current highest EXP required, Feng Bujue got 5,200 EXP. The system soon notified that he had reached level 14, and his Stamina Value had increased up to 1400. Now, his EXP was 900/14000. If he could increase 60% of the current highest EXP required in the next scenario, it would be 8400/14000. Thus, if he received the rewards one more time, he could reach level 15 directly.

Next, Feng Bujue came to another glass column to receive his reward for completing the scenario, which was a Skill Card that he was able to learn.

What he was expecting the most was a skill of 'Spiritual Specialty', and the second was a fighting skill. Honestly, his fighting ability was too deceptively cruel, but it didn't contain any

significant techniques. The only proactive fighting skill he had now was the [Lower Side Kick of a Brat]. Although he still didn't know who the other two unlucky eggs to receive the last two strikes of this skill, with this only skill added up to his poor street-fighting techniques, which was using the weapon to pound on one's head, he could never survive a proper fight at higher levels.

"Heaven Spirits and Earth Spirits..." Feng Bujue clapped his hands in front of his chest as if he was praying. He interlaced his fingers and rose his arms over his head, then he started to shake just like he was shaking the bamboo jar for sortilege while he was standing in front of the glass column. While watching it produce his skill card, he mumbled, "Woody bro, God of Deceptiveness, you should bless me with a good skill. It's the best to be the earth-splitting meticulous palm. Once I have it, I need nothing more. If it's impossible, at least give me the ghostly skill, etc. Breaking skill or tying skill is also okay. Only one number is fine though..."

No one knows whether Woody had heard the prayer from this atheist guy or not. Well, even if he heard that, it would be useless. Demons would never do charity. They only do business.

Feng Bujue acted like he was joking and finished his prayer. He then picked up the skill card and read its properties.

[Name: Body-Spirit Congregation Technique]

[Skill Card's attributes: Active Skill, permanent control]

[Skill Category: Spiritual Technique]

[Effects: After using it, user's body competence will generally be enhanced. However, it costs Survival Value. This skill will automatically stop when user's Survival Value declines to 1%. It needs 30 seconds to be reactivated. When Survival Value is lower than 10%, this skill can't be used.]

[Consumption: reduce 2% of user's Survival Value every 2 seconds.]

[Learning Conditions: Spiritual Technique F]

[Remarks: This is the core skill in The Devil's Subduing Journal of The Devil Ravine's Seven Scripture series. The Devil Ravine School doesn't concern emotions or virtues. Among the authentic mysterious schools, it's considered to be a shortcut of cultivation, more like the evil way to dig for profits. Even the starter exercises could enhance the practitioner rapidly.]

Buff: a temporary beneficial status effect in some video games

(his new specialty which was still locked – TL)

Chapter 84: Intermission (20)

Feng Bujue was overjoyed. However, the effect of this skill was a little bit different from what he had imagined of a proactive fighting skill. Anyway, no doubt that this skill could help him boost his strength in fighting.

He decided to learn the skill. Then, the system notification arose. "This is your Spiritual Value. You can see the specific value from here. Using spiritual skills will consume Spiritual Value. Spiritual Value can be recovered through resting or consuming special items. The system shop will not provide any quick recovery items for Spiritual Value. Current Spiritual Value: 140/140."

The game menu automatically popped up in front of Feng Bujue's eyes together with the system voice. An arrow was pointing at the energy bar on the top left corner, under the Physical Value bar, which had a silver hue.

"Oh, so I have to learn a skill to open it..." Feng Bujue mumbled. From the game's description, he knew that Spiritual Value was a new feature. Recently, he wondered why there was no new energy bar in his menu. Turned out it would appear when a player learned the related skills.

From this value, it could be seen that the Spiritual Value was matched with the current level, which was 140 points for level 14. Compared to Physical Value, it was just one-tenth. Of course, Physical Value had to be spent on many other activities such as running, walking, jumping, fighting, etc. Basically, any kind of action could consume a part of it. Besides, Spiritual Value was only

used for skills; thus, it didn’t need to be in enormous numbers just to show off.

After he had received EXP and the skill card, Feng Bujue was about to queue for another scenario. It wasn’t 5:00 PM yet. If everything went well, he would reach level 15 before dinner time.

Although they didn’t explain it clearly, from some discussions on the game forum, generally, in non-sleep mode, a relatively long scenario hadn’t appeared yet. The scenarios, which were longer than eight virtual hours, could be seen 50% in sleep mode.

Feng Bujue planned to have dinner after the next scenario; thus, he didn’t delay more. He returned to his login space and tried to call Like Rain. However, his friend was in the Mall at this time, and she couldn’t answer him immediately. A window popped up a reminder to him. [Your friend did not answer. Maybe she is not in her login space. Would you like to send her a message instead?] Feng Bujue touched the screen and typed his text, "I’m ready. When you get back to the login space, message me."

Only when all the members of the team were in their own login space could the captain send them the team invite. The game’s description had mentioned this, and of course, Feng Bujue knew this information as well.

Like Rain didn’t let him wait for long. She soon returned to her login space and called him. After they were connected, Feng Bujue said, "How is it going? Did you harvest anything?"

"I didn’t check the Auction House. I went to the shops and bought a costume that can boost the recovery speed of my Spiritual Value."

Feng Bujue felt a little bit surprised. He had thought that Like Rain would certainly develop herself in fighting aspect, but it turned out that she wanted to invest in the new Specialty. Then he thought about it again since the attributes the costumes provided were random, perhaps Like Rain had chosen the best offer among the three attributes booster. Perhaps she had decided to improve her Fighting and Spiritual Technique. Anyway, in this game, focusing on only one Specialty wasn’t a cost-effective approach.

"Oh," Feng Bujue continued, "Hey, the union needs three players to co-sign. We have only two now, not enough though. Will you be online tonight?"

"Your friend and you, plus me, but you don’t have three players online now?" Like Rain seemed not to get it as she threw him a matter that could embarrass people.

"Yeah... true." Feng Bujue had delayed for one second before he confirmed the embarrassing fact.

"Let me guess... Wang Tanzhi, Longao Min, Little Bones and I are all the friends you have?" asked Like Rain.

Little Bones should be the nickname Like Rain used to call Dispirited Laughing Bones. Feng Bujue came right to this conclusion as he was listening to Like Rain. He pretended to

wonder himself for a few seconds then took a deep breath to let the words come out from his teeth, "Hiss..." Then, he reluctantly replied, "Yes."

"This is difficult then. My situation and yours are not much different."

"F*ck!" Feng Bujue screamed in his mind. Anyway, he could only burst out in his mind; in reality, he could only force a smile. "Ah, ha, ha... That's why I asked if you would log in tonight. I'm not sure about Long-Ge, but Little Tan would do. Including you and Dispirited, we have enough players to co-sign."

"Yeah, could be," Like Rain answered, "but we can't be online for long. The continuous nervous connection is not good for the health. You should pay attention too."

"Hey! Before I met you, I have only been online for one hour! You saw me getting online when you got online doesn't mean that I'm addicted. Okay?" Feng Bujue screamed in his mind again. In fact, he could only reply to her with a feeble tone, "Argh, thanks for your care."

"In addition, having meals on time is also important. It is possible that it would be around 5:00 PM or 6:00 PM when we finish the next scenario, you should log out and eat something," she added with a calm voice.

"I think so! Who will not sleep or eat because of this? Perhaps when I was still a high school student! You are saying like I have

nothing to do after logging out!" Feng Bujue was yelling inside, baring his claws and fangs in his login space since his friend couldn’t see that anyway...

If Feng Bujue and Like Rain were closer, he would soon spit everything nonstop. Anyway, they were still far from the level that he could babble about anything, so Feng Bujue could only answer her, "Ouch, I know..."

He felt that if they continued this talk, it would become a convo between a mother and her little boy. He then seized the chance and changed the topic, "Hey, for us to have dinner on time, we should hurry up."

"Yes," Like Rain simply answered him.

Feng Bujue was like he had just received the amnesty. Taking a deep breath, he started to work on his screen.

[Feng Bujue, level 14]

[Like Rain, level 14]

[Please select playing mode for your team.]

[You’ve selected Multiplayer Survival Mode (Normal), please confirm.]

Chapter 85: The Hunter's Island (1)

This scenario is based on 'The Most Dangerous Game' by Richard Connell, and the adaptation has some similar details. It's not coincident.

"Welcome to Thriller Paradise." A low tone male voice greeted them.

[Loading completed. You are playing Multiplayer Survival Mode (Normal).]

[This mode offers an explanation of the plot. There are chances of Side/[Hidden Quests], together with special Worldview.]

[Rewards for completing the scenario: 50% EXP required to level up when calculating for rewards.]

[Plot's introduction is about to play. After the introduction, the game will start immediately.]

The GC introduction started. The light in the picture was really dark this time. Moreover, the screen looked a little bit bobbed as Feng Bu Jue could hear the sound of water flowing and the noise of the engine, which indicated that this happened on a ship.

The narrator of the system arose right on schedule.

"It is a hot, humid night in a tropical region and you are submerged in the warmth of the dark."

"You are a top hunter. With your sensitive senses, through the velvet darkness, you soon find an island on the right of your ship."

"The captain tells you that, according to his map, this place is called ‘the Ship Pitfall’. The sailors have given this place that name shows that they are afraid of the place too much it has become a superstition."

[Once there’s a superstitious sailor, it could expand to the entire ship. And a ship filled with tense-nervous members will soon encounter trouble.]

[Your ship is wrecked. You are trying your best to swim to that island in the dark. Although you are as lonely as a small, helpless ship in the vast sea, you have put forth your effort to climb up the rocky coast. When you come out from the water, a rough cliff emerges from the dark. You are trying to climb up even though your skin is worn out. With your last beam of strength, you’ve reached a flat area on the cliff. A dense jungle has spread to the edge of the cliff. You have no more strength to explore it as you can only drop yourself on the ground and sleep."

"When you open your eyes again, from the direction of the sun, you know it’s already afternoon. At the boundary of the jungle, you can see many footprints. You follow those footprints through the forest to the center of the island to see a castle built on the cliff."

"At this moment, the night falls on the jungle again."

After this narration was over, players had entered the scenario officially.

There were five players standing on the stone pavement outside a castle. Under the bright moonlight and the sparkling stars, they didn’t need lighting devices to light up the area.

Like Rain was standing next to Feng Bu Jue. She had changed her clothes into a black tight cotton vest and a hiking pants with some side pockets. Her garments looked pretty practical, tight, light and sleeveless, which facilitated her moves. She also had a black leather glove on her right hand while wearing nothing on her left hand. She used her right hand to control the sword, so this was reasonable.

Although the loose pants couldn’t outline her curves, with a close look, Feng Bu Jue found that Like Rain’s body had beautiful curves. Her slender waist was quite contrasted with her ample bosom that could drown people in their reveries. Anyway, half of female players in this game had the same appearance even though Like Rain had modified her appearance so as people wouldn’t notice her too much.

Among the other three players, there was a female player; her ID was [Not Afraid], level 16 with the title [Peekaboo]. She was wearing a light blue medieval witch style robe that reached her knees with a pair of white stockings and boots. Since the game

didn’t allow players to wear skirts, she was wearing a woolen shorts under the robe, which exposed her slender thighs.

Not Afraid appeared as an eighteen or nineteen years old girl with big eyes, small mouth and snow-white skin. No need to mention her body; anyway, as long as she was relatively thin in reality and not too beautiful, in this virtual world, every girl could become a goddess.

However, her pretend-to-be-cute ID, title, and appearance gave Feng Bu Jue a feeling that he could possibly be fooled...

And, eighty percent that the other two male players had come from the same team. They were at the same level, one was named [One Sword to Conquer the City], his title was [Newbie Swordsman]; the other was called [One Saber to Conquer the City] and his title was [Basic Saber Technique]. They both looked more than twenty years old. Not only did they have the same uniform, which was full-body black grown, but also the same hairstyle of messy long hair draping over the neck, just like an ancient knight errant character.

This reminded Feng Bu Jue about Pan Feng and Hua Xiong as those two had the same style with these two players. Perhaps they were the model that the children in this game would take as their final goals.

The regular tragedy of a player was that his development direction would be deviated from the original plan. For example, after a short time experiencing the game, he found out that the other fields would suit him better and eventually, he would

become a dedicated sniper or a dedicated healer. At that time, his nickname wouldn't look fine.

Among the five players, Feng Bu Jue's and Like Rain's levels were the lowest but their titles, [The Mad Cold-blooded Headshot] and [The Heartless Beheader], were dazzling.

It was easy to explain Like Rain's case. With the eyes of an assassin, which denied people from a thousand miles away, strangers would jump to a conclusion: this is absolutely an extremely ugly woman in reality, and that's why she has the cruel, intimidating fighting ability in the game.

However, no matter what angles they used to look at Feng Bu Jue, he didn't seem to be a strong player. When they other three saw him, they all thought: it's okay if this guy didn't change his real appearance in the game since he thought he is handsome enough, but he didn't even change the messy hairstyle; he is over level 10 now, but he didn't buy even one garment item to boost his attribute. In short, he had normal appearance, unexplainable ID, however, this guy had an impressive title...Is he a hidden talent? Or is he actually an abnormal person in reality?

The five of them then started to greet each other and seized the time to observe and assume each other's capacity.

After exchanging a few words, Not Afraid goggled her eyes, pointing at the logo on One Saber and One Sword, "Wow! You guys are from that famous 'Martial World' Union!" "Ha ha, yes. But it's nothing great." One Sword answered while his face was filled with 'great'.

Feng Bu Jue looked at their logo. It was a white cloud with the words ‘Martial World’ embroidered on it. This was certainly a union with a studio background. Feng Bu Jue remembered that the Marital World Union had occupied a small place on both Overall Competence and Combative Competence Lists, ranked #17 and #11 respectively.

However, Feng Bu Jue assumed that these two players weren’t professional gamers from the studio, but the ordinary players recruited to expand the number of the Union’s members.

If they were the staff of the studio, they wouldn’t be at level 15 like that. And, if they were the staff of the studio entering the game at Open Beta, with the items and lessons learned from the previous stage, their titles wouldn’t be a mess like that.

Quite the contrary, Not Afraid's title [Peekaboo] had given Feng Bu Jue suspicions. The Martial World Union’s rank was out of the top ten in the lists. A normal player, when reading the lists, it wasn’t bad that they could remember five or six names there. The majority of players, generally, had been impressed only by the top three unions.

So, there were three explanations for her deed...

First, she was a professional player. Second, she had a good memory. Third, she actually didn’t know the Martial World Union was on both of the lists. One minute ago, she didn’t even know what the heck was the Martial World. Then she saw their badges

and pretended that she had admired them, telling them they were ‘famous’ and stuff.

Those thoughts quickly flickered across Feng Bu Jue’s mind. With the title [Peekaboo], Feng Bu Jue had spent three seconds to come up to a conclusion. He immediately came near Like Rain and used a low tone only them could hear to speak to her, "When we have a chance, we will split up from the three of them. In fact, I want to stay away from that [Not Afraid]."

Like Rain glared at Feng Bu Jue but she didn’t ask anything. She chose to trust him unconditionally.

"Alright," she answered with a low tone. The two of them was carrying their convo in silence as they kept their face still and their lips didn’t even move. Anyway, the other three didn’t pay attention to them.

In the next minutes, Not Afraid had been using her admiral countenance to look at those two members of the union and said a lot of nice words. One Sword and One Saber started to feel elated. In fact, they had just joined the union this morning as the small characters of the bottom echelon of the union. They weren’t the Martial World Studio’s staff. Under the effects of the flattering words by a beauty, those two felt their confidence boosted. They thought, although I can’t be compared with the professional players in the union, I’m much better than that fellow called ‘Unidentified Mental Disorder’ (Feng Bu Jue). That guy can’t even afford a costume, so miserable. No wonder no union wants him.

This is the subtle feature of human mind. In a small group,

especially when there are opposite sexes to be attracted, the instinct drives humans to compare the weak points or the overall competence of other people to their individual selves just to feel that they are superior. In fact, it is just the safe feeling of one to comfort himself, just like talking to oneself that at least I'm not the worst.

Minutes later, an NPC appeared, indicating that their time had come and the plot was about to play.

Squeaky noises slightly echoed when the gate of the castle opened. A lit way emerged from the dark.

In the dazzling light, a tall man holding a revolver slowly approached.

This burly man had a waist-length black beard and a great image which was very impressive.

The weapon in his hands, no doubt that it was to make people more cautious.

Chapter 86: The Hunter's Island (2)

Not Afraid acted as if she was very frightened, hiding behind One Saber and One Sword. The other two then determinedly took out their weapons and shielded her, ready to defend in case that burly man would attack them.

"Ivan, let them in," a male voice called out from behind the big guy, "they are my guests." The voice was polite and gentle with a slight accent.

Ivan followed the order. He put down the revolver and returned to the gate, using his sturdy arms to open the doors. Then, he kept silent while looking at the group of players.

"Main Quest has been triggered."

When the system's notification arose, everybody could see the Quest in their menu, which read [Enter Zaroff's Castle and listen to his explanation of the game rules].

Feng Bujue's complexion soon changed after he had read the Quest. He mumbled, "General Zaroff, Ivan... wait a minute, I'm a hunter, I got here after a shipwreck..." He suddenly looked up as his eyes turned somber. 'The Most Dangerous Game by Richard Connell'." The related contents of this old story emerged from the attic of his memory.

Whenever Feng Bujue had drained his aspiration, he often read some short stories to relax and collect materials. Thus, this sort of

novels was familiar to him as he could recall them quickly.

If there were nothing unexpected, this scenario was a ‘human’ hunting game. Moreover, Feng Bujue got it clear that players would play the role of the preys...

After hesitating for a while, One Saber and One Sword turned around to ask for Feng Bujue’s and Like Rain’s opinions. Anyway, if there was a good chance, people would compete to get it. But, if it was a bad thing, just let the others take it. If we have no choice, just ask for the others’ opinions, and later on, we can pour a part of responsibility on them...

Feng Bujue shrugged, sighed and directly walked forward. "Just follow the quest’s direction then."

Ivan was standing there like a ferocious giant statue, which seemed very intimidating. However, Feng Bujue didn’t even take out his weapon and just swaggered in front of him before entering the castle.

Like Rain followed him closely. When Feng Bujue started to walk, she had already caught up with him and was the second one to enter the castle.

The other three exchanged looks. One Saber finally reacted as he cleared his throat, "Ahem... That... We should go."

"Yeah, right. In case that they meet anything bad, we can give

them a hand then," said One Sword.

Not Afraid nodded and followed behind them. The three of them then passed over the gate.

Standing at the gate, Ivan kept a surveilling eye on them for the whole process. Until all five of them had entered into the castle, he then silently closed the doors.

Behind the doors was a bright, spacious hall. A sturdy man in his ball suit was standing on the marble stair leading to the second floor, scrutinizing his ‘guests’.

General Zaroff was a tall, handsome middle-aged man. He had a gray hair, but his beard and eyebrows were still black. His eyes were glistening dark. Besides the bright facial features, that face had something special, which was the aura of a powerful man who used to give commands.

"I’m very excited, and it’s my honor to welcome the great hunters coming to visit me." He slightly bent down. "I am General Zaroff," he introduced himself and saluted them.

After Ivan had seen Zaroff’s move, he retreated his revolver and stood near the stairs.

"Forgive my careless guard, ladies and gentlemen." The special accent of Zaroff gave his words a feeling of being considered carefully. "Ivan is a simple person. However, he’s a little bit harsh.

His strong build is unbelievable, but unfortunately, he’s a mute. God gave him something and took something away from him..." he spoke this with a contemplating face.

"He looks like a Cossack," said Feng Bujue. Of course, he knew that detail.

"Not bad, my friend," answered Zaroff. He smiled and bared his sharp teeth. His words came out from his red lips, "Me too."

He gestured, and Ivan quickly came to him. Zaroff mouthed something to him as his lips moved without releasing any sound.

After Ivan got his order, he left the hall. No one knows where he was heading to.

Zaroff told them immediately, "My guests, follow me please."

He descended the staircase then led everyone to a corridor.

Minutes later, they arrived at a big medieval-styled room. Gray carpet covered the entire floor while the bookshelves and the other furniture in the room brought people a heavy feeling. Besides books, there were so many animal specimens like deer heads, zebra skin, etc. There was even a gray bear standing in a corner.

"I’ve read many books about hunting, English, French, and Russian. I have no other interests besides hunting," Zaroff walked over his exhibition and spoke like he didn’t brag about it, "do you

see the South African black water buffalo?"

"Very impressive," answered Feng Bujue.

"When it caught me, it threw me against a tree. I got my bones broken, but finally, I finished that animal." It seemed like the scene of that hunt was still playing in front of Zaroff's eyes.

Feng Bujue understood what he meant. With the information from his talk, players had a general concept of this BOSS' strength.

"I think the South African black water buffalo is the most dangerous animal to hunt down." Feng Bujue tried to use the details from the novel with exact words to urge Zaroff to come to the main topic.

The general suddenly mused for a while, then he threw them an understanding look and slowly spoke up, "No, it's not a dangerous prey." He walked to a coffee table, picked up a bottle of Whiskey, then asked," Do you want some?"

"No thanks," answered Feng Bujue.

Zaroff poured one glass for himself. "In this island, my territory, I have invented a dangerous hunting game."

"Invented?" Feng Bujue knew it but still tried to play with him.

"Ha, ha. Yeah, invented," the general laughed, "are you curious how I have ‘invented’ hunting?" He stopped for a while before continuing, "Of course, I’m not god, so I can’t create a dangerous animal from thin air. However, I have soon realized a species that has existed for quite a long time, but no one had ever hunted them down. They are not on this island, but I can always import them."

"What kind of prey are you suggesting? Tigers?" Feng Bujue was still playing with this BOSS.

Besides Like Rain, the other three felt awkward as they considered in their minds that this boy was playing too hard; did he consider himself the hunter in the plot? Why did he need to talk to an NPC that much?

Zaroff curled his lips. "No, the tigers had soon bored me. I’ve played with them enough. I’ve lost my interest in hunting tigers. Those animals can’t make my hands tremble even a second." He took a metal cigarette box from his pocket and put a long, black cigar which had a silver roll as its label in his mouth. He lit it up and started to smoke.

"I want to enjoy the thrill of danger, but most of the wild animals can’t give me this feeling," Zaroff blew out the smoke, "god makes someone to be the poet, someone to be the king, and someone to be the beggar... As for me, he has made me the greatest hunter." His countenance became gloomy. "However, after having fun for a while, I found that hunting couldn’t attract me anymore. You are also a hunter, can you guess why?"

"If hunting is an activity, you always know you will win before

the game, is it true?" continued Feng Bujue.

"True. I can’t believe you understand that!" Zaroff joyfully said, "I can always hunt the preys because they are just animals. Besides the wild instincts, they have just bare hands."

"But I’m a human with intelligence. It’s not fair to compare it with instinct and intelligence. When I recognized that, I felt I was so pathetic. It’s so sad, you know," he took out another cigar, "until one day, I had a feeling that there was something I have never hunted before. They are the most perfect preys because they can think."

Until now, besides Feng Bujue, the other four finally got the basic plot of this scenario. Turned out that General Zaroff’s standing in front of them was a sociopath. To seek for stimulations, he killed humans. The quest of ‘Listen to his explanation of the game rules’ was all about the rule of ‘hunting game’.

"You’re sure this is not a joke, right?" Feng Bujue replied with a serious tone. Of course, he soon confirmed that this wasn’t just a joke.

"I’ve never joked about hunting," answered Zaroff, "I bought this island, built the castle, and lived here for hunting. This island is an unrivaled hunting ground. The dense forest looks like a maze; a complex area which is full of cliffs, swamps, and ponds. More importantly, this island is bound by the sea. Everyday, I go hunting and I never feel bored."

"General, I’m doubtful," said Feng Bujue, "there are five people here. Can’t we just stop you from massacring everyone in this room right now?"

"Ha, ha, ha..." Zaroff laughed out loud, "Massacre? No, no, no. This is a competition. It’s like the hunter and his prey are playing chess." His eyes scanned over the five players. "As you have mentioned that case..." He raised his hand and gestured.

Ivan emerged from nowhere with a tray in his hand, bringing along the pure aroma of Turkish coffee. He put the coffee away and stood next to Zaroff like an electric pole. He was looking at the players with eyes like a torch.

"There used to be a group of Spanish sailors who came here. I have invited them to join my hunt, but they denied me and showed their hostility," Zaroff continued deliberately, "Ivan alone had torn them into pieces and fed them to the animals on the island."

Upon hearing his words, Feng Bujue’s expression suddenly changed as he didn’t remember the novel mentioning other kinds of predators living in the island. "Can I ask what kind of animals are they?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Zaroff coldly smiled, "Oh, pythons, coyotes, Bengal tiger. I thought I should make the forest livelier, so I have imported many things. Humans are not their original food. Usually, they eat boars. Of course, there are living boars, and they have to hunt them on their own. Thus, the wild animal can preserve their wild instincts." Zaroff then spoke to Feng Bujue, "Your face isn’t good, my friend."

"Ah, it’s because I expected the answer to be pigeons or parrots, but not the strong animals," replied Feng Bujue.

"Ha, ha, ha... You are very humorous." Zaroff seemed to be excited. "Good. Now let me tell you something you need to know in the hunt."

He came and switched a button on the wall. "Do you see that?" The General pointed to a far location on the sea. A light suddenly flashed there.

"A light for showing the route, but this route doesn’t exist."

The rocks there were sharp like sabers. They were like sea monsters who could crush every ship traveling by as easy as crushing a nut.

"I thought your ship had wrecked over there. Thus, don’t think about getting help and running to the sea," said the General.

This matched the name of the Ship Pitfall well. Zaroff came to another window and activated a mechanism. A chamber appeared below the window lit up by a flickering light. There were many giant shadows walking back and forth and groaning. In the dark, their eyes were luminescent with a weird greenish hue.

"Being a prey, hiding still in a place is not a wise choice." Zaroff said, "I have well-trained hunting dogs. Now, I’m collecting..." his

eyes raked over the animal specimens in the room, then he grinned, "I’m saying that I have a lot of skulls in the exhibition room. Some of them were smart guys, but they couldn’t escape my hounds’ mouth at the end."

Zaroff closed the window and came in front of them. "Excellent. The rule is simple. It’s five hours more before sunrise; you can leave the castle at any minute. One hour later, I will come for you." He put down both of his cigar and the glass in his hands, then he stood upright as a soldier. "I don’t want you to think that I’m just pretending. Anyway, the number of preys I have hunted is beyond your imagination. Caucasians, blacks, Indians, Mongolians. There are some excellent preys. They were smart, strong and patient. They have also adapted well to the situation, but I have to say that, I have never lost a game."

"What if you lose?" Feng Bujue asked, "I’m saying that, if we survive until sunrise, you will lose, is it right?"

"Ha, ha," the General beamed a confident smile and said with his enthusiasm, "Then you should be worth my effort. I will prepare a ship for you and show you how to arrive towards the nearest island." Zaroff lifted the glass he had put on the table. "You can trust me. I’m saying this with the honor of a gentleman, a soldier, and an athlete. Of course, you have to agree that you will say no word about what has happened on this island," he lowered his voice, "if you can leave here and tell your tale..."

"Current Quest, accomplished. Main Quest, updated."

The system’s voice echoed in their ears, and that quest in their

game menu now had a checkmark. The new quest read, [Leave the Castle, avoid General Zaroff's hunting until sunrise.]

[59 minutes before Zaroff departs]

[299 minutes before sunrise]

Besides the description of the quest, there were two countdown clocks that players could check at anytime. However, it didn't show seconds.

The General finished his glass of whiskey. Before the players left, he was kind enough to advise and warn them sincerely, "Oh yeah, I suggest not to leave footprints outside the castle. That is a basic mistake. Besides, don't go to the southeast corner of the island. There's a big swamp there. We call it the 'Death pond'. Quicksand is also there. A guy who claimed himself smart went there. I sent Lazarus after him. They both buried themselves there. You don't know how I felt. Lazarus was my best hunting dog. Ugh, that feeling was very terrible."

Feng Bujue had turned around and was about to leave as he hadn't expected that Zaroff would tell them many hints like that. However, one of his teammates was an impulsive fool.

It had happened faster than the talk. One Saber to Conquer the City took out his saber. Murderous aura diffused when the saber was taken out of his scabbard. He then slashed horizontally just like a running cattle.

He was about five meters away from Zaroff. When they saw Ivan standing at the gate, he already took out his saber from the bag. His sudden attack had startled the other four.

One Saber To Conquer The City had his own understanding of this plot, and he felt that this was the right place and the best chance to deal with this BOSS. They didn't need to play hide and seek with Zaroff; instead, they just needed to solve him here. If they ran into the jungle, where they didn't know what kind of danger was awaiting for them—during the moment they have drained their strength—this BOSS would then come with his dogs, and it would be their biggest nightmare.

Since the beginning of the scenario, there were only two people who appeared in this castle and they were just normal human, so how strong could they be? Their builds were ordinary, and their weapons were classic. From the settings, it seemed to have taken place two centuries ago in the real world. It was impossible that these two BOSSES possessed supernatural powers. The only thing to consider was whether they had pushed their bodies to the limit a human could achieve. It was okay since players' fighting capacity was also higher than that of ordinary people.

But the point was, One Saber To Conquer The City was confident that he could catch this BOSS because of his skill, the [Falling Head], granted by his title of [Basic Saber Technique].

Chapter 87: The Hunter's Island (3)

One Saber To Conquer The City's title looked normal. However, no matter what title it was, the skill it granted the player was really useful. For example, Little Tan's title, [The Flustered Ambusher], was shaggier than One Saber's and One Sword's titles; however, the skill granted from his title, the [Retreat and Chop Rapidly], could give him more space in fighting.

Whether a player had a weak, strange or even a perverted title, the skill it granted was, no doubt, pretty practical. A bad title could always give a useful skill, and thus, absolutely no trash skills existed. Of course, 'practical' and 'powerful' are two different concepts. Intimidating titles would go along with intimidating skills.

The [Falling Head] skill by the title [Basic Saber Technique] was the same.

[Name: The Falling Head]

[Special Ability Type: Active]

[Effects: User can appear behind the target's back in just a blink and be able to chop at the target's neck with a strength of quintuple (5 times) his maximum strength. (Cool-down time is two hours. This skill can be applied only on human-shaped mobs. When activating this skill, user has to stay within three meters from the target.)]

[Remarks: The Unrivalled Saber Guan Xiaoyu had created this strike. That year, our Knight Guan was 18 years old and, of course, he looked ferocious with tiger temples and dragon beard. After a training course of three years, he registered to be an executioner. At that time, the royal regime was corrupted and eunuchs were in power. Guan Xiaoyu had beheaded many good and bad officers during the period, which made his consciousness surged. When he was 23 years old, Guan Xiao Yu decided to enter the world of martial arts to live a happy and envious life. He had written the 'Beheading Saber Technique', which soon became the current peerless technique. [The Falling Head] is the first strike of that technique.]

One Saber To Conquer The City suddenly launched his attack. When he was about three meters away from General Zaroff, the corner of his lips curled just like this BOSS' skull was already a toy in his hands.

One second later, One Saber quickly disappeared from their sight and reappeared again behind Zaroff's back in just a flash. His saber then strongly slashed down on the man's nape.

Next, a thudding sound echoed.

Zaroff seemed to know his opponent's location in advance as he elbowed One Saber in his chest when he had just reappeared.

Before the saber in One Saber's hands touched Zaroff's skin, he was blown away, hitting the wall and gushing out a mouthful of blood. One Saber opened his eyes widely in fear. Surprise and pain had taken the ability to move from him.

The previous counter-attack was strangely strong that it severely damaged One Saber’s organs. Although there was no open cut on his body, the ribs in his left chest were almost all broken. The jagged broken bones flooded his chest with blood. His status was [Bleeding] now.

One Saber’s Stamina Value had directly plunged to 5 and still decreasing. The others didn’t have the chance to help him since Zaroff had blocked their way, using his sincere but cold tone to tell them, "Look at your friend. He acted impolitely and recklessly." He didn’t glare at One Saber who was lying on the ground as he knew this player wouldn’t be able to get up again.

"If he could endure that strike, perhaps I would save him, cure his wounds and give him the best medicine, food, and training, so as he could join my hunt again. Too bad..." gestured Zaroff.

Ivan saw his commander’s gesture and immediately came to One Saber To Conquer The City. He took out his revolver and aimed at his glabella.

"Help..." One Saber hardly spoke up. He had just uttered one word before he got a headshot. His body immediately turned into a white halo and disappeared.

"Party member: One Saber To Conquer The City, dead."

Everything had happened so fast that the other four didn’t have time to help him with his impulsive action.

Feng Bujue, on the other hand, thought his action wasn't different from committing suicide. He knew that at the beginning of the scenario, no matter what kind of simple and strong methods a player wanted to use to complete the scenario early, he would never succeed unless this guy was the protagonist with the upright tyrant aura. If a player wanted to show that he was smart and lucky and did something risky, no doubt that he would end his life soon.

One Sword's countenance paled seeing his friend die in just a short while. In fact, he had the same thought with One Saber, thinking that those two BOSSES didn't look so strong. After several scenarios which had bulls, snakes, and ghosts, these two had the same appearance with ordinary humans that made them simply the 'Goodwill Ambassadors' in his eyes. Ivan looked a bit ferocious, but General Zaroff didn't look dangerous at all.

Anyway, One Sword didn't have such skills like [The Falling Head], so he didn't come forward to attack them directly. He had thought that he would discuss secretly with One Saber and then they could launch the attack together. He didn't expect that One Saber wanted to be famous quickly by storming forward with his special skill.

And, no one had ever thought that this BOSS could easily break his attack by interrupting a super skill before it had performed its effects. Moreover, he killed One Saber in just a strike.

Feng Bujue sighed begrudgingly. However, a plan instantly popped up in his mind: use One Saber's death to ask for more

information. "It’s true, General. My friend is reckless, what if I say that—" he took the M1911A1 Pistol from his bag, but he didn’t aim his gun and just caressed it with his hand—"... I know how to use advanced weapons." He threw a look at the General. "You aren't able to catch the bullet, are you?"

"Ha, ha, ha..." Zaroff laughed again. "Of course, my friend. How could a human catch a bullet?" He knocked his knuckles on his chest and a low, thick sound arose from under his suit. "So, I’m wearing a defensive thing." He paused for a second before adding, "Anyway, I know that you are an excellent hunter, and your shooting skill isn't bad. If you could shoot my head with one shot, I would die for sure." He glared at Ivan standing next to him. "But I suggest you not to do that; because, Ivan will take revenge for me at any cost. Losing his commander, he’s not a soldier anymore, but the strongest wild animal in this world."

Feng Bujue got what he wanted to know, so he then put his pistol away and smiled. "Thanks for your good reminder, General. I think we should say goodbye here."

"Ha, ha... See you, my friends." Zaroff cheerfully smiled. He was polite and sincere yet cold and cruel at the same time, and that gave him an attractive villain image. His performance was so much at ease. It seemed that he didn’t have any weakness. This shivered people even though they didn’t feel cold.

Feng Bujue blinked to his teammates, who weren’t OVER yet, as a signal for them to retreat.

Five minutes later, the four of them gathered again at the stone

ground outside the castle. Along the way out, they didn't even dare to breathe hard or run away. They even thought twice if they wanted to make a sound.

It could be said that after the scenario had begun, this General Zaroff started to wear his makeup and became the BOSS, giving people the biggest desperation and a suffocating pressure. From Feng Bujue's point of views, besides the voice and the images of the Lord of Time and Satsuma Diehl, among the NPCs he had met, only Oink could give him the impossible-to-kill vibe. A mutant like Dr. Ashford could be likened to General Zaroff; both of them could be killed with only a dagger.

Finally, Feng Bujue used a brief tone to speak up, breaking the silence between them. "Apparently, the human shape of General Zaroff doesn't speak up anything. From the game's point of view, he is a monster with a strong physical build, maybe 10 times stronger than us. His mind is flawless. He is an experienced, powerful hunter. And, we are his targets... or his preys, in other words."

"Nonsense. We know it without you telling these things," said One Sword.

"I don't know if you got it from the convo between Zaroff and me, or when One Saber To Conquer The City got killed in just a strike, anyway, One Saber-Ge got it too late." Feng Bujue said, "Fortunately, we still have a chance to discuss now..."

"Wait a minute," One Sword To Conquer The City intervened. "I've thought that you are the type of player who like to 'play

drama’ and thus you have babbled too much with that BOSS; in fact, you seem to know what Zaroff wanted to do. What’s going on?"

"Yeah, it will waste our time to explain this. Moreover, if I don’t say anything, you will not let me come to the main job." When Feng Bujue said these things, with the expression on his face, everybody could fill their mind with the verse ‘If you sincerely wanted to know, I would answer you with all my mercy.’

"Enough time for you being cocky, spit it out," said Like Rain.

Feng Bujue got exposed; he smiled and said, "Alright, the plot of this scenario must come from a story called ‘The Most Dangerous Game’. This is not a long story about a protagonist... Argh, a famous hunter got tricked by Zaroff and entered the island. He then became his prey and survived the hunting game which lasted for three days.

"With his survival skills and the knowledge of hunting, he hid and prepared traps to play with the General and successfully survived the game period. Moreover, he returned to the castle and won the game."

He paused for a while. "Actually, according to the novel, Zaroff can kill the main protagonist right on the first day. However, he wants to enjoy the hunt, and for him to play more the next day, he spares the protagonist’s life.

"Later, when they have encountered each other in the forest,

Zaroff lost several hunting dogs, but he escaped the main protagonist's traps right at the last minute. At most, he just got minor wounds, but it gave him excuses. And, every time he has an excuse, he will stop chasing the protagonist, return to the castle and recover. Afterward, he will go hunt him again."

"He wants the hunt to be as fair as possible?" asked Like Rain.

"From the big difference between us, this is just a good wish..." Feng Bujue forced a smile. "The General just wants his entertainment to not end too soon," he paused then continued, "however, Zaroff is really a gentleman. Although he is a serial murderer, he will not cheat or deceive us, or change his mind in case he loses. He did give us a sincere caution about the deadly swamp. It seems that he really hopes that we can be tougher. If not, his hunting will not be very interesting."

"Yeah, then let's talk about our real situation." When Feng Bujue said that, he started to leave the stone ground and everybody followed him to the adjacent forest.

In spacious, clear areas, the moonlight could shine brightly. However, when they got to the jungle, besides Feng Bujue, the other three took out their light-emitting devices. Like Rain used her portable lamp, while One Sword and Not Afraid had used their flashlights. However, their flashlight's models were slightly different.

Feng Bujue picked up a random broken tree branch and started to draw on the muddy ground. "When we were in the exhibition room, I stood in front and saw a map on Zaroff's desk. When he

showed us the ‘Ships Pitfall’, and the guiding light shone on the coastal line clearly, I confirmed that the image on that map is this island’s map." He drew an oval shape which looked like an olive. "The Island looks like this. The castle is located in the middle, in a higher area where they could observe the whole island." He suddenly looked up, "Do you know how to find the north?"

"Yes." One Sword looked up to the sky to find the direction.

Not Afraid pointed at a side of the sky. "Is that the Polaris?"

"Good," answered Feng Bujue. He pointed his stick at the map on the ground and continued his narration, "This is the north. This is the south. The swamp is here..." He pointed at a place on the olive. "Before we plan our escape, I want to tell some differences between the novel and this scenario."

When Feng Bujue did his reasoning, he looked calm, mature and reliable. At this moment, people couldn’t find any sense of a casual and frivolous guy. When he was talking, he even exuded a special attractive force and persuasiveness.

"First, I remember the name of the main character in the novel is Rainsford. Lucky us, he has to play the whole three days, but we just need to survive for five hours. It seems easy to survive with the shorter time, however, good things are not always good. Just like what I’ve just said, General Zaroff has let Rainsford go many times because he doesn’t want the game to end soon. However, our situation is different; when Zaroff finds us, he will finish us.

"Besides, the novel doesn't mention there are other animals on this island. But when I was talking with Zaroff in the room, he stated clearly that there are snakes, wolves, tigers and other animals here. Even the boars are able to attack us. Thus, besides staying away from the General's pursuit, we also have to be careful with the wild animals at night.

"But... you've seen that this guy is too strong to be a human. The novel also describes him very powerful, but it is just a thriller novel and not the sci-fi novel or supernatural story. Now, we are facing General Zaroff, who can kill people with only one elbow, so he is absolutely the type of strategy BOSS that we can't confront directly. From the content of the Main Quest, we can see that the main meaning of this scenario is how to survive his pursuit successfully."

One Sword intervened, "By the time you took out your pistol, didn't Zaroff say that he would be killed if he got hit? If I got the gun in my hand, at that short distance, I would shoot him soon. With such short distance, the chance I could hit the target is really high."

"If I did as you said, we would all be doomed." Feng Bujue shook his head. "I took out the gun at that moment just to check Zaroff's reaction to this weapon and found more useful information from his mouth." He looked up with a countenance that didn't express anything. "As far as I known, the modern form of bulletproof vest first appeared in the 20th century, the 50s, and the author of this novel had passed away in 1949."

"Despite that fact, Zaroff was calm enough to tell us he was

wearing a bulletproof garment. Moreover, he seemed to disdain my M1911A1 Pistol. Thus, apparently, what that BOSS said are the reminders that the system gave us," said Feng Bujue.

"So it's impossible to kill Zaroff with firearms?" Like Rain was the one who got the fastest reaction.

Feng Bujue snapped his fingers. "Correct." His eyes raked over One Sword To Conquer The City and Not Afraid. "The system had based on players' actual situations to generate the scenarios. I think the four of us, also the one who was OVER now, One Saber To Conquer The City, none of us are specialized in shooting or have good firearms."

He naturally said that because among the four of them, only him had a pistol, moreover, he had only four shots left. Also, he was the player whose Shooting Specialty ranked highest here.

"In fact, I had asked Zaroff some information, and with the game's point of view, we can explain that in case we use guns to deal with him, hitting him in the body is useless, so we have to hit him on the head."

"Usually, there are two situations that we can do that. First, just like what you've said, we should murder him in a short distance. Second, at some point in the dark night, with our appropriate specialties, we can luckily hit that very alert and incomparable Cossack.

"Apparently, the first situation is more reliable, but even if we

succeed, it is futile. Because, just like the General said, Ivan would turn into a violent state.

"I guess he would replace Zaroff's BOSS position and attack us insanely. At that time, the scenario setting may be similar to 'the real world', and after that Ivan gets mad, he would turn into Hulk. I wouldn't be so surprised then. Once it happens, it's impossible for us to get out of the scenario alive."

"Phew..." Feng Bujue exhaled and said, "In short, the topic of this scenario contains just one word—RUN."

"What are we waiting for? Hurry—"

Feng Bujue signaled him to stop while he hadn't finished yet. "I'm about to tell you how to run."

"How to run?" asked One Sword.

"Split up and run," answered Feng Bujue.

"Why?" Not Afraid seemed to be more anxious.

Before Feng Bujue could answer her, a second later, another problem arose that disturbed his whole plan.

They then saw Like Rain turning into a white halo and disappearing. The system's voice then arose, "Party's member:

Like Rain, disconnected."

(Japanese: ロケット団の名乗り Rocket Gang's self-introduction) is a motto that Team Rocket members often recite and/or live by. Team Rocket consists of Jessie, James, and Meowth. The Team Rocket trio first appeared in Pokémon Emergency, in which they took over the Viridian Pokémon Center. After their first defeat at the hands of Ash's Pikachu had convinced them of its extraordinary power, the trio made their main goal to capture Pikachu.

Chapter 88: The Hunter’s Island (4)

Like Rain sat up from her game cabin and turned to look at a middle-aged woman wearing an apron before sighing. "Mom... It’s okay for you to come to my room like that, but why did you unplug the power?"

"Knock the door so you can ignore me again?" Like Rain’s mother smiled.

"I heard you, but I was busy..."

"You’ve disconnected anyway. Come and help me fix the dinner."

"Ah..." Like Rain sighed again, trying to press down her anger. "Mom ~~~ why don’t you ask dad to help you?"

"Your dad took the game helmet and hid in the garage."

"You know where he’s hiding, but you didn’t..."

"It’s the innate tendency that men like to play. If they don’t cross the line, we can watch them with one eye opened and one eye closed. If not, today, I can catch him in the garage; tomorrow, he will hide in the basement; and maybe the day after tomorrow, he will unplug the pool and crouch down in order to hide there to play his video games."

"All are fallacies. Alright, I’m coming." Like Rain could see that her mother didn’t have another choice now. She got out of the cabin and obediently followed her to the kitchen.

...

At the same time, in Thriller Paradise.

Feng Bujue was standing in front of a tree, with both hands clutching onto the tree and constantly pounding his head to the tree trunk just like a woodpecker. He groaned, "Cheated your daddy! Truly cheated your daddy!" Of course, he didn’t hit the tree hard; he just used the action to express his desperation.

Like Rain irresponsibly disconnected and this completely messed up Feng Bujue’s plan.

As he had estimated, players had to depart from this castle and cross the jungle to reach the edge of the island, and it would take at least three hours. Meanwhile, General Zaroff knew the small island like the back of his hand. With the same distance, although he couldn’t ignore the terrain to do some high-speed performance, it would take him two hours max to reach there.

Feng Bujue thought that if they had divided into two teams and run away from two different directions, at least, one team could have more chances to survive. Whether the BOSS would chase after one team and kill them, this distance could help the other team survive the game period of five hours.

This was a simple strategy, using distance to lengthen the time. If they could do that, the chance that they could finish the scenario would be approximately 100%. Although each of the players would have 50% chance to be killed, this was still a good deal. As long as they completed the scenario, of course, they could take the rewards for completing the scenario; and the other team, even though they got killed, objectively, they had contributed to the development of the scenario, so the system would offer them enough EXP.

About who would die and who would survive, it was a matter of probability. Whoever the BOSS would chase after, this was not a matter that players could decide. Players couldn't blame anyone for this but their bad luck. From these aspects, the chance that One Sword and Not Afraid would accept this plan was high.

And of course, Feng Bujue and Like Rain would form a team in this plan since he was worried about that Not Afraid pretty girl. From her title and her behavior, the skill she got from her title would be a hiding skill or relocating the mob's resentment target. If he were together with her, it would be okay if nothing happened, but if any dangers happened, he would be the one who would die for her.

However, he didn't have evidence for his reasoning. If he spat it out, the other could deny them altogether. Moreover, it was her playing style; if there was already someone who bought it, why did he need to play the bad guy's role? Thus, Feng Bujue didn't say anything when he saw One Saber and One Sword wanting to be her protectors. However, he wasn't a guy who had more money than sense, so giving them some hints later was enough.

The problem now was he didn’t know why Like Rain got disconnected. If he wanted to follow his plan, Feng Bujue would have to walk alone.

Feng Bujue didn’t plan for each player to go in a different direction since working alone would be very dangerous. If they cross the jungle alone, they would be killed by wild animals or some unknown factors. If one of them went on their own way, they would all possibly die before they could reach the edge of the island. Then, the BOSS’ pursuit would be added up to their complete failure.

"Yeah, a scenario for five, but now, we’re just three right when the scenario’s main plot is coming." Feng Bujue thought, "Three of us hiding together would have no meaning. When the BOSS finally catches up with us, gathering at one spot would result to all getting killed. We can’t change the plan for two teams then."

After he had arranged his thoughts, he returned to One Sword and said, "Good. I’m going to talk about the running away plan."

"Wait a minute," One Sword quickly interrupted, "why are you giving us orders? Your level is the lowest here. You’ve just talked about the current situation, and the contents of the novel are not similar to our scenario. The information we know are the same, aren’t they?"

"Okay, then you take the lead, what to do next?" Feng Bujue threw the responsibilitiy to him at the very first words

"Argh..." One Sword was floundered. He gulped several times then rose his tone again. "We now head to the northwest, cross the jungle and reach the shore first. Just lengthen the distance between us and this castle then." He acted like he was taking things very seriously. "Zaroff has hunting dogs; even if we could erase our footprints, it's only a matter of time before he can find us. So, we shouldn't care about footprints but instead take our time and set up some traps along the way to delay him a bit. Then, when he reaches the shore, it would be dawn already."

"Good idea. You're a genius!" Feng Bujue's eyes shone with light.

"Eh? Ha, ha. Nothing, nothing." One Sword didn't realize Feng Bujue's ridicule in his words.

Quite the contrary, Not Afraid was watching him with a weird look as if she was trying to figure out what he had implied. However, to maintain her image of a weak player, she didn't open her mouth to say anything.

"Anyway, I think we don't need to set up traps," said Feng Bujue.

"Eh? Why?" asked One Sword.

"Do you know the traps in the jungle? Are you going to make some?" asked Feng Bujue.

"Oh..." Now, One Sword realized that the sort of traps he knew was just to dig up a big hole and put some leaves on it. He didn't

even know the simplest hanging rope trap.

"Basically, jungle traps can be divided into two types: hunting traps and combat traps." Feng Bujue explained, "Their main functions are to trap and hurt the targets. Moreover, there are some traps that needs an operator to work with it. Personally, I think ‘First Blood’ and ‘Predator’ are the two movies that explain different kinds of trap clearly. Anyway, it’s slightly idealized. In fact, most of the traps are not reliable, and it takes a lot of time to set up."

He cocked his head and casually raked his hand through his hair. "Although we can manage to set up some traps in just a short time, don’t forget that there are many wild animals in this jungle. Just consider even if we can set up traps, you can’t be sure that Zaroff and his dogs are the first ones who step into your traps. So, it will just waste our time."

One Sword’s countenance darkened. Being stabbed bleeding with just one strike, when someone revealed your plan in just a short time, anyone would get mad.

"Of course, the trap is just a small flaw." Feng Bujue’s tone changed. "Except for that, your plan is perfect."

"Yeah... So?" One Sword didn’t dare to continue since he was afraid that he would be lifted up and then sunk down immediately.

"Of course, you two will go to the northwest. After we’ve separated here, you should be careful." Feng Bujue waved his hand,

turned around and headed to the castle.

"Hey! What are you doing?" One Sword was scared. "Are you going back there?"

Feng Bujue didn't answer him. Instead, he said, "If we three go together, in case Zaroff finds us, we are all doomed. If we split up, you'll go to the northwest and I'm going to the southeast, at least one side could survive."

"Why are you going back to the castle?" asked Not Afraid.

"Oh, I don't have a lighting device. I'm going to ask the General if he could provide me a torch or something." After that, Feng Bujue walked on the stone ground to the BOSS' castle.

"Ha, ha, this guy is crazy." One Sword To Conquer The City beamed a forced smile. "Hm, that's why he's called 'Unidentified Mental Disorder'."

Not Afraid watched Feng Bujue's back with something sparkling in her eyes.

"We should go. Don't care about him," said One Sword.

Not Afraid wore the naive, innocent look again. "Yeah, One Sword-Ge, you have to protect me well, please."

"Ha, ha... Count on me." One Sword slapped his chest, exposing a trustworthy pose. He then took out his sword and flashlight, leading Not Afraid to the jungle.

...

In a deep northeast corner of the jungle on the island.

The soft, rustling sounds echoed in the dark forest.

A shadow was moving cautiously on the ground. Sometimes, it was on the tree branches. At other times, it lied between the gravel.

Python, the most dangerous predator of the jungle, was the top creature in the natural food chain.

There was a cold-blooded sinister giant monster in this island. It was more than 10 meters long with a flat head, and covered with folds. The creature had a black back and a black-brown stomach. There was a delicate white stripe on its back. It was a natural assassin. Its forked tongue was like a 3D searching radar, and its muscles were strong enough to bind and break its preys' bones. The python didn't have toxin since it didn't need it. It could stretch its mouth until its jaw was misplaced to swallow a human completely. It would take the python several weeks to digest the food. After one hunt, it could live with no food for several months.

General Zaroff wasn't afraid of this python, and no one else but

him could kill this monster.

Normally, the python took a corner of the island as its territory, and no animal dared to step in its lair.

And tonight was the night it went out for dinner after the last meal a few months ago!

...

Feng Bujue = Unidentified Mental Disorder

Chapter 89: The Hunter's Island (5)

Feng Bujue had returned to the castle and harvested something unexpected. One minute after he had knocked on the door, Ivan came. Feng Bujue and the General chatted for a while as he tried to ask for something like torches. Turned out the other was so generous to give him a dagger and a flashlight, also advising him not to waste time running away...

In fact, in this scenario, if players asked, the BOSS would give them these two items for free. One item was to facilitate their journey in the jungle, and the other was used for lighting.

It was easier for players to get these sorts of items as their levels were getting higher and higher. Anyway, to high-level players, these normal quality items were really valuable for them, and they would gradually become like consumable goods. At level 20, players would have at least one or two items ranked Perfect. Even if they couldn't find one in the scenarios, they could buy some with their game coins and Skill Value they had accumulated up to level 20. Nevertheless, there were various ways to find items in Thriller Paradise.

After acquiring the dagger and the flashlight, Feng Bujue started his escape journey in the jungle.

In his assumption, the area surrounding the castle wouldn't have any wild animals. As they were all animals, which counted on their instincts to survive, they got it clear that the area around the castle was the King of Animals' Territory. Of course, here I refer to General Zaroff, not our schoolmate Qin Ze.

Thus, after Feng Bujue had entered the jungle, he traveled in a rush. He quickly moved forward without stopping to rest, wading across a one-meter tall moor of weeds, jumping over the muddy pits, and bypassing the stone cliff. Besides stepping on a large lump suspected to be the wild wolves' feces, everything was smooth enough.

"Attention please, Zaroff has departed from the Castle."

When the notification sounded, Feng Bujue checked his Quest Menu as it displayed [240 minutes to sunrise].

It was also the time when Feng Bujue had considered to officially enter the stomach of a wild beast named 'Jungle'.

It was unknown when some leeches had been clinging on his nape. Feng Bujue only knew about their existence when he found his Survival Value was decreasing. He shed some blood using the dagger to remove those vampiric mollusks from his neck. Fortunately, the game's description also mentioned that under the same circumstances, parasites wouldn't enter their clothing as they would just attack players' exposed skin areas. If not, Feng Bujue would absolutely take off his clothes to check his body thoroughly once.

At this moment, he finally recognized the cost of moving fast forward. The effects of the humid tropical weather soon appeared as his Stamina Value was decreasing with an unnatural frequency. His [Dance of the Knight]'s effects were also limited in this kind of

rough terrain. At the same time, his clothes also made him feel hot and uncomfortable, but fortunately, thanks to the lesson by the leeches, he didn't even dare to roll up his sleeves.

Half an hour had passed by and the jungle had finally revealed its ferocious appearance in the dark. Dense shadows of trees towered everywhere like a thick curtain. As the density of trees was becoming greater, Feng Bujue had to climb up to the top of a tree to check for direction. If not, he would gradually get lost.

The deeper he entered into the hinterland of the jungle, the more difficulties the surroundings brought up. The jungle's vegetation had three to five layers vertically just like a tent in general. In this case, the moonlight had lost it function here, leaving Feng Bujue with the only option which was to count on his flashlight.

"When I've watched 'Man vs. Wild', I did think that they were just acting in the show. Now, I'm stuck in the jungle just like a little grandson toddling around. It's true that one doesn't feel tired looking at other people working. The shows are not able to convey the actual difficulty level of crossing the jungle indeed." Feng Bujue felt rueful; he couldn't help but to recall the time he had been watching a channel that replayed some classic videos. The host of the show had given him a feeling that 'it's not difficult to survive in in the wild'. Now, he truly understood that crossing the wild areas with only a dagger wasn't something an ordinary person could do.

All of a sudden, animal sounds echoed in the dark from his right. There was heavy breathing, and something sounded 'wee-wee'. From the sound, it should be a wild boar.

Feng Bujue's first reaction was to climb up the nearest tree. He didn't want to compete with something on all fours in this inklike darkness.

The call was approaching along with a wild boar treading on the ground while pressing down and breaking bushes to make way.

Soon, Feng Bujue had climbed up the tree and shone his flashlight in the general direction of the noise.

"No. Sounds like there's a different sound." Feng Bujue vaguely heard a different kind of noise. Then, he immediately understood why a boar was rampaging in the middle of the night.

10 seconds later, that wild boar appeared in Feng Bujue's sight. The animal had short limbs that supported its sturdy body. Rough black hair was covering all over its body with dark mane. The energetic boar was storming forward like a small tank. At this moment, the mane around the boar's neck was rising up as it was screaming nonstop. These were the signs that the animal had been stipulated. Perhaps it had met a very powerful predator.

The hunter, who was chasing after the boar, came right after it. That was a python. Although it wasn't as big as the exaggerated monster at the northwest of the island, it wasn't small either.

In fact, many people can't imagine the way a python swallowed its big preys. A five-meter python can swallow a two-meter crocodile, and an eight-meter python can swallow a zebra

completely.

And, the one in front of Feng Bujue was an eight-meter one...

Perhaps the wild boar was running disorderly in panic, or perhaps the system intended to let players see what was going to happen... in short, when the flashlight shone to a certain area, a classic scene was being performed—a wild boar hitting the tree trunk.

However, the serpent didn't hit the boar as it was slithering forward. Instead, it crossed its enormous body to make a half circle to trap the boar between its body and the tree trunk, which was really big that two adults couldn't encircle it. At this moment, the tree trunk had blocked the boar's escape.

The python lifted its head and scrutinized its prey. The wild boar seemed to understand that it couldn't escape, so it then launched the last counterattack by flexing its limbs and storming forward in an attempt to bite the serpent with its long fang.

The boar hadn't touched the python's body, yet the python's head had dropped right away in high speed, biting the wild boar with just one strike. Right after that, the python released the prey and bit it again instantaneously. The serpent's speed was so fast that people couldn't see it clearly, just like someone was using two fingers to grab a bar of soap from a pot of boiling oil.

The wild boar finally got into the python's mouth, and the latter immediately started to enjoy its 'dinner'. The 'swallowing process'

depends on the sizes of the preys. Sometimes, it needs several hours.

Feng Bujue had already obstructed the light from his flashlight as he didn’t want to bother the python enjoying its dinner. Then, he tiptoed quietly as he crawled down the tree. He didn’t have the time to wait for the python to swallow the boar completely; he just prayed that the other was focusing only on its meal and ignored him.

After he had successfully got off the tree, he didn’t aim for the southeast direction; he just ran madly as he decided to leave this place and lengthen the distance between him and this monster.

Unexpectedly, right at this moment, Feng Bujue heard other sounds from another kind of animal, which was an even deadlier threat!

Qin Ze: Is the Chinese translation name of Serizawa Tamao aka King of Beasts was the leader of the "Serizawa Army" and formerly the strongest senior student at Suzuran All Boys High. He is from the manga Crows by Hiroshi Takahashi.

Man vs. Wild: Man vs. Wild, also called Born Survivor: Bear Grylls, Ultimate Survival, Survival Game, Real Survival Hero or colloquially as simply Bear Grylls in the United Kingdom, is a survival television series hosted by Bear Grylls on the Discovery Channel.

Chapter 90: The Hunter's Island (6)

The hound's barks announced the danger was coming, and obviously, this danger aimed for Feng Bujue.

He opened the game menu and checked his Quest Menu. The time displayed that it was [203 minutes to sunrise].

General Zaroff had only departed for 37 minutes. Although Feng Bujue had tried his best to run away for over one hour, at this moment, the chance that his opponent could catch him was still high.

The barking sound came closer. Not far from him, the python had given up its meal, threw the wild boar onto the ground, and immersed into the jungle in panic. It seemed that animals on this island were well aware of the hunting dog's barks. Even if they weren't afraid of the hounds, they were still scared of their owner.

Feng Bujue understood that this was an emergency situation and he must do something effective to counter it. Although it was hard to avoid death, he should make efforts to delay more time for his other two teammates, increasing the chance that they could complete the scenario.

Hiding away wasn't a possible option. Along this path, Feng Bujue had left footprints. With the general's ability of tracking down his preys, no need to mention the footprints, even a small broken tree branch or a streak on the grass couldn't be hidden away from the eyes of the Cossack man.

Moreover, Zaroff had brought along his hunting dogs. The smell left on the muddy ground to this sort of hunters, which had the sense of smell 100 times stronger than human's, was as obvious as traffic sign boards.

Under such circumstances, being a prey, he should be extremely panicked. In a dark and complicated situation, hearing the intimidating BOSS coming closer and closer, and not knowing when and how this 'human' hunter would attack his prey, needless to say, this feeling was so self-evident. In most of horror or action games, being chased after by something scary are used to test players' psychological quality and operating skills.

If it were some other player, he would run madly into the jungle and wouldn't care about the directions or anything else. In this case, they would just run away from the canine barks. However, Feng Bujue was calm and alert. As he didn't feel fear, he quietly readied the dagger, then used the flashlight to determine the best direction to run.

He didn't care that the flashlight would reveal himself because if he turned off the flashlight, he still had no way to slow down his opponent's speed. Quite the contrary, it would make him run in the dark.

After Feng Bujue had conducted a quick survey, he considered the path in the north was relatively smooth enough; he then shone his flashlight in that direction and started to flee away with his fastest speed. The hunting dog's barks were still echoing behind him as if they were getting closer to him. However, he didn't

bother with this kind of auditory pressure; in fact, he didn't turn his head around even once or got his mind distracted. He was totally concentrated on the road in front of him, ensuring his pace would not be affected.

Running on such irregular terrain, the fugitive should avoid turning around while running to check the one who is chasing after him since this contains a hundred harms without a single benefit.

In countless horror movies Feng Bujue had watched, the scenes which had a high frequency for such a situation to appear included the main character (often a beautiful lady) usually getting chased after by monsters in a jungle. The lady would be screaming while running away, and from time to time, she would turn her head around to reveal her panicked face, and the camera angle would record from the monster's point of view, which was constantly jittering. After running like that for a while, 100% that the main character would tumble and then the images would be messily clipped and edited. One second later, tomato sauce would fill the screen together with a pig squeak echoing and the monster getting a lot of blood.

Feng Bujue wouldn't make this sort of mistake. It was impossible to see him tripping. Well, it was more practical to see him make the monster trip.

The pursuit lasted for a short while. When the barks arose behind him around five meters, Feng Bujue knew he had entered the sight of the hunters. According to the common sense analysis, Zaroff had two options then. First, releasing the dog and letting it

tackle down the target 'by itself'; second, using his BOSS-level shooting skill to shoot the target.

No matter which option he would choose, Feng Bujue would be killed instantly, and the difference was just that he would get his throat torn apart by a pair of fangs or get his nape shot through with a bullet.

Anyway, there's a cool proverb saying that a stab from behind is a swordsman's insult. Oh, it seems to have nothing to do with our current situation.

In short, Feng Bujue had decided that if he had to die, he should at least resist to death. If he were about to be OVER and he hadn't consumed much of his Survival Value and Physical Value, this was such a meaningless thing. His mind just flickered and his [Spirit-Body Congregation Technique] was activated. He suddenly accelerated, flexed his feet and jumped aside, landing behind a tree trunk.

This was the first time Feng Bujue had used this skill. A wonderful feeling crept up to him as if the blood in his body was boiling instantly. His body exuded some kind of heat, but this 'heat' was different from the heat of brought by pressure as it didn't bring an uncomfortable sticky feeling but instead a stir of excitement. It was enough to say that this had boosted his fighting spirit.

The desired effects for a skill that didn't consume anything but Survival Value were like this.

"No..." Feng Bujue suddenly felt suspicious while hiding behind the tree.

After he had activated the skill, every aspect of his strength was enhanced, and his senses were also increased a little bit. His hearing became more sensitive, and his reflexes were much faster than ordinary people's. Generally speaking, it was like the flow of time slowed down for him... At this moment, he could distinguish clearly between the tiny noises coming into his ears. Thus, he found out that under the cover of the dog's barking, besides the sounds made from four foot stomping on the ground, there was no sound of human walking.

He immediately craned his neck out from behind the tree. Indeed, he didn't see the light from a flashlight or any other light-emitting devices. Since General Zaroff wouldn't be groping in the dark with his dogs, basically, from the beginning, there was only a dog chasing after him.

Feng Bujue understood it immediately. This was a way the system had helped players to survive. He had estimated the difficulty level of this scenario a little bit too high. He had thought that after half an hour, the general would conduct the pursuit with his dogs, but it turned out Zaroff only released his hound first, and he would deliberately chase after them later.

Perhaps the difficulty level of the scenario would be based on the players' capacities before the BOSS departed. Nevertheless, the fact that One Saber got killed too soon and Like Rain had disconnected might have changed the difficulty level. Anyway, this setting was

consistent with the watertight style of the system.

Players could split up to run, and so could the monsters! Thus, there would be no scene where one team could finish the scenario with ease, while the other team would struggle in desperation. Each team would surely meet this advanced test, and correspondingly, the BOSS would show up tonight!

Chapter 91: The Hunter's Island (7)

"It was just a dog chasing me all this time!" Feng Bujue felt really irritated knowing that. Moreover, his skill was activated, so if he stopped it now and fought with his normal status, it was like he had just wasted more than half a minute of his Survival Value.

He seized the time and wormed out, wanting to use the shortest time and the cruelest way to smash that hunting dog into a pulp.

Feng Bujue glided away while his left hand was holding the flashlight. He shone it ahead of him as his right hand clutched the wrench tightly, as if he was about to conduct his criminal act at any moment.

However, when the dog came into his vision after being illuminated by his flashlight, Feng Bujue got shocked. He couldn't help but feel glad that he had activated his [Body-Spirit Congregation Technique].

After a burst of rapid footsteps extruded the humid atmosphere, in a large area covered with fog, a scary, giant figure was crossing over and approaching him.

The dog proudly craned its neck. It had almond-shaped eyes, a flat head, and erect ears. The white and rigid scissor-shaped teeth were ready to bite. The dog's body was sturdy with developed muscles; its neck was slim and gradually expanded, connected to the sturdy body, which had a strong and firm back and four long and wide thighs. In short, the monster had a perfectly proportional

body.

These good, special features came from strict training and good breed. Of course, being a monster in Thriller Paradise, it was created to scare people or be a killer, not to participate in Westminster Show. Thus, it had something that normal canines didn't have.

The hound's entire body was as black as charcoal while its eyes were flaring up like fire. The body of the dog was incredibly large that it wasn't different from a tiger, and wasn't much different from the largest cat species.

As it was baring its fangs, its saliva was constantly dripping from its teeth. The most exaggerating feature was the dog's mouth. Under its neck was a mane shining that looked exactly like the legendary hound in Hades. Anyway, this monster had only one head instead of three.

"This stuff must be made from alchemy!" While Feng Bujue was exclaiming in displeasure, the dog strode across.

If the monster stood on its two back legs, it could chew off Feng Bujue's neck directly. So, Feng Bujue didn't dare to act carelessly and jumped backwards, causing the hound to miss its attack.

This time, Feng Bujue could jump quite far that he was startled himself. The Body-Spirit Congregation Technique had brought him a boost that was beyond his expectation. This was the first time he had experienced the boosts that were over ordinary people

bodies' standards. However, it was even beyond what he was accustomed to, such as speed and strength increasing together with his dynamic vision. He only needed to concentrate and everything in front of his eyes would become pretty slow. In fact, he could even see every mosquito flying across him. Moreover, he had a feeling that he just needed to stretch out his arm to pinch that mosquito.

At the end of the first movie of the 'The Matrix', after Neo got awakened, he also had the same feeling when Smith attacked him, and he could deliberately receive the opponent's attack, changing the double-handed attack into a single-handed attack with a confused face. This is when someone feels his own strength had suddenly increased several times compared to normal... and he is not adapted well right at the moment.

The hound didn't stop attacking; it barked and jumped onto Feng Bujue, forming a curve in mid-air as another wave of its attack came.

BANG ——

The sound of metal had collided and echoed in the jungle. Feng Bujue was tackled down, but he didn't get bitten. His [Mario's Pipe Wrench] was like a bone proudly stuck across the dog's mouth.

This hound's bite was really strong with its teeth as firm as steel. The dog was still fine as its upper and lower jaws were clamping onto the metal wrench. If it were an ordinary dog, its teeth would soon be a mess.

With this close distance, Feng Bujue could see that this dog's breed wasn't pure at all. Although it had the head and fur like Dobermen's, the hound's body was like a mastiff's, and the size of its head was even bigger than that of a lion. This synthetical beast had nauseated him.

Currently, Feng Bujue's strength was also tremendous. His right hand clutched tightly onto the wrench braced in the dog's mouth. Now, he and the dog were in a stalemate. He dropped the flashlight in his left hand and took out the dagger that Zaroff had given him, then he stabbed the dog at its soft stomach.

In just a fragment of time, Feng Bujue got dog blood all over his face, but he knew this fight hadn't ended here just yet. Before the opponent stopped breathing, he couldn't stop his attacks. He didn't bother about his bloody face and continued to forcefully strengthen his hand, cutting the dog straight down from the neck to the stomach. Anyway, the monster was only a canine. If its mouth, the most lethal weapon of the monster, was oppressed, struggling recklessly with a flexible human who was equipped with weapons, it couldn't have a way to escape.

Before the hound died, it had burst out a formidable strength and left a very deep print of its teeth on the wrench. However, it wasn't strong enough to break this weapon. As its intimidating howl turned into screeching, blood and water from its body poured on Feng Bujue. After that, the dog was declared to be finished as its body collapsed without any bit of force remained.

Feng Bujue quickly pushed the giant body away, letting it fall

aside. He had soon run out of his strength, and he was afraid that he couldn’t escape under the dead body of the dog.

Savagely solving the dog was indeed a little bit cruel. Feng Bujue immediately lifted his skill. It wasn’t more than three minutes, however, he had consumed 2 points of his Survival Value at each five seconds, plus his Survival Value wasn’t really full before he had engaged in the fight, so at this moment, his Survival Value was just 32 points. At this point of time, it was three hours to sunrise. Thus, Zaroff didn’t need to come here and attack him; he just needed another dog like that or one or two ‘leeches lessons’ and Feng Bujue would be over.

"Huff, huff, huff." After he had lifted up the skill, Feng Bujue faced the sky and gasped for his breath. The painful, exhausted, and discomfort feelings were washing over him like a tsunami. It seemed that using the [Body-Spirit Congregation Technique] would leave him with side effects. These effects couldn’t be described clearly by the attributes or words in the menu as it was the same with being mentally exhausted after fatigue.

However, Feng Bujue didn’t have time to rest. He had to rush towards the South-East corner as each step he took would bring him further away from the source of danger. Using space to exchange for time, he had to make use of the distance and seize the time.

After he had adjusted his breath, Feng Bujue picked up the flashlight, put the weapons into his bag and continued his journey.

He felt extremely unwell and his whole body was covered with

the black dog blood that made his clothes stuck onto his skin. The humid atmosphere and the increasing heat were more than enough for him to suffer immensely.

However, Feng Bujue had a tough competency as he was very patient, which was intimidating to other people. This competency had been expressed in many aspects. Besides maintaining his survival based on the plant noodle broth for quite a long time, they were... For example, he could be on a packed bus, letting an auntie lean against him and bully him for forty minutes without any reaction; he could easily eat the scraps of unpalatable food that his friend had cooked with a pretty calm manners, moreover, after he had finished the dish, he would say it was good though. And, he could endure not taking a bath or changing clothes in one week...

In short, feeling discomfort physically wasn’t a big lethal matter to Feng Bujue. Some stains of dog blood or water weren't enough to challenge his ascetic tolerance.

If a female player encountered this situation, it was very likely that she wouldn’t be able to endure it. If she couldn’t find a source of water or something to wash those disgusting stains away, she could log out right away.

Talking about female players, the situation of One Sword To Conquer The City and Not Afraid over there wasn’t optimistic at all.

They also encountered a hound which was the same type with what Feng Bujue had met. Fortunately, they had two players. Moreover, One Sword To Conquer The City was the sort of player

who fought to level up. His capacity in fighting alone was definitely stronger than Feng Bujue when he didn't activate his Body-Spirit Congregation Technique.

Right at the beginning of the fight, One Sword had stormed forward, using his fast moves to attack the dog with his sword. However, after a while, he gradually fell into a disadvantaged situation. He clearly understood that once the monster jumped onto him, it would tear his throat with just one bite and deliver him a direct death. Thus, he could only attack and run, draining his Physical Value to exchange for shedding some blood of that monster.

After over 10 strikes, Not Afraid could see it from aside that One Sword alone couldn't do it. If he died, she had to play the game alone, which was the worst situation that she didn't want to happen. Her title [Peekaboo] had granted a proactive skill called [Count to 10], which performed best when she had teammates surrounded her. Thus, she had to ensure she wasn't playing alone.

Thus, Not Afraid decided to temporarily give up the image of 'needed to be protected', taking out her weapon and silently approaching the dog from behind...

Not far from that, the hound was pressing on One Sword's operating range. He was gradually backing off to a tree aside, losing his way to escape after each step. He got it clear that his force and the opponent's force were quite the opposite. When he was using the best of his force to fight against the monster, he could barely be compared to 30% power of the dog and no more than that. Since the gap between their powers was quite

enormous, he had no way to confront the monster directly.

It happened like that all the time during their fight. Before the fight and in the middle of the fight, the participants' mentality would eventually change. 'Observing' can give the information far less than the other's true capacity. In just two strikes, everything would be clear. The hope of getting lucky as 'how strong the opponent could be' would be broken soon in the battle.

Physical Value Consumption wouldn't wait for the situation to change, and the changes wouldn't be something that One Sword could totally control. Now, he had to make a decision, in which he would sacrifice a large amount of his Survival Value and make some strikes to exchange for a tragic victory, or just keep going this way and consume his energy until he could find the other way around.

While One Sword was still hesitating, a scene that surprised him happened.

Their fight was taking place near a stone cliff where trees scattered around. The starry night above their heads was sparkling with cold beams while the moon was hanging in the sky, shining a tender but blurry light.

Under the moonlight, a petite figure suddenly jumped up, dragging something along with her. She made a beautiful curve in the air, hacking down the dog from behind. Both the monster and One Sword To Conquer The City were dumbfounded at the spot, as the former could smell danger and the latter was stunned in awe.

Not Afraid was holding a long handled sledgehammer, moving like a tiger descending the mountain, smashing down directly on the monster!

The Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show is a prestigious all-breed conformation show that has been held in New York City annually since 1877. It is one of a handful of benched shows in the United States. Dogs are required to be on display in an assigned location (bench) during the entirety of the show except when being shown in the ring, groomed for show, or taken outside to eliminate, so that spectators and breeders alike have an opportunity to see all the entered dogs. (In the more common unbenched shows, dogs are required to be present only at assigned ring times.)

Chapter 92: The Hunter's Island (8)

The fight had finally come to an end. The sledgehammer exuded an invisible pressure that enhanced its lethal power and the affected area. The hound didn't even have time to groan as it had already been smashed into two pieces.

Not Afraid's skill was called [Elephant Hoof Jumping Strike]. As a consumption skill, it required Fighting Specialty grade D and above. Anyway, its power was formidable.

One Sword, of course, didn't know this information. He only knew that such a monster, whose capacity wasn't less than his, got killed in just a strike by Not Afraid, a player who looked fragile.

One Sword had just reached level 15, and he had played the 'Killing Game' for a while. Now, he understood that if they were playing 'Killing Game' mode, facing an opponent like Not Afraid, as long as he had a small flaw, his fate wouldn't be too different from that dog's.

Seeing One Sword's look, Not Afraid felt she didn't need to pretend anymore as her naive and innocent visage had gone away, leaving no trace of the tender, cute voice. When she spoke up, her tone was like that of a bad girl. "Ah, I have no choice. I've thought that I didn't need to do anything by myself." She dragged the sledgehammer with only one hand. As she was moving forward, the noise of the hammer head rubbing on the ground gave people a feeling of how heavy this sledgehammer was.

"Didn’t think you boy was so fragile that annoys people." She was standing next to the dog on the ground, forcefully swinging one arm which drew the hammer half a circle in the air before it heavily pounded down. The hunting dog had been cut into halves, but its upper body was still shivering and trembling on the ground. However, this time, the dog’s head got smashed into a messy pulp.

This cruel last hit had splashed dog blood all over One Sword’s face. He now wore a terrified countenance as he stood dumbfounded on the spot.

"Yeah..." One Sword was still displaying his posture of ‘Ge will protect you’, however, at this moment, he didn’t even dare to use a loud voice to speak up. With a very cautious manner, he said, "Ah... ha, ha... Turns... turns out that... you are... so cool.... Why when... we... met... the tiger and the boar..."

One Sword’s remaining words were: "You were hiding all the time and showed that you were very scared." However, he was intervened before he could finish them.

"What did you say?" Her tone was exactly the same with a gangster’s voice. "Hey, boy, do you look down on me?" She tilted her head and ferociously stared at him. Then, she rose up her big sledgehammer. "Dare to talk to your mama like that..."—an invisible pressure slapped his face—"... will get ya killed."

"Da-Jie... Jie, Jie... I was wrong!" One Sword was leaning against a tree trunk while sweat started to bead all over his face. Although players couldn’t attack their teammates, from his spirit, he was not much different from the dead now. "It’s... with my...

capacity... I... I could only deal with some fish or trash mobs only. Da-Jie, you let me clear the path for you, it's my honor... Ha... ha, ha..." His forced smile looked like he was crying.

"That's almost the same." Not Afraid put the sledgehammer into her bag, crossed her arms in front of her chest and said with the posture of a Da-Jie. "Spit it out. That 'Unidentified Mental Disorder' (Feng Bujue) boy seems to be good. We haven't heard him dead yet, which means he had finished the dog only by himself. Well, he's stronger than you..."

"How do you know he got the hound chasing after him too?"

"Nonsense! Didn't you see the number of the dogs in the castle? I assumed the number of dogs Zaroff would release depends on the number of teams players that have split up, or even more than that."

"Argh, in fact, I could reluctantly deal with that dog alone..." One Sword said with a soft manner of a yes-man.

He hadn't finished, yet Not Afraid's shout had interrupted him, "Don't be lengthy! Bald head!"

"Bald... bald..." One Sword appeared as a long-haired knight, and now he was inexplicably called bald.

"You have the attribute boosts from your Union. Moreover, you are levels higher than him. He could do whatever you couldn't,

which means he is relatively stronger." Not Afraid didn't intend to mess up with him as her words were reasonable. "Stop here. If I've known it earlier, I would have followed him. Wrong move."

One Sword's mood was down; he lowered his head and muttered, "Yeah, I'm so sorry. My weak capacity has troubled you."

"Ah, forget it. Bald will forever be bald." Not Afraid-Jie was so generous to 'forgive' him like that.

If the game had the animated emoticons, One Sword would definitely have a gloomy shadow over his head now.

"Good. Now is not the time to be dispirited," Not Afraid pointed, "the North-West is that way. Continue to clear the path."

"Ouch, it's... I know it's the north—"

"What do keep blabbering for!"

"Oh, yeah..."

...

The jungle was still pretty dense in front of Feng Bujue that he couldn't even see the sunlight. The terrain was bobbing up and down. Sometimes, it was the rock stand; sometimes, it was just mud under his feet; and the other times, it was the curved, twisted

gravel trails.

While he was trekking, the discomfort on his body gradually turned into numbness. This numbness then replaced his relaxed mind as the fatigue stuck on his body like a burden he couldn't brush off. Under this continuous walking condition, his Survival Value didn't recover, while his Physical Value was decreasing, causing him no ends of worries. Although he didn't need to use his proactive skill [Perfunctory Maintenance] since there was no mechanical equipment to be fixed in this scenario, he still had two times using the [Lower Side Kick of a Brat], which required 200 points of his Physical Value. However, if his Physical Value decreased to a certain point, in the case of a sudden event, it would be his dead point.

[153 minutes before sunrise]

At this moment, Zaroff had departed for half an hour. In papers, from the time they had received the Quest, players had been running away for 146 minutes.

Of course, Feng Bujue didn't have the full 146 minutes since he had spent some minutes on explaining the situation to his teammates and returning to the castle to ask for items. All had consumed his time. Anyway, certainly, he had departed 40 minutes before General Zaroff.

Killing the dog didn't take much time because Feng Bujue had used high speed to run away for a while. Later, he had met the python hunting down the boar two or three times. Fortunately, he was alert enough each time to ignore it and run away while trying

not to draw its attention.

The period of five hours they had to survive had passed by half. Even if Feng Bujue could put aside the fact that Zaroff had a faster speed but didn't use his fastest speed to chase after him, at this time, no matter what, he should be on his way.

In the next 20 minutes, if Zaroff didn't show up here, there was only one possibility, in which he didn't aim for the South-East direction, but instead chased after the other two players.

Thus, from the bottom of his heart, Feng Bujue couldn't wait to hear the system announcement that some members of his party died...

It wasn't that he disliked his teammates; however, it was how the plot developed as someone had to die. To each team, it would be 50%. Feng Bujue believed that the other team now had the same feeling.

10 minutes later, Feng Bujue simply stopped and rested on a big, flat stone. He then massaged his swollen calves and enjoyed this moment of resting.

Apparently, up to now, his plan of using space to exchange for time had worked well. Even if the general could show up here and kill Feng Bujue or the other two people on the spot, he couldn't make it on time chasing the other survivors who were in the opposite location on this island.

At this moment, Feng Bujue's plan was considered to enter the second phase—protecting his life and slowing down the pace. Anyway, this phase wasn't related to the other two players. The reason was simple; they had two players, but Feng Bujue was just alone. If General Zaroff appeared here and killed him, he had nothing to say more. But if he came to the North-West direction, from now on, Feng Bujue had to be more alert. In case the General didn't pursue him but he got killed by something else, which meant the last member of the party got killed eventually, it would result in a big tragedy.

"Party's member One Sword To Conquer The City, dead," the system's voice suddenly echoed.

At the moment, Feng Bujue heard this notification as he shamefully revealed a smile. However, seconds later, his smile was frozen on his face. "Why only one died?"

He was still waiting for the news that announced Not Afraid was also dead. Only by knowing both of them were dead could his mind be at ease. Since Feng Bujue believed that with Zaroff's competence, no matter what kind of skills that [Peekaboo] Mei-mei had, they could only help her live a little bit longer.

However, if the announcement of the death of Not Afraid didn't come after a long while, there were many variations for this situation. The chance she could escape from the general was so small, and possibly, the death of One Sword To Conquer The City wasn't related to Zaroff. He had died because of some mobs or some other events.

With this thought, the worst situation would be Zaroff was still chasing after Feng Bujue indeed! And, One Sword and Not Afraid had encountered something else leading to one dying, and one running away. In the next two hours, Not Afraid had to work alone and face the fatal threats alone. And, Feng Bujue himself...

When he came up to this thought, Feng Bujue's pressure returned again. He bit his lower lips, then blew a lock of hair in front of his forehead. "Too bad... Now, I have no way to guess where the general will go."

"Party's member Not Afraid, dead." The system's notification arose.

"Eh?!" Feng Bujue was dazed then exhaled in relief. "Phew... I can ease my mind now. It's true that they have encountered Zaroff."

With this conclusion, Feng Bujue was relieved. Now, what he wanted to do was to ensure his safety while continuing to the South-East direction.

In fact, staying here was also an option. In such scenarios, staying at one spot wouldn't be considered 'Passive Playing'. However, Feng Bujue was still wary of Zaroff. In a sudden case that Zaroff took his henchmen and sped up to reach him, his current distance and space weren't enough to assure his own safety.

So, after taking roughly 10 minutes for resting, Feng Bujue departed again.

However, this time, after he had walked for around 300 meters, he suddenly stopped. When he was crossing a small saddle section between the mountains, he found something—a human skeleton.

Da-jie: Chinese way to address older sister, especially gang girls.

Chapter 93: The Hunter's Island (9)

Feng Bujue shone his flashlight around to see the general situation there. After confirming that there were no traps or something like that, he swaggered there.

The corpse had long become a skeleton. From the bones, he could recognize that this was a male. Apparently, after he died, wild animals had been playing with his corpse for a while. He was probably dragged here from somewhere else, but it was hard to tell where was his death scene though.

The clothes on the corpse must have been soon dragged by the other wild animals. Feng Bujue crouched down next to the skeleton to check it. Soon, he found a small iron box in one of the pockets of the corpse's clothes.

The iron box looked as thin as a finger, around the size of a small photo. Perhaps it was used to carry photos. The box had some rust, which was a normal phenomenon in such humid environment. Feng Bujue took out his dagger and attempted to open the box from its edges.

There was no photo inside the box, only a pencil and a folded piece of paper which was filled with words.

[Name: A Message from the Unknown Dead]

[Type: Related to the plot]

[Quality: Shabby]

[Functions: Unknown]

[Being able to be brought out of the scenario: No]

[Remarks: Although you've found this, you don't need to read it at this moment. Once you read the content, everything would never be the same.]

At the first glance, Feng Bujue felt something odd with the item's properties and the remarks. It seemed it was something important that the dead had left there. But what about 'don't need to read at this moment'?

"Would it... change the plot if I read this paper?" Feng Bujue mumbled, "'Do not need to read it'... Now, there's only me in this scenario. In the next two hours, I just need to be careful and 90% that I could finish the game. However, if by any chance I happen to read this... it would bring some bad changes..."

If there were another player, he would give it up immediately. But to Feng Bujue, this was his Achilles heel. If you find a beauty to seduce him, he could let the girl sit in his lap without a small surge in his heart; but if you put a pile of papers in front of him and tell him that no one could explain or reason these details, he will absolutely storm over and grab them.

At this moment, Feng Bujue's reading addiction had burst out—he felt unbearably itchy. Unless there was a teammate like Like Rain to take it away from his sight, he must read it.

He unfolded the piece of paper and shone his flashlight on it. Turned out it was written in Russian.

Feng Bujue's heart slightly sank as an extremely horrible thought popped up in his mind, which turned out to be true in the next couple minutes.

Although this novelist reasoning was kind of a genius, he didn't know Russian. Fortunately, the system had the translation function, so the Chinese translation appeared in his menu.

[If someone saw this letter, I'm dead already. This is good for me, as a relief, and I deserve it.]

[My name is Zaroff, the owner of this island. Perhaps you have met someone addressing himself as General Zaroff in the castle. Perhaps not yet. No matter what, you should know he is a counterfeit. He's called Rainsford.]

[I have invented a hunting game, in which I was hunting down human preys. Rainsford used to be my prey, also the only survivor in my game. I can still recall every detail of that hunt. He was very excellent in using only one dagger to kill a Malaysian trapper and catch a Burmese tiger. I was also a good person. I have taken the upper hand many times, but I was kind enough to let him go.]

[He survived up to the third day and won the game. I lost, but my mood wasn't bad since it was an exciting hunting game for me. As I had promised, I let him recover in the castle and then I gave him enough food and water for his trip on a sailing boat to leave the island.]

[I thought that I would never meet Mister Rainsford again in this life. Unexpectedly, he came to the island again six months later.]

[He told me that after he had left the island, he started to miss our game and that the other kind of entertainment couldn't stir him up. He thought he wanted to join me.]

[At first, I didn't accept his request, and I also wanted him to leave. However, he did not hesitate to make himself a prey and beg me again.]

[I thought I'm a crazy man, but at that moment, I knew he was truly insane.]

[So I had the second game with him. Moreover, I had declared that I wouldn't give him mercy. If he could survive my hunt for three days, I would let him be my hunting partner.]

[I had never expected that he would succeed again, even easier than the previous time. I didn't even know how he did it. In those three days, he hadn't appeared once in my shooting range. He seemed to be able to listen to things from very far away. Before I can approach him, he had already left with a speed even faster than mine. His traces showed that he was as agile as a monkey,

however, I couldn't understand why he seemed not to need food, excretion, sleep or rest.]

[On the third day, I had released three hounds and made them chase after Rainsford. Later on, I only found three dead dogs. None of them died because of traps or cuts from daggers. Someone had killed them barehanded.]

[Afterwards, Rainsford started to hunt with me. Since then, his behaviors had become very strange, always asking me to trap more people here. I told him if we caused too many troubles in the sea, the government would notice us. However, he was like a greedy addict who could never be satisfied.]

[He had improved the traps in the sea and started to import more wild animals. I told him that those animals could harm us too, but he ignored me. Rainsford then completely lost his mind. He is 10 times crazier and crueler than me.]

[Nine days ago, I thought I would kill him when he was asleep. This is not an act of a gentleman, but I have no other choice. Maybe I have created this demon, so now I have to finish him myself.]

[When I was sneaking into his room, he was already waiting for me behind the door, wearing a sinister grin on his face.]

[Ivan pushed me from behind and subdued me. He then threw me into the cell. He was my most loyal servant and he would never betray me. I'm not superstitious, but I could only assume that

Rainford had controlled Ivan through some kind of mysterious spells, so it could explain many things.]

[Today, I'm a prey. During the past nine days, Rainsford always knows where I am. I know that, but he will never come to see me or kill me. Moreover, he will never let me approach the castle or leave the island. He wants me to die hopelessly in the mouths of those wild animals. Being torn apart by the claws of my 'preys', it will be the best mockery he got for me, a great and proud hunter.]

[On the fourth day, I met a dying sailor. He got ambushed by a tiger. He told me that there was a man who called himself General Zaroff and forced them to play a game. At that moment, I understood that I was replaced.]

[Everything is coming to an end now. I have wounds all over my body, and I have a fever. I don't know for how long I haven't closed my eyes. If death is coming for me sooner or later, at this moment, I only hope that it will come to me serenely and quickly.]

[I'm writing this not for my repentance or my redemption. I just thought I should leave a message to someone... Rainsford is not a human. He's an unknown evil incarnation.]

[Hurry! Get away from here! As far as possible! Even if you have to drown yourself in the sea, don't stay on the island!]

Chapter 94: The Hunter's Island (10)

[Decoded Worldview, Player: Feng Bujue received 200 points of Skill Value. Party's members now can see the rules of the plot's Worldview in their menu.]

[Current Quest, updated. Main Quest, updated.]

[Escape the island or kill Rainsford.]

"The f*ck!" Feng Bujue cursed out loud as he slapped his own face twice. "Why did I read it!"

He stood up and checked his stats in the menu. After 20 minutes of resting, his Survival Value had increased by 34 points. His Physical Value, on the other hand, was a little bit better as it was 452/1400 now. The problem was, how could he complete the Main Quest with his current status?

"Eh? Specialty is upgraded!" At the same time, Feng Bujue found his Common Specialty in the Specialties Menu had been upgraded to D.

Common Specialty and Skill Value were somehow proportional. Of course, there was no absolute swap between them. Players could only use this for reference. Whatever the case was, only 1 in 10 players or some sort of players like Feng Bujue, who could often decode the special Worldview, if they had actions that contributed to the development of the scenario, would have points accumulate into Common Specialty. From this aspect, it was pretty similar to

Skill Value.

Normally, the more scenarios they played, the higher the grade of their Common Specialty would be. Any player could reach Grade S in Common Specialties, and the difference between a master and an amateur was just the pace to see who could reach the top first. Of course, there was something higher than Grade S, but they weren't the standard grades of Specialties that anyone could enter. We will talk about this concept later.

Right now, Feng Bujue had decoded the Worldview for the second time, and his Common Specialty was upgraded accordingly. However, he didn't feel any sense of accomplishment since this time, his work had been done without the need of reasoning, and it was mainly based on his courage, careful manner and luck.

Talking about this separately, if one had good fortune, he could find the skeleton in this col; if he were careful enough, he could find the small iron box, and if he were daring enough, he could gather his guts to read the paper...

Anyway, everything had come to this, so he had to think about the countermeasures again. The period of five hours that they needed to survive had no meaning now. No matter what, Rainsford would pursue him soon. Getting killed was now just a matter of time.

Moreover, as Feng Bujue had estimated, the time he had... wasn't much now, and there were two reasons for this.

First, this wasn’t a scenario in Sleep Mode. From the players’ discussion in the game forum, the time for a multiplayer scenario was four hours max. Most of the time, they could be solved within 20 minutes or one hour. In this scenario, which Feng Bujue was experiencing, it had been around 90 minutes in real time already. Nothing would occur if he hadn’t read the papers, but now, it could speed up the rhythm of the scenario.

Second, Zaroff had written clearly that this Rainsford was possibly not a human. Thus, if he could have wings and come here, it wasn’t a surprise then.

It could be said that the remark of the piece of paper was precise —‘Once you read it, everything will never be the same.’

Sure enough, after he read it, the setting of this scenario had turned from thriller to magical and frightening style.

"The main thread is to choose one from two... Kill the BOSS or escape the island." Feng Bujue sneered, "Hmm, if I could subdue Rainsford single-handedly, I would soon storm to him with One Saber To Conquer The City!" He licked his lips, patted his forehead with his fingers, and caressed the bridge of his nose, which was his old habit while thinking. "The problem is... even the real General Zaroff couldn’t escape this island, and I’m just a player who has just arrived here, will I succeed?"

He rose the message again in front of his eyes, trying to consider it from all angles. As he had remembered 100% of the content, it was much relaxing just to read it for now.

"Ha ha... Tough then." He laughed from his heart.

In this world, there are some people who are addicted to fine food or women; also, there are some who are addicted to drugs...

To Feng Bujue, an addict in thinking, investigation, and reasoning, breaking perilous situations and growing up again from impasses, these things could bring a perfect satisfaction to such a narcissistic guy like him. Thus, he could do it all the time without feeling tired.

"After getting back to the island, Rainsford suddenly had a tremendous physical ability. His strength seemed to be boundless as he didn't need to eat or sleep. He could kill the ferocious hunting dogs with bare hands. He had some kind of sense that could track down the animals from very far away. Murderous and cunning... However, killing people was his priority. If not, he wouldn't take risks to draw the attention of the outer world by increasing his hunting frequency for more vessels."

Feng Bujue converted the contents of the letter into simple information. He read it in silence while his impression towards this guy was growing bigger. For those irrelevant details, he had trimmed them down and thrown them into the blind corner of his brain. "So he has a desire for killing people. Why doesn't he kill them directly? Why does he need to use the game the general has invented? Basically, Rainsford doesn't need to do the extra 'hunting tricks'. At the same time, he doesn't need to control Ivan to be his servant or raise those hounds. Also, he doesn't need to impersonate the general. But he did them all. Why? Just to seek

for excitement?"

Feng Bujue's thought came to a dead end. However, he soon returned. "Wait a minute..." Feng Bujue read the paper again. "When the real Zaroff was still alive, he met a sailor who got ambushed by a tiger and the real Zaroff himself died here. Rainsford didn't kill them on his own." Feng Bujue thought, "Rainsford has introduced those wild animals. When he mentioned Ivan tearing apart the Spanish sailor and feeding the beasts, he sounded natural... And, when he talked about hunting himself, it was the verse of the Zaroff in the story."

"And, if he was seeking for stimulation and enjoying the hunt, why has he released the dogs to chase after his preys? What if the dog killed me, what else did he have to hunt down?" Feng Bujue muttered, "Is he... some kind of animal Evil God who has hawk eyes, panther's speed, and bear's strength?"

"He has done many things to nurture the wild instinct of the animals on the island, so as those 'animals' could hunt down 'humans'?" Feng Bujue immediately jumped to another thought. "But Rainsford's ability to communicate with animals is just like other people. Besides the hounds he has been raising, the other animals on the island are not subjected to his drive. If not, he didn't need to kill the three hunting dogs that the real Zaroff had released in their second game."

Feng Bujue had analyzed many features of this BOSS, but he couldn't conclude anything.

"Seems I need to go back to the castle for more clues." Feng Bujue

sighed. "Whatever option I choose to complete the scenario, returning there is my only choice. The reason why General Zaroff couldn’t escape this island is... the only exit is hidden in the castle, and that place is the only place that he couldn’t enter in the whole island. This explains why the castle’s owner finally died in the jungle."

"Sigh... I really shouldn’t have read it. What should I do now? Come back to the castle? My Physical Value isn’t more than one-third. On the way there, I have to rest once or twice. If I’m lucky enough to avoid Rainsford and get to the castle successfully, I must be exhausted. And I need to sneak in there... it would be the bright daylight then..." Feng Bujue irritatingly scratched his head and messed up his hair.

"I used to think that you would die before the other two. Unexpectedly, you are still alive... Moreover, you seem to have found something interesting," Rainsford’s voice echoed in the dark.

Feng Bujue agilely reacted, flexed his body and retreated while shining the flashlight to the direction the voice had come from.

Rainsford was clasping his hands behind his back while standing on a block of rock. Moonlight shrouded his body, illuminating a big grin on his face. "You would feel weird why I am here that quick."

"To tell the truth, nothing could surprise me now," answered Feng Bujue.

He didn’t rush to run away. However, he understood that he needed to maintain a distance between him and the other. If this BOSS wanted to kill him, he didn’t need to talk and would just ambush him directly. Thus, the conversation they had now was a part of the plot for him to harvest more important information.

"Ha, ha... Traveler from the other world, I think you have used some other method to know that your friends are dead now," Rainsford said, "you must think that I’ve killed them."

Feng Bujue knew what he wanted to say next, he interrupted. "So, they have died because of something you have been raising. And you, you have been chasing after me from the beginning."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha..." Rainsford laughed out loud. "Unidentified Mental Disorder," he called his player’s ID, which only the Derivative X-23 had done before. "Master Satsuma Diehl wanted me to send his regard to you."

"Sh!t" Feng Bujue was dumbstruck hearing that. His eyes instantly opened wide as he used a louder voice to repeat, "SH!T!"

...

[Ultimately... there will be one day... when you guys... will... pay... a big price... It won't... be long...]

...

Satsuma Diehl’s last words flashed back in Feng Bujue’s brain.

"So you do know Satsuma Diehl, don’t you? Hey, Rainsford bro, how many years have passed by? And, isn’t it happening on Earth?"

"How many years? Snort... It doesn’t matter. The human era is just a drop in the river of time. Places also aren’t related. Do you really know where you are?" Rainsford brushed his clothes. "My bulletproof vest comes from the era that you, Unidentified Mental Disorder, calls future. I don’t know where it is, but is it very important?"

"Ha... Ha, ha..." Feng Bujue tried to force a smile. "Makes sense. Can I ask how did you form a relationship with Satsuma Diehl? And, Mister Rainsford, what are you?"

"I’m still a human. I’ve just got some extraordinary powers from Master Satsuma Diehl." Rainsford shrugged. "Many years ago, I survived Zaroff’s hunting game. When he sent me out on a small boat, it didn’t bring me back to the world I know, but to a strange place."

"At that place, I’ve met all kind of things I have never seen before. Those things made my previous knowledge on religions and science seem to be worthless. Do you know why humans want to seek for the ‘answers’ but always make wrong and stupid conclusions? Because the ‘truth’ isn’t something we could accept.

"Foreseeing future isn’t different from stealing future. Understanding the truth could lead to negation and self-destruction.

"If apes knew the function of fire, they wouldn’t eat raw meat. Thousands of years ago, if they knew about medicine, they would not bury the sick alive. Hundreds of years ago, if they understood the true teachings of religions, they wouldn’t burn innocent women they considered witches.

"And I, after I’ve known something, I’ve become like this."

"Snort..." Feng Bujue beamed a vapid smile to him then threw him a crucial question. "What kind of agreement is it between you and Satsuma Diehl?"

Rainsford answered him calmly, "I provided him the exhausted and desperate soul, and he gave me the immortal life and supernatural powers." He paused for a while, "After Zaroff died, I tried to torture and confine all the victims before killing them. But soon, I realized that the castle doesn’t have many cells for them. Ivan and I were too busy to care."

"Seems you got a big demand..." sneered Feng Bujue.

"I should thank Zaroff for his invention of ‘Human Hunting Game’ since the results show that it is the most effective way," Rainsford said, "I don’t have to handle everything personally. I just only give them rules and wait to see them falling into hopeless desperation and instinctively struggle to survive before getting

themselves killed."

"That’s it. I understand," Feng Bujue said, "so, the port to enter or exit this island is placed under your castle?"

"Hm... You are as smart as Master Satsuma Diehl had told me," Rainsford smiled coldly, "it’s true. There’s a hidden river under the castle leading from there to the most west. An exit is hidden in a cliff there, and you could only see it when the tide is low. Anyway, it’s useless for you to know where it is. There’re only several boats in this island, and they’re all in my castle."

"All right, I can’t get out of here," Feng Bujue mused and said, "so, you are not going to kill me now because Satsuma Diehl wanted to tell me something through you."

"Ah... Of course," Rainsford smiled, "your soul is something Master desires the most. Now I want to ask you: Are you exhausted and desperate enough? If not yet, I can play with you. Ha, ha, ha. How many days do you think you can survive on this island? Would it be longer than what Zaroff had done?"

"You’ve underestimated me, Mister Rainsford." At this moment, Feng Bujue became more tranquil and was at ease; he even started to tease this BOSS. "What a coincidence! I happen to be the strongest creature in this world."

"Yeah? Do you really think that you are not human?" replied Rainsford.

"If you are considered human, of course, I am a human," Feng Bujue answered, "however, as everyone knows, aliens and SCP-682 are not able to eat special Chinese people and so on because they are the most tenacious existences. Holding on the attitude of letting me emerge and perish on my own is useless."

Rainsford kept silent for around five seconds. "Although I don't know what you are talking about... I seem to understand your point of view. If so, I will handle you on my own."

He hadn't finished, yet Feng Bujue had launched out like a rocket, jumping over 10 meters in just a blink. The place he had stood now had a deep footprint pressed down on the ground. There was a faint scent of blood diffusing in the air.

Rainsford beamed a malevolent smile and started to chase after Feng Bujue. The power of his moves wasn't less than that of Feng Bujue when he was using the [Body-Spirit Congregation Technique] as he just needed to slightly flex his feet a few times to glide over the direction that Feng Bujue had run away. Moreover, the more he ran, the faster his speed would be. Every time he flexed his legs, his body would dart forward just like it was shot out from a bow. This guy was incredibly strong.

In terms of strength, Feng Bujue couldn't be Rainsford's match. Even One Saber To Conquer The City, when he was full of vitality, could only last a single breath with one of his strike. With his current Survival Value, certainly, Feng Bujue couldn't endure anything. Thus, he didn't care how many points the Spirit-Body Congregation Technique would consume. After all, just one a blow of the opponent, and it would directly decline to 1.

In this kind of speed contest, Feng Bujue could reluctantly race a lap with his opponent. Although his absolute speed and outburst were slightly better, the distance between Rainsford and him was gradually being shortened.

The understanding of the two regarding the topography here was different. Moreover, the chaser could see the direction where the other was going as he could predict the way at once. Quite the contrary, besides running madly for his life, Feng Bujue had to check the small path in front of him not to step into the void or enter a dead end. If he didn’t have his sight much enhanced, running in the jungle like this with only a flashlight would soon cause him to hit a tree trunk like a stupid boar.

At the last dark moment before dawn, there were two silhouettes —one leading and one chasing—with the former energetically crossing the jungle just like a constantly boosting bullet, using the surroundings as the support to accelerate even more; and the latter, which was like a mayfly surfing on the water surface, light and agile, never been in a disadvantaged situation.

This race didn’t last for too long. After only one minute, Feng Bujue’s Survival Value had been burnt down to less than 10 points. If he deactivated the Spirit-Body Congregation Technique at this moment, he wouldn't be able to re-activate it again. So now, he could only endure burning his blood to struggle for 20 seconds more.

Rainsford was very close to him. Gradually, he was just roughly 10 meters away. At this moment, the space between their eyes

suddenly lit up as they finally got out of the jungle to the Dead Swamp at the South-East corner of the Island.

Feng Bujue didn’t care; with the attitude of a hardcore gambler, he put forth all of what’s left to him while gliding on the muddy surface of the quagmire like lightning. Finally, he successfully stopped on a piece of stone about ten meters away from the edge of the swamp. This was one of the only footholds in the middle of the quagmire.

At the moment he stopped there, Feng Bujue’s Survival Value had almost drained down to bottom. Now it was only 1 point left, and even a sting of a bee could instantly kill him.

Rainsford stopped at the edge of the swamp and didn’t move further.

SCP-682, also known as the Hard-to-Destroy Reptile, is an extremely dangerous Keter-class creature from The SCP Foundation - a secretive organization that contains anomalous or supernatural items and entities away from the eyes of the public. SCP stands for Secure, Contain, Protect.

Chapter 95: The Hunter's Island (11)

"You are tough, just like you've said," Rainford said, "well, you are lucky enough to be able to jump over there."

"I spit on it! Lucky?" Feng Bujue shamelessly bragged. "This is competence. That's my peerless legendary qing gong skill called the drifting feces."

The BOSS didn't reply on his dirty babbling words and silently took out a pistol...

"F*ck!" Feng Bujue yelled, and after that, he disappeared.

Taking a closer look, it turned out that he was hiding himself behind a big rock next to his original foothold. He contracted his body and clung to the rock while holding the flashlight in his mouth. Due to the certain distance, his body was now in Rainsford's blind corner.

Although the light wasn't bright, Rainsford's sight was much better than an ordinary man's. Just with the flashing light behind the rock, he could see it clearly. Regrettably, he had no proper angle to shoot.

Feng Bujue's four limbs were all clinging on to the rock, but his butt was dipped in the mud. Such small contact area wasn't enough to drown him down, but with his remaining Physical Value, he could only endure this position for a while.

"I should have brought the shotgun." Rainsford smiled as he retreated his pistol. "Although my shooting skill is not bad, it’s true that a pistol is not suitable to aim for targets in the dark like this."

"It’s you who got your hands shivered seeing this peerless qing gong master!" Feng Bujue shouted. In order to provoke this BOSS despicably, he didn’t regret dropping the flashlight into the swamp.

"Ha, ha... Do you really think that you can be safe hiding there?" Rainsford grinned. "Do you really think that I don’t dare to go there?"

"Nonsense!" Feng Bujue said with a tone that was even more arrogant. "I’m busy showing myself as a decent guy. I don’t have time to hit you. So, be frank and come to me first!" He spent two seconds, stretched out one arm and gave the BOSS the finger.

"Rude bastard!" The BOSS got really angry; he couldn’t help but to curse Feng Bujue.

Rainsford immediately left the edge of the swamp, backing off to create a distance for his run before the jump. Surely, Rainsford hadn’t read any wuxia novels before, so he didn’t really know Feng Bujue’s drifting feces. He thought that with his physical conditions, if he prepared well, he could jump over to the rock where Feng Bujue was hiding.

At this moment, Feng Bujue’s flashlight had completely sunk, and Rainsford didn’t bring any lighting devices. The surroundings were really dark as there was no moon and the sunrise hadn’t appeared yet. The sky was glowing in a dark purple red hue. Even if this dead swamp was an open place, with his vision, Feng Bujue could only recognize things within five meters.

At this moment, everything that surrounded him was very tranquil, and he could clearly and loudly hear every sound. Feng Bujue held his breath, trying to concentrate on hearing Rainsford's movement. Soon, he heard the rushing steps with a strangely high frequency, much more than his running pace. Moreover, the steps sounded short and strong, which meant they didn’t come from high speed but from the release of accumulated power.

Eventually, after a heavy thudding sound of feet stomping on the muddy ground, Rainsford flexed his leg and jumped up like a whale arching its body in the air, leaping to its target.

When Feng Bujue heard his opponent was running and jumping up, he immediately mounted up the rock again without thinking about anything else. He just took out the pistol and fired twice continuously. He didn’t expect that he could hit the target, as he just wanted to use the fire sparked from the muzzle to see where Rainsford had jumped.

In fact, these two bullets didn’t hit anything and its deviation was outrageous. The worst thing was, after one second, Rainsford was standing not even two meters away from him on the same stone.

Feng Bujue didn’t have time to hesitate and fired one more time. This time, his bullet hit Rainsford’s body. With such a low vision, needless to mention the headshot, it was good enough that he could hit the target.

To ordinary people, even if he was wearing a bulletproof vest, with such short distance, of course, he will inevitably fall backwards, can’t breathe or even get shocked. However, Rainsford didn’t even take a step back; he just grimaced like he had just received a punch.

"Ha, ha, ha." Rainsford laughed contentedly as he knew it was over. This BOSS didn’t intend to use his pistol. He was about to tear this uneducated bastard apart with his bare hands.

"Muwahahaha." Feng Bujue was laughing even more contentedly as he released his consumable skill called [Lower Side Kick of a Brat] to trip Rainsford.

Ignoring grade of Specialty, it would be able to trip 100% monsters that could be tripped literally. Using this skill on this type of BOSS was so suitable.

Rainsford fell backwards while his arms were swinging in the air trying to clutch on something as he was wearing a frightened countenance. In fact, he was a sort of BOSS that was able to react during his falling time, like changing his body’s posture or the direction, or even rolling once to stabilize his body and getting up again. However, under the effects of this skill, no matter what kind of monster he was, he would be ‘tripped’. Until he ‘fell on the ground’, the skill wouldn’t end.

So… Rainsford fell from the stone down to the swamp…

Feng Bujue didn’t say anything else. After he released the skill, he instantly hid himself behind the stone one more time, recovering the position of clinging himself onto the stone, shielding him away from Rainsford and not daring to appear in the other’s sight.

As things had reached this point, Feng Bujue would never dare to reveal any flaws. In case Rainsford took out the pistol and shot him randomly before he died, or just flung a handful of mud to him which could reduce his Survival Value, it would be like wasting all of his previous efforts.

Whether it was necessary or not, being careful was never wrong. Thus, Feng Bujue tried to keep his position and quietly listened to Rainsford’s cursing and struggling in the muddy swamp. After around three minutes, the noises ceased. One second before the mud had come into Rainsford’s mouth, he was still cursing Feng Bujue, and it only stopped when those filthy things flooded his lungs and suffocated him.

"Current Quest, accomplished. Main Quest, accomplished."

"You have finished the scenario. Automatic teleportation in 180 seconds."

According to the plot, it seemed that Ivan wouldn’t become violent after his BOSS got killed. Of course, it should be like that. If not, this plot was really exaggerated.

After Feng Bujue had mounted up the rock, he thought, "Perhaps after the players had read the last words of General Zaroff, the other way around to finish the scenario is to sneak into the castle, deal with Ivan and find the underground port. Afterwards, players will use the boat to get out of this place. However, this could only be done if there are more players. One of them would lure Rainsford away, and the others should take the chance to enter the castle..."

He soon chose to teleport since his Survival Value wasn’t enough to linger here any longer.

Not long after Feng Bujue had left, the sturdy body of Ivan emerged from the jungle. He stood at the edge of the swamp, scrutinizing the muddy place in front of his eyes, thinking about how to salvage his master who had sunk down there...

Qing Gong, (Chinese for "light body skill"), is often considered to be a fabled skill seen only in legends, films, and stories. When heroes are depicted as jumping on water or gliding through the air, Qing Gong is the skill they are supposedly using.

Chapter 96: Intermission (21)

[EXP received: 5,500.]

[Game Coins received: 55,000]

[Items received: A Dagger]

[Completed/Received Quests: 2/2]

[Special, [Hidden Quest] completed: 0]

[Decoded Worldview: The replacement of Zaroff]

[Fear Value surged: 0 time.

Highest Fear Value: 0%

Average Fear Value: 0%]

[Your Fear Rating: A whole sack of guts. This first rank grants you a bonus. Please select later.]

[Skill Value received: 420]

[EXP increased by Skill Value: 4,200.

Game Coins increased by Skill Value: 42,000]

[Rewards for completing the scenario: 80% of EXP required to level up]

[Calculation completed. Please continue.]

Another system’s notification immediately popped up.

"Your Title is updated – The Plot Seeker."

"You’ve reached level 15. Your Physical Value has increased. Current Physical Value: 1500/1500."

"New Game Mode is unlocked. You can check it out through queuing options."

Feng Bujue got a big harvest this time; anyway, he thought it was supposed to be like that. He didn’t expect that he could finish Rainsford, but if he made such a great move, he should have a corresponding return.

From the Skill Value, it could be seen that he had received 200 Skill Value points for decoding the Worldview, which meant his activities in the game had helped him receive the other 220 points, noted that killing the BOSS with a lower side-kick contributed 100 points.

After Feng Bujue had read his calculation, he came to the storage to equip the [Casey Jones' Mask]. The system reminded him, "You can choose to show or hide your mask type items."

Feng Bujue chose to hide the item, then he checked his menu. The mask had upgraded his Fighting Specialty to one more grade. Now, his stats were as follows:

Title: [The Plot Seeker].

EXP: 1000/15000

Skill Value: 1080

Game Coins: 339000

Specialties: Common D, Weapon E, Investigating E, Fighting D, Shooting D, Curing F, Spiritual Technique F, ??? (new locked specialty)

Bag: 5/10 slots occupied, including [Mario's Pipe Wrench], [The Eye of Hatred], [M11A19 Pistol], [Echo Armor], and a [Dagger].

Equipment: [Dance of the Knight], [Casey Jones' Mask]

Login Space storage: Jigsaw Puzzle Piece – Monkey.

Skills: [Perfunctory Maintenance], [Lower Side Kick of a Brat], [Spirit-Body Congregation Technique], and [Planned Victory From a Thousand Miles Away].

The [Planned Victory From a Thousand Miles Away] was his new skill granted from the new title. This one was different from [Cerebral Concussion] since it was a proactive skill.

[Name: Planned Victory From a Thousand Miles Away]

[Special Ability Type: Proactive]

[Effects: Observe the scenario's final BOSS' stats directly (if any), including competence, height, weight, race, skills, weak points, etc. This skill can be reused with the cooldown time of one second. If the BOSS' competence changes at the moment of the observation, reactivate the skill to see the changed data.]

[Remarks: Know yourself, know your enemies, be ever victorious.]

The special skill granted from this title was advantageous to players who liked to plan for strategies. Moreover, it didn't consume anything.

Let alone the passive skills, such skills granted from titles that didn't consume anything like this often had limits. For example, One Saber To Conquer The City had the [Falling Head] skill, which

didn’t require any consumption to be activated and thus its cooldown time was two hours. If he didn’t meet a humanoid BOSS, but it was just a humanoid mob, he would have to consider whether it was worth it or not.

About the skills granted from titles that consumed some value, for example, Long-Ge’s [Colliding Lightning] and Little Tan’s [Retreat and Chop Rapidly], which all consumed 30% of their maximum Physical Value to activate,, these skills’ cooldown time was a little bit less than the other. The former required one hour cooldown, and the latter could be used randomly. And from the effectiveness aspects, that ‘random use’ was, of course, a little bit less compelling... as he could only use the skill to flee away while the lethal power was zero.

Talking about Feng Bujue’s new skill called [Planned Victory From A Thousand Miles Away], it didn’t consume anything nor needed time to cool down. Apparently, it couldn’t be a fighting skill. Generally, this skill would be used once when he had just entered the scenario and saw the BOSS to confirm its stats. To a player with a good memory, refreshing to see the data again was meaningless.

Here I should add something. Besides the skills granted from titles, players could learn other skills which didn’t require consumption. In fact, although the [Body-Spirit Congregation Technique] consumes Survival Value to maintain player’s special status, it didn’t consume anything at the moment it was ‘activated’. No single Physical or Spiritual Value point needed. Moreover, the skills that could be activated without consumption didn’t bother players in terms of ‘success launching rate’. Even if they had the related Specialty graded F, it could still be 100%

successful.

For instance, someone who had a skill that didn’t consume anything with the effect of a snap of his finger could burst a third-wheel to death, even if the success rate was just 20%, he just needed to snap his fingers several times more; it didn’t waste his Physical Value anyway... The Body-Spirit Congregation Technique was the same. If he failed launching it, in case he didn’t consume anything, he could refresh continuously until he could successfully activate the skill. The cooldown time only starts when the ‘skill stops’. But if the skills weren’t activated successfully, there was no ‘stop’ concept. Thus, the default setting for success rate when launching skills that didn’t require consumption would be meaningless.

"Ah... I’ve reached level 15." Feng Bujue stretched his body. "At this level, I don’t need to rush and earn EXP. Yeah, I should seize the chance when the goods are still expensive. If the items that I’m about to receive is not good, I can still sell it at a good price."

This shouldn’t be delayed. Today was the first day of the Open Beta, everything was still messy, and no one knows what scene it would be at his or her next visit.

Feng Bujue came over the glass column, and the familiar notification arose. "Please choose your rewards, one, a random item that suits your level, two, 50,000 game coins, three, 6,000 EXP."

He had chosen the item and hopefully waited for the white halo to be materialized.

As Feng Bujue’s level was 15 now, the ‘item that suits his level' shouldn't be that random ‘stone’ or something like that. Such items, perhaps only players at level 5 with nasty moral standing could receive them.

However, this time, he got disappointed again with his thug life...

[Name: Children’s Round Bat]

[Type: Weapon]

[Quality: Normal]

[Attack Power: None]

[Attributes: None]

[Special Effects: None]

[Remarks: To ensure safety for children under 10 years old when they come to play baseball, they have invented a safe, round bat, covered with rubber material and filled with air inside. Even if it hit someone on the head, he will not get hurt.]

"You didn’t even feel shame to claim that this is a weapon with zero ‘attack power’!" Feng Bujue grabbed the white bat and swung it twice. "This white toy is suitable for a player at level 15, huh!"

He was too lazy to keep such an item that wasted his storage as he determinedly came to the Mall and sold it to the shop.

When he returned to the elevator and the door slid closed, Feng Bujue saw that the number of the Mall Section was set at 10. He also checked his mailbox and unexpectedly found two unread mails.

The first mail came from Like Rain. It contained a simple message: "I'm so sorry I got disconnected. I will contact you later tonight." Since she was having dinner, she couldn't calm her mind. She then logged in, but Feng Bujue was in the game at that time, so she just left him a mail instead.

"A very serious person..." Feng Bujue told himself.

The second mail came from the system, titled [You've successfully sold your item.] The mail contained two sentences, including [Your auctioned item is sold to an [Anonymous] player at 140,000 game coins. Click on the attachment to get the payment.]

Feng Bujue clicked on the attachment and his game coins increased to 479,000 coins. At this time, he could be considered well off. After spending 100,000 coins to establish a Union, he would still have 380,000; it should be enough to buy some costumes and enhance his attributes. Besides, Feng Bujue was about to run out of bullet for his M11A19 Pistol; he needed to buy supplies. Perhaps he needed to buy some Survival Value supplement medicine to make up for the consumption on his Body-

Spirit Congregation Technique.

"Oh, and so on!" Feng Bujue suddenly had nothing in his mind as he was wearing a strange expression. "Before the next scenario, what should I do?" he paused for a while then muttered, "yeah... eat first..."

...

When he got up from the game cabin, the clock displayed 6:40 PM. Although his plain noodles broth didn't require fine technique to cook, it should be around 7:00 PM when he could finally put it into his mouth.

Feng Bujue sat up and stretched out his arms in a standard stretching position to relax his backbones. Indeed, it wasn't good to lay inside the game cabin for a long time since it wasn't as comfortable as sleeping in his bed.

He looked at the corner of his living room to see the food was still in Arthas' bowl, and there was something dark in his sandbox.

"Oh? No way." He was surprised as he turned around to search for the cat, only to see it snoozing on the sofa. Feng Bujue smiled. "Ha, ha, genius. Got it after just one training course. I thought it would need two or three times more to learn it." He was in a really good mood as he placed one hand on the edge of the cabin to support his body while jumping out of it. Then, with the first step, he trampled on another cat poop on the floor...

"This is multidrop bombing!" Feng Bujue cried. "Do you think it’s funny if I trip?!"

"Meow, meow ~" Arthas yawned a big one on the sofa, swung his tail, and walked his way pass Feng Bujue as it refused to give him attention.

Afterwards, when Feng Bujue had cleaned up everything and was sitting in front of the computer together with the bowl of noodles in his hands, it was already 7:15 PM.

He found a bottle of chili sauce in the fridge. No one knows since when it had been staying there. The expiration date on the package was unclear. Anyway, if it didn’t have green hair, he could always put the food in his mouth.

When you have noodles, but you don’t have anything else to add in, such experience, I guess anyone can understand. At that moment, although you are not sure about it, you will still determinedly pour it into your noodles.

After he had turned on the computer, he habitually opened the chat software. Surprisingly, he found a mail that his editor had sent him. This wasn’t normal. Feng Bujue opened the mail, and the contents made him drop his chopstick on the table...

The mail read, "Bujue, aren’t you interested in participating in a variety show on TV?"

Chapter 97: Intermission (22)

"Jue-Ge, right on time. We've just finished a scenario," Wang Tanzhi said after he adding Feng Bujue to the team.

It was 2:00 AM in the morning. When Feng Bujue got into his login space, he accepted Little Tan's invitation to join his team.

"You've been training very fast." Feng Bujue checked the level of the three players in the team. Last time he met Little Tan, he was still at level 12. Now, he was at the same level with Like Rain and Dispirited, which was level 14.

"I bought EXP cards. Moreover, we've just completed a medium-length scenario," answered Little Tan.

"Excellent. You guys go queue and play more, I'm going to check out the Killing Game mode then we will play together," said Feng Bujue.

Dispirited's voice came along from the call channel. "Don't forget the signing thing."

"Ah, right. The description says that entering a union could increase the EXP for the team," Feng Bujue said, "so, I'm going to invite you to my conference room and we will discuss there."

He touched the screen to send the conference room invite. After that, he opened the menu to check the link related to the union

function. After some touches, a system prompt popped up. [Before you confirm your operation, please make sure your bag has at least one unoccupied slot.]

Feng Bujue touched the confirm button and another window popped up. [Please enter the name of your union and the list of co-signing members.]

Then, he paused and thought, "Yeah. I need to discuss this with them. If I chose a name randomly, it will be fine with Little Tan, but perhaps Like Rain and Dispirited wouldn’t want to sign."

Feng Bujue turned away from the screen and touched the button of the Conference Room. When the elevator opened, he entered the room. The other three were there already.

Little Tan and Dispirited had all changed from the default clothing of newbies.

Dispirited was wearing a full set of anti-terrorism military black uniform. Her whole body was covered, without even a split to be found. If she didn’t take off her black cotton mask and the helmet, she wouldn't look much different from the counter-terrorist organization in CS. It was even hard to tell her gender from a far distance. It seemed that she was determined to develop herself in shooting aspect.

Little Tan had bought himself a costume of the "assassin brothers". He was wearing a scarlet jacket, accompanied with a gold cap, which had a hood. If he wore the hood, it could cover half

of his face. On his upper body, his waist and calves, there were many leather pockets that could carry flying knives, bullets or medicines. He was wearing gloves and a pair of deerskin fast boots. At the first glance, he did have the demeanor of an assassin.

These two persons were well-armed, but at this moment, they were doing something very contrast to their appearance. Dispirited with her full set of anti-terrorism uniform was having ice cream, and Little Tan the assassin was eating potato chips.

"Hey dude, what is going on with the snacks?" asked Feng Bujue.

"I bought it at the system's shops," Little Tan said, "although it is just virtual taste sensory simulation, it can ease the desire." He stretched his arm to offer the snack bag. "Jue-Ge, do you want some?"

"I know where to buy them. I mean, why did you buy snacks?" said Feng Bujue.

"Ouch... because they said potato chips are on sale at 50% for the Open Server event..." answered Little Tan.

"Sale-off your head! Just waste your bag's slots like that!" said Feng Bujue.

Dispirited added, "You can also buy more slots for your bag." She licked her ice cream. "Enlarging the 10-slot bag to 15-slot bag costs one million coins."

"It means 100 RMB for each slot~" cried Feng Bujue. The exchange rate of 1:2000 instantly appeared in his mind. "Yeah, I should be careful with the game coins. There are so many things that need money."

Now, Feng Bujue didn’t have any free money to recharge. He thought that he could earn money from Thriller Paradise, thus, this topic wasn’t a good one to continue. At this moment, Feng Bujue turned around and found Like Rain was standing against the wall next to the door. Of course, with her characteristics, Like Rain wouldn’t buy things like snacks there. When their eyes met, she spoke up first. "I didn’t mean it this afternoon."

"Yeah, it’s alright," Feng Bujue answered, "di... didn’t you tell me in the mail before?"

"So..." Like Rain mumbled, "you are that type..."

"Hmm, what are you talking about?" Feng Bujue could feel that she was implying something.

Dispirited smiled from the table. "My cousin was thinking that you are sort of a guy who can break up with his girlfriend via text message."

"Don’t listen to this kid," Like Rain corrected, "I just thought that you are some kind of a voluble guy."

"Hey, it means...." Feng Bujue felt irritated.

Little Tan laughed out loud. He slapped the table while crumble of chips sprayed out from his mouth. "Drawing blood from the first prick!"

"I can draw blood from you with the first prick!" said Feng Bujue.

Dispirited intervened them. "Good. You boys still have time to troll each other. We should talk about our common business now. Where is the application for the establishment of our union?"

"I still haven't taken it," Feng Bujue answered, "I just want to ask you guys, what should we call our union?"

"Ah? Now you turn to democracy," Dispirited continued, "yeah, we haven't considered it yet."

Like Rain said, "Now we are going to discuss it. You guys propose, I'm in charge of objecting the ugly ones."

"Rain-Jie, we haven't said anything, how do you know it would be ugly?" said Little Tan.

"Oh boy, just several hours of being apart, why does he call you Jie now?" Feng Bujue asked Like Rain.

"You wanna do so?" Like Rain still used the calm and cold voice to

answer him.

"I did once, but you told me that I'm not older than you, so it's not suitable, right?" Feng Bujue said, "If I call you Meizi (younger sister) you will think I'm taking little advantages from you, isn't it?"

"I've forgotten that, but you have just reminded me. So, are you automatically giving up this chance?" asked Like Rain

"Tsk~ who needs that. From the ancient time up to now, named 'younger brothers' are the ones who serve you, named 'emperor' are the ones who give you nine deaths and still alive. I don't care about this," Feng Bujue said, "I think Like Rain is a good name to call."

"Cousin, this is so-called 'loosen the reins only to grasp it better'," said Dispirited with a smile. Although her tone was always mischievous, she usually hit the nail on its head. "She does want you to call her Like Rain."

"If you don't talk, nobody will think that you are mute." Like Rain rolled her eyes at her little cousin, who just sold her down the river. She casually stepped forward and sat down next to her.

Dispirited stuck her tongue out, seizing the chance and continued, "I suggest our union to be called... Sad Rain Sigh Wind!" Actually, when she started it, she hadn't come up with anything yet. Luckily, she was quick witted enough to finish her idea.

"Why are your names placed in front of our names?" said Little Tan.

"Do you have a problem with that?"

"Yeah... from now on, maybe we will have more members. Long-Ge would join us too. This name should be considered." Since Little Tan didn't dare to say 'I have a problem', he then tried to express his objection flexibly.

Feng Bujue crossed his arms in front of his chest and said with a musing face, "I suggest... Abnormal Mankind Research Center."

"Veto." Like Rain said calmly just 0.00001 second after Feng Bujue had finished.

"Why?" asked Feng Bujue shamelessly.

"Ugly!" Like Rain didn't say that. It was Dispirited and Little Tan who said that in unison.

"Dude, spit out one." Feng Bujue didn't haggle with schoolgirls, but used his threatening eyes to scare Wang Tanzhi. "If you can't come up with a good one, I will chop you off and feed the piggies."

"Whose verse is that! Who do you think you are playing!" Little Tan cried, "At least, you have to give me some time to think!"

"Anyway, we don’t have a new matter. Everyone, just take your time and think about it." Like Rain leaned against the backrest of her chair.

"First, we should set up the union’s keynote. The unions like Order and The Immortals are all the name of the studios. And the other imposing names like The Invincibles, Emperors, Dominating the World something, are already found in the game. Small Unions like us can’t be compared to others in terms of finance or personnel. Thus, such exposing names should be passed," Feng Bujue said while he was sitting on the conference table, positioning himself as a businessman with 10 interlaced fingers put in front of him. "Second, the names that could cause confusion or lengthy ones which expose the manners of some sort of rotten homebody or fujoshi assaulting the nostrils, we’d better not to consider them. An example of this sort of names is ‘Far East Magic Daytime Sleep Tong’. If we use such type of names, we would be able to draw some brats who are approximately at Little Tan’s mental age to join us."

"Hey! You are the one who did the research! If you didn’t, why do you have such huge information!" cried Little Tan.

"And last one, names in English, Japanese or French, or some pieces of rare languages mixed with Martian are easy to misread, and they are –beep—suspected. So, just cross them then," continued Feng Bujue.

"You can still use the censor sound to say what you want! How did you do that!"

"Good, those are the prerequisites that we are going to brainstorm," Feng Bujue said, "if anybody comes up with a bad suggestion, we will chop Little Tan and feed the piggies."

"Why does it matter to me if the others can't give a good suggestion!?" Little Tan threw some potato chips to Feng Bujue. "Even if I can't give a good suggestion, I can't be chopped off and be fed to the pigs! There's no setting for this chopping and feeding pigs in this game!"

Naming was an annoying matter. Besides what Feng Bujue had mentioned, there was something else they needed to consider. As they had different interests, even if the name of the union couldn't satisfy everybody, at least it shouldn't make some members abhor it. Besides, it would be awful that other people couldn't understand the union's name since they had to wear the union's badge and play with other players. If they had used the name 'Abnormal Mankind Research Center', it would have been fine if Feng Bujue wore this logo swaggering somewhere. But if the girls wore this and went out, it wasn't good since others would consider them as weirdo aunties.

CS: Counter Strike is a first-person shooter video game which was first created as a tactical first-person shooter video game developed by Valve Corporation which originated from a Half-Life modification by Minh "Gooseman" Le and Jess "Cliffe" Cliffe. By the fourth beta version, Valve Software, the developer who created Half-Life, began assisting in the development of Counter-Strike. In 2000, Valve bought the rights to Counter-Strike, and would publish the title for Microsoft Windows that year, and later in 2003 for the Xbox. OS X and Linux ports were available in January 2013.

Fujoshi: Japanese terms for yaoi female fans, a pun which denotes their way of seeing homosexual relationships in media as

being "rotten". The male equivalent is called a fudanshi.

Chapter 98: Intermission (23)

After some deliberations, it was Feng Bujue who had come up with a suggestion that satisfied everyone—Hell's Frontline.

It wasn't because he was a novelist which made him good at naming, but instead because the inspiration for this name had come from the game master who was somehow neurotic and devilish.

While Feng Bujue was still thinking, the event he had experienced in the morning regarding those five buttons had flashed in his mind, and this name came out from his mouth.

Turned out that nobody had any other opinions. Perhaps they had already rejected many ugly names for the union and it had drained their patience. Perhaps their attention started to dilute and they just wanted to finish this quickly. Since no one had vetoed it, [Hell's Frontline] was approved.

Feng Bujue immediately returned to his login space and submitted the name of their union. When the system prompted [This name is available for your Union to use.], he finally felt relieved as he had been worrying that someone else had used the name already.

After he had received the application letter, the related items appeared in his bag. They were a sheet of paper and a pen. These two items formed a set and occupied one slot in his bag.

[Name: List of Co-signers – Hell’s Frontline]

[Type: Consumable item]

[Quality: Normal]

[Functions: To apply for the establishment of a Union]

[Remarks: After the player received the item, if it is not submitted within 24 hours, it will disappear. Each player can only receive one application letter per day. Players who are already a member of a particular Union cannot receive this item. After having four signatures and paying 100,000 coins, the Union can be established. Players who signed the paper are considered the Union’s members.]

Feng Bujue brought the application paper back to the conference room and asked if they had any suggestion for the leader position of the Union.

Like Rain wanted to let Feng Bujue take the job; Little Tan, of course, believed in his Jue-Ge, and he wouldn’t do that anyway; as for Dispirited, she didn’t have a standpoint, to her, it would be the same no matter who took the leader job. However, she didn’t want to take the leading position. "You want me to be the leader? Hm.. One, no aura; second, no interest."

Therefore, Feng Bujue didn’t have any other way around to refuse this. He mused for seconds, sighed then signed his game ID

at the position of the union's leader—Feng Bujue, then handed the paper to the other three.

Afterwards, when the four names had been written down on the paper, Feng Bujue took it, returned to his login space and submitted it to the system.

[Verifying information of signers, please wait...]

[Please confirm your operation: Establish the Union – Hell's Frontline]

Feng Bujue pressed the confirm option.

[Your application order is valid. Reconfirm now, and your Union will be created. This also costs you 100,000 coins. Please make sure that the money you have on your body (Coins in Storage and Mails cannot execute this operation) is enough to carry out this operation.]

He touched the screen to reconfirm. The application letter in his hand then turned into a white halo and disappeared. One second later, the system's notifications continuously popped up on his screen, including audible notifications and messages.

[Union – Hell's Frontline, successfully established.]

[You've created the Union – Hell's Frontline]

[You've become the Union Head – Hell's Frontline. To see your specific permissions, please check the link below.]

[Union's Public Storage is open.]

[Union's buff function will be opened in the next 24 hours. It will depend on your Union's rank on the related ranking lists to give you two buff options.]

[Team experience bonus for the Union's members has been opened.]

[Do you want to set up the badge for your Union now? If you don't want it now, you will receive the default style by the system.]

While listening to the last notification, Feng Bujue saw a default-style badge appear on his screen. It was a simple round gray logo with the words 'Hell's Frontline' floating above.

Feng Bujue didn't want to modify it now since he still remembered the game's description mentioning that the first modification would be free, but if they wanted to adjust it again, they had to pay for it. The particular fee would depend on the number of the union's members. The more players it had, the bigger the fee for this adjustment was.

At the same time, Feng Bujue also checked his Social Channel. Besides the friends list, current teammates, and blacklist, the new

tab for union had been added.

When Feng Bujue was about to return to the conference room, he found that there was a new button on the elevator operation panel, which read [Public Storage]. The default setting access for the storage was, only the Union Head had the right to put or withdraw coins and items there, while the other members could only place things in. Of course, the storage was empty now.

Feng Bujue returned to the conference room and said, "This business is really troublesome." He suddenly had a feeling. "Even the establishment was nothing but trouble, not to mention the management..." He was a responsible guy. If he had some power, even a tiny one, he always hoped to accomplish his relevant responsibilities perfectly. It would be okay if he didn't care, but if he did care, he must do his best. It was not enough to just look into one's heart, this is all about attitude instead. Competent people would do on their own to have a clear conscience that no one has anything to complain.

In fact, under normal circumstances, Feng Bujue would choose to have no power at the beginning... Before that, he had hoped to let someone else take the leader position. Regretfully, he now had to do it on his own. With his personality, this meant 'trouble'.

The other three had heard the system's notifications while they were still sitting in the conference room. Moreover, the badge had appeared on their clothes. The union's logo appeared on Little Tan's and Dispirited's left arm. As Like Rain's costume was sleeveless, the logo appeared on her left chest, below the clavicle like a lapel badge.

"Jue-Ge, you've designed this badge?" asked Little Tan.

"System default," Feng Bujue answered, "I've seen them. There are many patterns to choose, or we can even draw our own one. However, I want to do the democracy till the end. If I didn't ask for your advice, I would choose an ugly, awkward one, and you guys would force me to spend coins to fix it."

"The logo should have a black ram head with red eyes. Gray background and flame-type heraldry. Black words outlined with blood-red hue," Like Rain immediately described a very specific design.

"Yeah, satanic symbol and flames. Suits the union's name well, eh? How did you have the ideas that quick? Also, it's very reasonable," asked Feng Bujue.

"Not a big deal. You are good at writing, but you don't allow me to be good at drawing?" answered Like Rain.

"Ah? Are you a designer? Architect? Mangaka?"

"Give me the Deputy Head's authority. There are things that I have to do, then you can go play your Killing Game mode." Like Rain didn't answer him and just changed the topic.

Chapter 99: Intermission (24)

After Feng Bujue returned to his login space, he disbanded the party to avoid a case in which he would hold Little Tan and his friends back when they wanted to queue for an available party. He had assigned Like Rain as the Deputy Head of the Union and let her handle the Union's badge. Although she got disconnected once, from her consistent performance, apparently, she was a very reliable person and she wouldn't mess up with this simple task.

Feng Bujue didn't hurry to enter another scenario. After spending 100,000 coins, he had 379,000 coins left, which was enough for him to equip himself with something good.

First, he went to the [Mall – Section 10] to sell that children baseball bat to the shop. The price was so reasonable. Just 1000 coins, around 5 RMB. This suited the 'None' attack power well. Moreover, this item didn't grant any useful attributes.

Bullets, medicine supplements, and lighting devices were the supplies Feng Bujue intended to buy. Still, he didn't hurry now; instead, he went to see the costumes first. Those things would cost big money, but they could enhance players' attributes. Moreover, those were the things he needed to purchase sooner or later. Let's see what kind of costume he could afford with around 380,000 coins.

Feng Bujue didn't care much about his appearance in the game, but it didn't mean that he didn't care at all. He felt quite fine to wear the newbies' default garments. Everyone had to wear them once, and they were all free. However, if he needed to buy

something, he wouldn't want to wear a weird mix just because of the attributes boosts. Wearing that style of clothing and bragging around, he didn't have such guts.

There were numerous costumes, so if he wanted to check out one by one, he would have to stand there until dawn. Thus, Feng Bujue had his own way to choose. Right at the beginning, Feng Bujue was like he got two kinds of diseases which burst out his desire of buying costumes of the American Superheroes style. Soon, he found out that superheroes costumes prices were such a ripoff. For example, the 'Dr. Doom' costume was priced at 900,000 coins. This costume had three parts, namely, helmet, clothes, and a hooded cape, which meant there were three places to be boosted. However, players couldn't buy separate components, as they could only use 900,000 coins to buy the whole set.

With the small amount Feng Bujue had, he could only look at these costumes.

In comparison with the players who could use 1,000,000 coins, which was around 500 RMB, to purchase five extra slots in the bag like Little Tan and Dispirited, Feng Bujue's 380,000 coins from the beginning of the game till now was only worth 190 RMB. However, his plan was to earn enough to make up the loss he had invested into the game cabin. To make it clearer for you, he was now using the NL2055 standard single-player cabin, priced at five digits. Double the amount he paid for this kind of game cabin and he could already buy a car. Of course, it didn't include the paperwork for the car...

"Hmm, in fact, this costume is not good. Green hat. Moreover,

the armor and the cape don’t look convenient for movements," Feng Bujue consoled himself.

After that, he found another costume he really wanted to buy—Deadpool, a costume designed in black and red tights and no cape. It was much suitable for moving; moreover, there were belts to carry guns or sword, which helped save the slots in player’s bag. This costume included two components, the mask and the suit, which meant it could provide only two attributes boosts.

By the way, the cost of the Deadpool costume was 700,000 coins...

Feng Bujue comforted himself one more time, "Yeah, too despicable, too lowly, does not suit my tall image..."

If anyone could hear his words, that person would surely ask him two questions. The first question, "So why do you search for it?" The second question, "What kind of image do you have?"

He then tried to search for other characters’ costumes. The conclusion was, famous characters’ costumes were all priced over 500,000 coins, and the strangest thing was the Batman costume, which cost 2,000,000 coins. According to the exchange rate of this week, it cost 1000 RMB. Of course, this costume was super. It had five components: the head cover, the upper garment, the lower garment, a belt and a cape (Clothing slot is divided into five small boxes: head, footwear, upper body, lower body, and accessories. No matter how many components the costumes had, even if it had only one piece, still, it would take the whole five boxes). Also, players could have five boosts for his attributes. Moreover, he

could wear more equipment on his body, which could help him save the slots in his bag.

After a while, Feng Bujue was about to give up. It seems the whole armors weren't what he could afford; he'd better purchase the garment and then mix them together. First, he needed the upper body and the lower body clothing. After he had those items, if he still had money, he would buy more accessories.

When he came up with this thought, Feng Bujue suddenly had an idea. He followed the style and the colors to search, and finally, he found a costume that suited him well. He even beamed a contented smile.

If Batman is a career, besides the innate talents one must possess, perhaps there's another requirement, which is to have the properties of around 700 million USD. On the contrary, the requirements to become his opponents are quite low. For example, there's a guy who gives him headache the most, also the one who thinks life and wealth are cheap enough.

First, Feng Bujue spent 120,000 coins to buy the upper body garment—a purple suit coat whose hem reached his knee lined with a dark blue plaid shirt accompanied with a tie and a dark green vest suit. Then, he spent 80,000 coins to buy a pair of trousers whose color was one or two shades darker than the coat as the lower body garment. Finally, he used 40,000 coins to buy a pair of dark leather gloves.

Feng Bujue had spent 240,000 coins in total to purchase the Joker's costume. Of course, he wasn't that exaggerated to dye his

hair green or cover his face with white powder, cut his mouth's corners and put on lipstick... He wasn't fanatical though.

After he acquired the costumes, when he wanted to equip them, he had to think about which random attribute boosts he would choose. The three random attribute boosts generated for him were: slight increase in Physical Value's recovery speed, slight reduction of Physical Value consumption when carrying heavy objects, and slight increase in Survival Value's recovery speed. Feng Bujue almost didn't consider anything as he immediately chose the increase in Survival Value's recovery speed since it would benefit his Body-Spirit Congregation Technique. Theoretically, his Body-Spirit Congregation Technique was still very useful at the later stage of the game, thus, it wasn't a bad choice to boost this attribute.

Random attribute boosts from the lower body garment was a little bit terrific: first, under the circumstances that the player went upside down (using his own force), it could significantly increase the Physical Value's recovery speed; second, slightly increase bouncing ability; and third, greatly increase Spiritual Value's recovery speed while player's Survival Value would be decreased accordingly with the same rate.

The first one was kind of deceptive as long as he read it. Although it stated 'significantly increase', when players put himself upside down, perhaps his Physical Value would decrease... This was like one advanced forward and the other one held back. Was it different from 'slightly increase'? Basically, it was just a troll. So, Feng Bujue had chosen the second option, which looked the most common.

The gloves belonged to Accessories Category. The boosting options he got included slight reduction in Physical Value consumption when carrying heavy objects, slight reduction of the effect of bleeding status, and slight increase in the attack power of user's punch. These three options had different tendencies. The first one was relatively neutral; the second one belonged to a defensive kind, and the third one, of course, had the offensive tendency.

Feng Bujue had weighed them for a while. Eventually, he chose the second option. Presently, he had three weapons including a pipe wrench, a dagger and a pistol that he could use as he pleased. With this situation, in which he could arm himself fully, he didn't need to use his fist due to that 'slightly increase'. This was like throwing away a watermelon to pick up a sesame. Moreover, he recalled how terrible Like Rain was in her bleeding status during the scenario of the Yousuke High School. Currently, there was no member of his Union that wanted to develop further in Curing Specialty, and he couldn't be able to always keep bandage, antidote, scald meds or items to cure special effects, etc. with him. It wasn't because he didn't have enough money, but it was because of the limited storage. Thus, if he had such a special boost, he could ease his mind somehow. And, the gloves weren't expensive. Once he had more coins, he could always buy the same pair and choose another boost.

Upon this thought, Feng Bujue patted the nape of his neck. "Argh! I forgot to ask Little Tan to give me back the Winchester. It's been a few days, 80% this dude has forgotten it." However, he shrugged immediately as he thought, "Well, that weapon is very practical. Just let him keep it. It can support him much."

After Feng Bujue had selected all the boosts for his attributes, in summary, he had spent 240,000 coins to increase his Survival Value's recovery speed. He could now jump higher and reduce the consumption speed of his Survival Value... All above these... he had formed his style.

In his clothing slot, there were still two unoccupied boxes, which were the headwear and the footwear. Anyway, Feng Bujue now had 140,000 coins. If he purchased one of these, he wouldn't be able to afford the other. Moreover, he had intended to buy more supplies. Thus, he didn't continue on checking costumes any further.

Although the items had been placed in his clothing slot, he needed to return to the login space to put them on. There was no situation that a player could change his/her appearance in the public areas.

Feng Bujue bought five blood bottles, but he didn't buy the large ones. He had bought the Survival Value Supplement (Medium). About the pricing, the supplement's prices weren't based on the ratio as 30 small bottles cost 2,000 coins; 50 medium bottles cost 6,000 coins, and the large bottles, which could fully recover player's Survival Value, cost 12,000 coins. This kind of pricing was based on the type of bottles and the description in Thriller Paradise: "Could only pile up five layers max. Continuously using the item will relatively reduce its effect." It seemed that the small bottles were better, however, taking three small bottles could only recover slightly more than that of a medium bottle. They were at the same price, but it took more slots in the bag.

Plainly, the large supplement bottles could save space and ensure the efficiency, and, of course, this kind of fast and convenient items cost a lot.

In the end, Feng Bujue bought a flashlight and two magazines of bullets for his pistol. Each magazine contained seven bullets. Since he still had one last bullet in his pistol, these two magazines each took one slot of his bag. Fortunately, although the costumes he had bought couldn’t be compared with the professional costume that came with the dagger scabbard, pockets for bullets, etc., there were some pockets in his coat where he could keep these magazines of bullets.

After he was done with shopping, Feng Bujue left the Mall and returned to his login space. When the elevator door slid close, he received a system’s notification that said [Your Clothing Tab has been opened.].

In China "wearing a green hat" is an expression that Chinese use when a woman cheats on her husband or boyfriend because the phrase sounds similar to the word for ‘cuckold’. This apparently dates back to the Yuan dynasty when the relatives of prostitutes were forced to wear green hats.

Chapter 100: Intermission (25)

The game menu automatically popped up in front of Feng Bujue's eyes. An arrow pointed at the Clothing Tab and the system's voice came along.

[After adjusting your items in Clothing Tab, you can choose the option 'Change costume' in your login space, and the system will change your appearance accordingly.]

[If you take off all of your clothes or choose to hide your clothes, your character's costume will be restored to the default setting.]

[Notice: Players cannot change their garments in the Clothing Tab in any scenarios. In public areas, players can wear on or off their clothes, but their appearance will not change accordingly. Only when you are in your login space can you carry out operations that can change your clothes.]

When Feng Bujue heard the notice, another window popped up and floated in front of him, which read: [Please confirm if you are wearing other pieces of costumes. In this situation, after you're done with changing clothes, your previous clothes will be automatically placed inside your bag or your storage. If you don't have enough storage slots, the system will enclose your items in an email and send it to your mailbox. Your mail can last for 24 hours in real time.]

"Very thoughtful reminder," muttered Feng Bujue. By the way, he was wearing the default costume of newbies. Such a detailed

setting, only a grain of sand could sneak in.

He then set his clothing to be visible, except for the mask. The [Dance of the Knight] immediately appeared on his foot. Confirmed. In the next seconds, Feng Bujue's whole body turned into a white halo, just like he was about to be teleported from a scenario. Anyway, it was just a flash and him changing clothes was done.

Feng Bujue felt satisfied with his new image reflected in the mirror. Under the setting that his clothes were visible, the bag, which used to be hung across his chest, had become invisible; also, he didn't have the feeling that he was wearing it. When players wanted to take out items from the bag, they just needed to poke their hands into the position where their bags should be. The item then would come out from a dimensional fissure.

Feng Bujue had spent more than 30,000 coins to buy supplies, and the amount he had now was 104,600 coins. It would be better to keep some money with him. If he spent it all, when he found an item he could sell at a good price, he would find it troublesome with the auction fees.

Feng Bujue decided not to touch his 1080 Skill Value points. Currently, he didn't lack equipment but fighting experience. The [Echo Armor] had been in his bag for three scenarios, and he hadn't been able to equip it yet. If he counted on the chances to upgrade his related Specialty to the level he could equip the item, perhaps it wouldn't work. At present, it seemed not practical to train his Common Specialty to Grade C at level 15. Now, he hoped that his Weapon Specialty could be upgraded in the next Killing

Game he was about to play.

Planning took time; no plan, no need to spend time. Actually, Feng Bujue had spent more than 20 minutes to shop and sort out his items, but it was just 20 minutes in the game. By the way, within this time, Like Rain had finished the design of their Union's badge.

In fact, when Feng Bujue had returned to his login space, the badge on the left sleeve of his newbie costume had been added, but he didn't notice it. After he had put on his new costume, he saw the additional feature in the mirror.

Next, he went to check the Union menu in his Social Channel. Wang Tanzhi, Dispirited Laughing Bones, and Like Rain, these three IDs displayed that they were playing. However, they hadn't been there for a long time just yet. In his friend list, besides these three people, the ID Longao Min was still gray as he wasn't online. As he guessed that Long-Ge wouldn't be online tonight, the Union stuff would have to wait until he logged in.

Feng Bujue took out two magazines of bullets from his bag and put them into the pockets of his coat. He took a deep breath then paid attention to the game menu. He opened the playing mode options. At level 15, players were considered to finish the newbie period and the primary stage in the game. At this point, they would start to enter the middle stage which had richer contents.

From level 5 to level 14, there were only two playing modes; now it was four, including Single-player Survival Mode (Normal), Single-player Survival Mode (Nightmare), Multiplayer Survival

Mode (Normal) and Killing Game.

Of which, the Killing Game had four more modes, namely, one versus one, two versus two, three versus three, and random three to six players melee.

In the first three game modes, players could choose to queue and meet the opponents randomly. They could also choose to enter the game with their team; however, as they had to be on the same side, only a team of three could try this mode. A team of four couldn't play Killing Game. Moreover, a team of three could only play three on three and not two on two. In short, it's impossible to arrange a spy among the opponent team.

Besides, there was another option called 'Challenge', in which players could invite other players to play the opponent side in the game. This function would have, no, must have a set of conditions.

First of all, both of the people challenging and being challenged should at least exist in their each other's social network. Either in the [Friends], [Blacklist], and [Recent Teammates] tab. The blacklist in Thriller Paradise was a passive option. Thus, if you just hear about some other players, but you have never met him in the game, the only option you have is to add him to your friend list, and only if he agrees can you send the challenge invite then.

Thanks to this setting, players on the ranking lists could avoid numerous challenge invites sent to them daily. At most, they had to deny a large amount of friend requests as well as piles of emails when they returned to the login space. As they were celebrities, they had to accept that little pressure. Also, they didn't need to

worry that they would accidentally delete the ones they wanted to befriend since they could find them again in the Recent Teammates Tab.

The second condition for ‘Challenge’ was, besides the mode one on one, players who entered the challenge should be in a team in order to start the battle. This was to prevent the ‘undercover’ phenomenon. For example, in three versus three playing mode, three players could challenge one player, and that player was actually their friend in the game, who was about to go undercover and trick the other two players queuing... This kind of stuff would not happen since when a team of three sent the challenge invite, the other team should have three members in order to accept the invite.

Of course, in case that they had queued randomly, there’s a chance that they would encounter some of their friends in the opponent’s team. Although this situation was rare, in case it happened, the ‘Passive Playing’ concept was applicable in Killing Game. Moreover, it wasn’t just simply increasing the teammates’ Fear Value gradually.

Players in Killing Game who were judged to intentionally assist the opponent side or purposely tricked their teammates, their Skill Value would get deduction... When the Skill Value they got in the scenario was all deducted, the system would start to deduct the original value they had earned before. In case the Skill Value players had before the game wasn’t much, the system could always deduct it to negative numbers. Thus, if players intentionally messed up the Killing Game, the loss they had to bear would be weighty. Besides the increasing Fear Value, which could force them to disconnect at the maximum point, the loss of Skill Value

was also extremely terrible. If the system found out a player had conducted this behavior many times, just like a cracked jar getting finally broken, his account would be locked, awaiting to be resolved.

It's easy to explain the last playing mode, the random three to six players melee. Players could only queue alone and kill until there was only one standing, which was also the winner.

In Close Beta, Valiant Ghost Devouring Heaven had met his co-workers in Order Studio in this playing mode and killed them all mercilessly. This situation could only happen in Close Beta where there were few players that had reached high levels and the ones who were eligible to play this mode were limited. That's why the four of them could encounter each other in the same game. At this time, in Open Beta, such situations would hardly happen.

Feng Bujue had already thought about trying out Killing Game when he reached level 15. However, for the first time he played this game mode, he didn't expect to win, he just intended to get familiar with the new playing mode. Thus, he didn't dare to enter the team playing mode. One, he was afraid he would hold them back; two, he could be slaughtered before he understood how to play this mode.

Then, Feng Bujue chose Killing Game, pressed 1 versus 1 option and entered a random team...

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