THRILLER PARADISE

BOOK 02

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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 101: Basic Thunderbolt Chapter (Preface)

[Feng Bujue, level 15]

[Please select the playing mode you want to join.]

[You've selected Killing Game one versus one. Please confirm.]

[Confirmed. Generating scenario...]

[Loading... Please wait...]

The scene in front of Feng Bujue had turned pitch-black. Some subtitles appeared along with the narrator's voice.

[The core of Killing Game is players fighting against each other. The intimidating features of the scenario itself will be reduced in this playing mode. There are chances for other Quests or Worldview. The map size will be generated based on the number of players and their competencies.]

[You can check your teammates' and opponents' IDs, levels, and survival status in your Party Tab.]

[Regulations on the interaction between players as in Articles A to E are still applied in this playing mode. If you are not sure about these regulations, please click the link below.]

[This is the reminder for the first time you entered Killing Game. Enjoy.]

When the reminder was over, Feng Bujue didn't hear the greeting 'Welcome to Thriller Paradise' as usual; instead, there was a male voice, speaking up with a Minnan dialect.

"Make your opponent shiver in fear. Make him see what real terror is!"

It turned out that the opening scene of the Killing Game was different from other scenarios. After this greeting, the next

reminder prompted.

[Loading completed. Currently, you are playing Killing Game.]

[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 points of Skill Value.]

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

The computer graphics opening scene immediately appeared in front of Feng Bujue's eyes. The image depicted a vast, empty and gloomy area. The ground was a large flat rock. There was a cliff on the right where many dried bodies and skulls were hung there. A hazy moon illuminated this mournful area.

Next, he heard a short description of the scenario, which was hard to believe...

[Legend of Devildom has dyed Shen Zhou. A mysterious man from a profound sect has shaken the world. Xuanyuan Sword wishes to lose once. Ghost Generals found it hard to rehabilitate humans...]

"Hey... what the heck is that... Shen Zhou Thunderbolt?" Feng Bujue had an ominous premonition in his heart.

[In a lunar eclipse night, immense fog brings together a sad maze. Dim starlight shines on the lamp of life! Gloomy green grass, ambiguous ghost silhouettes flash like the scenes in hell! The wind is howling through the hanging bodies on the cliff. Two men came from different worlds. One has calmed down his nervous mind, awaited. The other coldly holds his sword, waiting in silence.]

[Who loses? Who wins? Who dies? Who's still alive?]

"It really comes..." Feng Bujue mused, "with this shitty style, what comes next would be encountering and fighting?"

Bingo! He got it right.

The scenario's description was short with several lines. After it was over, Feng Bujue had regained his ability to move again. He immediately turned around to check here and there. Then, he saw a person standing roughly 500 meters away from him. Coincidentally, that person had also just turned around.

"Main Quest has been triggered."

"Kill all members of the enemy team."

"[Hidden Quest] has been triggered."

"Compose a poem on your own and receive an exclusive Spiritual Weapon."

As the system's notifications constantly arose, Feng Bujue was completely speechless to this scenario. [Hidden Quest] just appeared directly; moreover, the scenario would reward an item. What kind of approach is that?

In fact, such setting was the exit the system had left to players like Feng Bujue.

In one versus one playing mode of Killing Game, the plot wouldn't be too twisted as the chances players had were enormous. Possibly, it would take a couple of minutes to determine the result. So, the winner would receive a little reward while the loser could only receive the odd number of Skill Value he had fought for it in the game and nothing more. Anyway, there were some cases that players had fought for hours in a one versus one scenario, even one or two days. For example, two players with good shooting skill were put on a vast deserted island, and the system had set up a jungle, a hidden research center, the pirate's lair, etc. on the island. In such situations, there would be more side quests as well as more rewards. In two versus two, three versus three or melee playing modes, half of the scenarios were really complicated. The system would put players into the game randomly or put them into opposite situations but still give them a certain degree of freedom. Moreover, it would set up some awkward rules like the scenario of

the seven inconceivable things in the campus so as players who were good at planning and thinking could have more room to perform.

Anyway, in one on one scenario, direct and simple scenarios still took a relatively big part. No doubt that in this situation, players who were good at fighting would take the upper hand. And, the players who were good at solving puzzles... well, just take Feng Bujue's situation now as an example, if the system didn't give the [Hidden Quest], he had no way to resist his opponent.

Now, he had the chance, but it depended on him whether he could seize it or not.

Of course, both of the players had received this quest. Quite fair. If Feng Bujue's opponent were brave and brilliant, apparently, he would win for sure. One smart player versus another powerful player, if any of them could win, no matter it was the fighting player or the reasoning player, it would still be reasonable.

Feng Bujue was unlucky as he accidentally met an opponent who could be considered both smart and brave. This player's ID was [Wild Trace Sword Shadow]; he belonged to the Martial World Union. He was one of the superstar players of the Martial World Studio. Together with the studio's manager [Smile and Greet the Common] and another professional superstar player called [No Saber Visitor], they were called the three hotshots Saber Sword Smile.

When regarded 'No Sword', 'Smile Master', and 'No Saber', the other studios, which always considered fighting competences as their framework, had to acknowledge their abilities. In fact, The Immortals and Order, the two leading dragons in this industry, had also given offers to these three but got refused every time. Order had even planned to merge the Martial World Studio with them; however, this plan hadn't been implemented. After all, this was business—buying the whole company just because of three players was not worth the risk. What if those three decided to

leave Order and establish their own company after their companies had been merged? At that time, Order would become a matchmaker.

With Wild Trace Sword Shadow's competence, there would be no problem for him to enter the top 20 of the combat ranking list. However, at this time, he wasn't on the list yet. It was because he didn't log in during Close Beta after he had created his character. When Open Beta was released, he then started to train and level up. His case was similar with Feng Bujue. After he had reached level 15, this was the first time he had tried Killing Game.

However, Wild Trace Sword Shadow was different from the other top players from Order Studio, who could deliberately train their levels. The time he had been playing wasn't much. It wasn't because he didn't want to play Close Beta, but he actually didn't have time to show up there.

In reality, Marital World Studio was just a grass-roots company, whose initial scale wasn't much different from that of the Ice Emperor team led by Young Master Ji Bu. Smile And Greet The Common, No Saber Visitor and Wild Trace Sword Shadow were all that their studio had at the beginning. The three of them didn't have the rich-second-generation background like Young Master Ji Bu. If Young Master Ji Bu couldn't earn anything after a long time of struggling, at most, he had just wasted the money his parents had. However, the other three had loans from banks, friends, and relatives. If their Studio couldn't make a profit, in the worst case, their parents and they themselves would become homeless and hide everywhere to avoid the creditors.

Fortunately, they had succeeded. With their competencies, they had operated and managed the company to today's scale and success. Now, Martial World Studio already took a position in the top echelon of this industry. After they had paid off their debts, the company then moved into a special office building, and now they had more than 100 workers. It could be said that they had been

professional players once and now they were young entrepreneurs.

Anyway, in the world of professional players, usually, they couldn't determine the time they would retire. This world really looks like a 'Martial World'. How could hotshots retreat like that? Moreover, in this life, how many hotshots would be willing to live a life of seclusion when they were still able to fight?

So, the three sect's masters, Saber, Sword, and Smile, were still engaging in the game themselves. They did not only want to manage the business outside of the game, but also wanted to do business with the unions in the game. In Close Beta, they didn't have time to play. As the studio had been investing in new game projects, there were so many things they needed to manage. In fact, they were still very busy now. Before everything went smoothly on the right tracks, they could only be online at night in their sleep.

Back to the Killing Game.

The fact that Feng Bujue was matched with Wild Trace Sword Shadow in this game meant the system obviously considered his competence wasn't much less than his opponent's. The biggest difference between players in Killing Game was five levels. In a scenario, no matter whether it was a player's teammate or opponent, there was no situation that there would be a pair of players that was six levels in difference. If a team had two members whose levels were six levels apart, that team couldn't enter the scenario.

In case there was a multiplayer scenario, the system would try its best to match two teams with equivalent competences. Also, in one on one scenario, the system would never put the two players with much different competence to single out.

Thus, on papers, he could win every Killing Game, including this one.

"Yeah... That guy over there is specialized in fighting for sure.

This situation isn’t good though..." Feng Bujue muttered. He was looking at Wild Trace Sword Shadow who was wearing a black satin gown and a long ponytail hairstyle. The long sword held in his hand was taken out of its scabbard, exuding cold beams. Seeing the ID of this dude and the opening scene of the introduction, which said ‘the other coldly holds his sword, waiting in silence’, Feng Bujue could figure out many things.

At the same time, Wild Trace Sword Shadow was observing Feng Bujue, but he found it hard to guess this guy’s style. The man standing afar from him had a western purple suit coat that looked like he was cosplaying the Joker in Batman’s comic books. However, the weapons he was holding were a pistol and... a pipe wrench.

Wild Trace Sword Shadow had suspicions in his mind, "What does this person do? He doesn’t look like a player specialized in fighting as his close combat weapon is a tool, while his other hand is holding a long range weapon. Is he training both of his Weapon and Shooting Specialties? The system’s narrator had mentioned ‘One has calmed down his nervous mind, awaited’, this should be him. In other words, that guy looks pretty calm, but in fact, his mind is unsure?"

They didn’t stay still for long as Wild Trace Sword Shadow started to take action first. Since he was confident with his ability, he decided to attack to probe first. Anyway, testing didn’t cost him anything; in case his opponent couldn’t bear just a strike, it meant his bearing was good enough. Nothing to be done then.

[My god... An abundant aura emitted from Wild Trace Sword Shadow as he soars up to the sky. Murderous aura blends with clouds; the sky’s hue suddenly changes as black clouds appeared in the night sky.] The Minnan male voice echoed in their ears.

"Wut?" Feng Bujue and Wild Trace Sword Shadow had the same reaction. There was a narration for their fight in this scenario?

Coming along with the narrator’s description, the sky started to be dimmed as the wind became stronger and the black clouds had covered the moon.

"You really are something!" Feng Bujue turned and ran away. Having heard the sharp narration, he had washed away the idea of directly confronting his opponent; he decided to run first and think about a plan later.

Wild Trace Sword Shadow saw him running away, so his mind was more emboldened. He had just tried the Killing Game, and this was the first time he had encountered another player in Thriller Paradise. He used to be afraid of his opponent’s capacity, but now, Feng Bujue was running away, no doubt that he was in a disadvantaged situation. Wild Trace Sword Shadow then let go off his feet and hands and started his strong and offensive pursuit.

[The body is like a flying dragon, soaring up as though he had wings, finding a split to break out from this battle. Marvelous fast strides. Hurry up! Feng Bujue sees a difficult situation as he turned around and ran away.]

[The sword is like a vast sea; qi is like the screaming wave! Wild Trace Sword Shadow holding his sword chases after the other. Murderous aura is increasing extensively as a rapidly stirring cloud. His momentum is like the mighty heaven!]

"Have you mistaken it! Obviously, I’m fleeing away, how could you say it in such an imposing way!" cried Feng Bujue while running.

Wild Trace Sword Shadow was running around 10 meters behind him, laughing. "My friend, once you accepted this setting, it’s quite interesting."

BANG ——

Feng Bujue didn’t answer him; instead, he turned and shot his last bullet in the M1911A1 pistol. Then he took out the gun

magazine, and without reducing his speed, he reloaded his pistol with the new gun magazine taken from the coat pocket.

"Seems your shooting skill is just regular..." sneered Wild Trace Sword Shadow. The bullet didn't hit him, so he was still chasing behind Feng Bujue.

Even if Feng Bujue could stop and aim, it would be very hard to hit a moving target, let alone doing it under a fleeing situation. Actually, the purpose of this shot wasn't to hit the target, but to see the opponent's reaction.

Turns out Wild Trace Sword Shadow's reaction to Feng Bujue was really annoying. When Wild Trace Sword Shadow heard the shot, he didn't dodge or cease his pace, this said two points: first, his mentality was absolutely perfect, at least in the game, he had surpassed the instinctive human reactions; the second point, it was also one of the conditions to achieve the first point, so he certainly had something to defend against firearms.

More annoyingly, he had mocked Feng Bujue's shooting skill. The one who could have extra strength to talk while running after Feng Bujue, who was using [Dance of the Knight], needed not to describe how strong his physical attributes was.

"Poem, poem, poem..." Feng Bujue mumbled just like he was pressing his body to death as he was urging his brain to flicker faster. "Make up one quick... or else I have to die."

Minnan: is a branch of Min Chinese spoken in certain parts of China including southern Fujian (the Minnan region), eastern Guangdong, Hainan, and southern Zhejiang, and in Taiwan. The Minnan dialects are also spoken by descendants of emigrants from these areas in diaspora, most notably the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.

Shen Zhou: Old name of China.

Chapter 102: Basic Thunderbolt Chapter (Breaking)

[Vortices of clouds swiftly arrived, and a thunder is about to strike! Footsteps are as dense as a heavy shower, walking on the deserted earth, gliding like a wind over the lone cliff.]

[The big difference between their foundations is as obvious as the prominent aspects between strong and weak competences. Wild Trace Sword Shadow doesn't want to prolong this battle. He's pursuing the opponent whose fleeing away, and now he has decided to use his cruel, murderous skill!]

The narration was actually a little bit slower than what was happening. Anyway, the system needed time to interpret the current situation into words. Thus, when the narration came into Feng Bujue's ears, Wild Trace Sword Shadow's attack had arrived.

[Wild Trace Sword Shadow sweeps through the air. His sword with its cold aura has immediately stirred up. A silhouette is swirling under the dim moonlight. In a short moment of silence, the tip of the sword is the only thing that moves. Attentively focus. Drifting clouds cover the moon. Darkness falls everywhere. He slashes out!]

[My goodness~~ Wild Trace Sword Shadow sways and attacks. A distance of 10 steps is nothing to him now. The first strike comes along with thousands of clangs. Under the cliff, in the middle of the moon, the sword sounds are trembling.]

At this moment, Wild Trace Sword Shadow was using the skill [Glorious Shadow Slash] granted by his title [Swift Blade Like Wind].

[Name: Glorious Shadow Slash]

[Special Ability Type: Active]

[Consumption: 15% of the highest Physical Value, 15% of the

highest Spiritual Value]

[Effects: Instantly appear within 10 meters in front of a target. The user's attack speed will be increased by 80% for 3 seconds. Cooldown time is 10 minutes.]

[Remarks: The Light and Dark features are interlaced within the strike. Extremely fast and strangely dangerous, which the opponent couldn't see or retaliate against.]

When Wild Trace Sword Shadow suddenly appeared in front of Feng Bujue, the latter had almost crashed into the other's sword. Fortunately, Feng Bujue's reflexes were agile as he instinctively swayed aside while raising his wrench to parry.

The sword tip and the wrench collided, sparked and created a loud clang. However, Feng Bujue had just stopped the first strike from his opponent and avoided the crucial attack. Next, during Feng Bujue's close combat with Wild Trace Sword Shadow, the latter's flexible blade in his other hand looked like it was dancing while the attack speed was much enhanced. Wild Trace Sword Shadow was constantly slashing Feng Bujue, leading to some cuts on the latter's left calf muscles, left shoulder, and on his back. This caused the [Bleeding] status.

[The absolute style appears for the first time. Feng Bujue takes out his unique weapon, exhausts his power to turn the Earth and Heaven skillfully, using marvelous movements to avoid the sword! Each step brings both shock and danger! However, short vigilance is not as fast as the instant sword qi. The sword weaves a net in the sky, gathering blinking rays. Feng Bujue has wounds all over his body. This is a fight that leaves a rain of blood and fishy wind.]

"I can't hold it anymore! I'm about to face my death!" Feng Bujue continued to run forward, but he didn't admit that he was about to lose. He realized that the skill Wild Trace Sword Shadow had just used couldn't continuously be performed in a short time. If not, it shouldn't be the fighting ability of level 15, since it wasn't much

different from a level 25 skill.

[Cold eyes, wind-like fast strikes. Right when the moon appears splendidly, Wild Trace Sword Shadow turns and pursues his opponent. His wrist slightly sways—this is the second strike!]

"Return?" When Feng Bujue was listening to the narration, his opponent's sword had almost reached his back.

[Mad tracks tyrannically cross. Sword shadow tells no mercy. My goodness~]

At this moment, Wild Trace Sword Shadow didn't think that those narration lines were awkward anymore; in contrast, he felt quite livid. The second strike was an ordinary skill of his called [Lunging Straight Thrust]. Seizing the chance before Feng Bujue lengthened the distance between them, he could use this skill to stab him.

Currently, Wild Trace Sword Shadow had finished his probe to Feng Bujue, and he could assure his mind now. In their recent close combat, as he had observed Feng Bujue's counterattacking moves, he assumed that Feng Bujue wasn't the sort of players who would develop themselves in Fighting Specialty. Although his escape from the Glorious Shadow Slash was worth a praise, he didn't have anything better than that. With this kind of speed, he couldn't dodge this strike, and the game would come to an end.

[The night is silent. It was merely to see the wind that sweeps off the cold shadow. Bloody image crosses the void. A strike that could determine victory and defeat has failed!]

"Such thing is possible?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow's skill had missed its target. His visage immediately changed as he saw Feng Bujue was speeding up, instantly lengthening the distance between them to dozens of meters. A faint scent of blood still permeated the air.

"Humph... not simple, indeed. This boy has something hidden..."

Wild Trace Sword Shadow smiled as his competitive attitude was raising.

[As facing a lost game, dead or alive, it just happens in a blink! Feng Bujue suddenly performed a strange skill. Just like he has shed his own mortal body and was reborn again, his agile body is gliding away like a lightning strike.]

BANG, BANG, BANG...

As he had activated his Body-Spirit Congregation Technique, Feng Bujue didn't want to run anymore. After he had made a certain distance with his opponent, he turned around then aimed his pistol. Within 10 seconds, he had finished a magazine of bullets.

"This sort of range attacks are useless." Wild Trace Sword Shadow smiled as he chased after Feng Bujue again.

In fact, he didn't have any passive skill that could help him resist those bullets. It was actually because he had some defensive items equipped on his body, including helmet, armor, and leg guard, which were all hidden. All the defensive attributes were refracted and graded at Excellent quality. A bullet from a pistol could hardly hurt him. Unless the opponent's shooting skill was extraordinary that he could hit the target at the same position for several times, or shoot him directly in his neck or eyes, his defense would never be broken.

Of course, if the opponent would use the Winchester and shoot him within the range of 10 meters, or used a rifle to shoot him from a far distance, it could cause him certain injuries. Unfortunately, Feng Bujue didn't have any of those items now, and he wasn't a player who specialized at Shooting Specialty either.

After he had reloaded his last gun magazine, Feng Bujue put the pistol away.

"Perfunctory Maintenance wasn't effective while the Lower Side Kick of a Brat can only be used on mobs. I've tried the Planned The

Victory From Thousand Miles Away, but I couldn't see anything..." Feng Bujue muttered in his mind, "the only skill that I could use now is the Body-Spirit Congregation Technique, but it's not suitable for long-term use..." Although he looked like he was madly running for his life, Feng Bujue always kept a clear mind to analyze the situation and his opponent. "This guy had used two active skills. The first one is a blink fused with extreme strength. I am 80% sure that it's granted from the title. Thus, the cooldown time can't be short. Although the second strike doesn't seem to have CD (cooldown time), it is just a strong strike, and I can dodge it."

Feng Bujue took the dagger from his bag and grasped it in his left hand while his right hand was clutching the wrench. "Thanks to Casey Jones' Mask, my Fighting Specialty has improved to D. Our game characters have the same level, and his Fighting Specialty would be D at most. In papers, my fighting ability and his are at the same level. So, I could dodge his murderous attack recently without using any skills..." When he came upon this thought, his opponent was approaching. "Now that I have activated the Body-Spirit Congregation Technique, my maximum speed and power should be more than his. Also, I have brought the Survival Value supplements, this battle... I think... I can play with him!"

[The mad sword continued to attack! Feng Bujue parries the strike like a furious wave! Yeah~ My oh my! The shadows of the two players are staggering. Strikes come and go.]

[Thus, just with one sword, chaos is opened. All those years of making efforts came once from the chest. Their Sword Qi and spiritual power are struggling. It's hard to tell who is going to win.]

After Wild Trace Sword Shadow had seen his opponent speeding up, he prepared himself. Feng Bujue's counterattack was in his estimation. At this moment, he didn't only try to attack the whole time, but he also protected himself by using some fast movements to oppress his opponent.

From the sensitive sense of a professional gamer who had many

experiences in fighting, Wild Trace Sword Shadow vaguely felt that Feng Bujue couldn't maintain his status for long. If he prolong the time of the battle, this guy would collapse.

[Facing a strong opponent, Feng Bujue ignores his injured body and continues to fight recklessly. The more he fights, the higher his spirit would be. My goodness.]

"My friend, yeah... do you want to join our union? I can introduce you." After a while of struggling, Wild Trace Sword Shadow could only defend himself.

As the saying goes, 'one inch shorter one inch riskier'. At this moment, Feng Bujue had swung his short weapons, a dagger and a wrench, as fast as lightning as his pace was also faster than his opponent's. He besieged Wild Trace Sword Shadow and attacked continuously.

Although the scene had showed that Feng Bujue was oppressing his opponent, but in fact, it was quite the contrary as he was the one who had gradually fallen into failure.

Engaging in this fight, the big gap between their fighting competences was revealed. Under such circumstances, even if Wild Trace Sword Shadow couldn't take the upper hand in speed and strength, with his profound experience and skills, he wouldn't lose this game. At the same time, Feng Bujue was draining his Physical Value and Survival Value in the battle he couldn't win.

"No need. Such a chap like you, I don't ever want to meet you again," answered Feng Bujue. Indeed, it could be considered a compliment.

"Ha, ha, ha... If you know you are going to lose, why are you struggling so much?" asked Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

Feng Bujue didn't answer him and continued to attack. It was unknown what his intentions were. He had already consumed one-third of Physical Value in just a short moment of the fight while his

Survival Value wasn’t better. Although his costume could reduce the effects of the [Bleeding] status, it couldn’t completely stop his Survival Value from declining. Since he had been injured and the Body-Spirit Congregation Technique had consumed 2% of his Survival Value for each five seconds, his Survival Valued had soon plunged down to under 30%.

Facing such a tremendous opponent like Wild Trace Sword Shadow, Feng Bujue absolutely didn’t dare to be careless to supply more blood when his Survival Value had reached under 10%. Because, at this moment, just one mistake could kill him right away. Thus, when his Survival Value had declined under 30%, he used the first bottle of the Survival Value Supplement.

"You’re just wasting your items."

The more Wild Trace Sword Shadow fought, the calmer he became. As he got used to Feng Bujue’s attack style, he talked more. "Frankly speaking, delaying here isn’t good for you as it only benefits me."

Feng Bujue said, "You are so frank though. Then, I’m not afraid to tell you bluntly..." He suddenly stopped his attack and jumped backwards out of the fighting range.

[Drawing the injured body, he knows that he won’t have a chance to take the victory. Although he’s unreconciled, he’s willy-nilly in this situation.]

[The ice-cold murderous intent is still there, but the wild attack like furious waves has been ceased. The situation right now is that the loser is panting hopelessly, while the other was standing still as condensed water.]

"You thought that delaying the fight would benefit you, it comes from your considerations towards the fighting aspect," Feng Bujue continued, "in fact, I hope that you would continue to defend and shouldn’t hurry to seek for victory because I need time to think about the answer for the [Hidden Quest]."

The trail of being calm and relaxed disappeared from Wild Trace Sword Shadow's face as it turned somber.

"Smile and see a thousand arms destroyed in the vast sea.

Plan to decide the fate of Earth and Heaven, releasing the karma.

No senses, no fear, not afraid of death and life.

Not Demon, not God, just a wandering crazy Ghost."

After Feng Bujue had read his poem, the system prompted. [[Hidden Quest], accomplished.]

[You've received a Spiritual Weapon designed for your own – The Death Poker.]

[Spiritual Weapon is locked permanently to a specific player, which can't be exchanged, trashed or damaged. This weapon will not occupy a slot in user's bag as user can create it by consuming 2% of the highest Spiritual Value. Attributes of this weapon will be increased along with user's level]

Feng Bujue put away the two weapons he was holding in both of his hands. His mind flickered, and the white halo instantly converged on his palm and soon turned into a deck of cards. At the same time, his Spiritual Value had been reduced by 1 point; now it was 147/150.

He quickly skimmed over the item's properties and dismissed his Body-Spirit Congregation Technique.

[Read a poem and gather the efficacious waves. Silhouette disappears, leaving the vast, imposing aura.]

[Feng Bujue's tenderly raises two fingers. There's a hidden spiritual aura on his fingers. No strike, no technique. No attack, no defenses. A moving light like a shooting star sparks, darting towards Wild Trace Sword Shadow.]

"Isn't lock range attack is..." Those last words was stuck inside Wild Trace Sword Shadow's throat as a poker card swiftly flew

pass his face, leaving a bleeding cut on his cheek.

"What the heck is that..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow's countenance changed all of a sudden. If he hadn't seen that the situation wasn't right and immediately cocked his head, that attack would have hit his eye.

"A card," answered Feng Bujue calmly.

"That is it... is that the power of the Spiritual Weapon?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow said, "Seems this [Hidden Quest] is worth trying..."

"Do you really think that I would give you time to compose your poem and only continue the fight after you get the spiritual weapon?" Feng Bujue said and darted another two cards. After the cards had been released from his hand, they were like living things, tearing the wind to make an incredible curve in the air as they flew towards Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

[Another two light attacks with a graceful momentum. Wild Trace Sword Shadow raises his sword to parry. The sword qi is as powerful as the wind howling. My oh my~]

[The sword moves while its qi is as bright as a rainbow. Torrential power wipes through the sky, while the two flying light is incoming.]

Wild Trace Sword Shadow's hand, which was holding the sword, was trembling since his sword was still shaking. "Odd movement trajectory. Extraordinary speed accompanies with such strength..." His mind was alertly screaming. His opponent had 54 cards. Although he could dodge one and use his sword to stop the other two, with this kind of situation, getting himself killed was just a matter of time.

"Good. Introduction should stop here. Next, I'm going to attack officially," said Feng Bujue.

[The situation changed in an instant. A rampant declaration

made Wild Trace Sword Shadow wear a visage of fear.]

"Tsk..." Having listened to the narrator, Wild Trace Sword Shadow didn’t feel convinced at all. Anyway, he couldn’t say anything since Feng Bujue had been in a difficult situation recently, but he didn’t show a streak of ‘fear’. At most, he had just ridiculed him a bit.

At this moment, Feng Bujue took out five cards at once, arranging them on his hand. "First, we are going to try Straight Flush."

[While Wild Trace Sword Shadow is still hesitating, Feng Bujue has struck out!]

Straight Flush: is a poker hand containing five cards of sequential rank, all of the same suit.

Chapter 103: Basic Thunderbolt Chapter (Urgent)

Basic Thunderbolt Chapter (Urgent)

[Name: The Death Poker]

[Type: Spiritual Weapon]

[Quality: Excellent]

[Attack power: ???]

[Attributes: Unknown]

[Special Effect #1: Infinite (one card will be generated every five minutes. This will only stop when 54 cards are fully generated).]

[Special Effect #2: Combination (attacking opponents by combining the same kind of suits will enhance the power of the attack).]

[Special Effect #3: Spiritual Hunt (spiritual weapon will always strike the target of the user's desire).]

[Equipment Conditions: Unlock Spiritual Specialty]

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

[Remarks: When Apocalypse turned Gambit into the Death Knight, a part of his powers had gained autonomy and betrayed its master, turning into an unknown energy wandering in the multiverse. One day, it met another powerful soul. It then turned itself into a deck of cards, becoming an intimidating loyal servant of that soul.]

No doubt the Spiritual Weapons were excellent. Along with the user's increasing level, the weapon's attributes would be changed and developed accordingly. There was also a chance of strengthening a mutant. As the unique weapons that only Spiritual Specialty could possess, players couldn't ask for them as they could

only meet this sort of weapon by chance. Such items couldn't be purchased from shops or the Box of Fear. Players could only gain them from some scenarios which had special plots or [Hidden Quests]. This was similar to the method of training to Specialties Grade S.

The Spiritual Weapons and the titles were very much alike as the system had customized them to suit the players' needs well. If the player's development tendency has been changed with time, the effects of their Spiritual Weapons would change accordingly. However, their shapes would remain, thus players had to reach at least level 30. When their fighting method and playing style were settled, they could receive this sort of weapons.

Anyhow, Feng Bujue and Wild Trace Sword Shadow weren't ordinary players. Talking about Wild Trace Sword Shadow, even when he had reached level 50, he would consistently use swords. So, it would be fine giving him a Spiritual Weapon in the shape of a sword. Of course, the fundamental condition was to complete his [Hidden Quest].

Regarding Feng Bujue, he was a versatile person as he could get through one or two levels of each Specialty. This deck of [Death Poker] he got was suitable for players who were good at a variety of Specialties, with its ever-changing effects. Feng Bujue was just at level 15; he could hardly imagine how powerful this item could be when fully operated.

[Critical! Critical! Critical! The murderous strike arrives. Instantly, the sky and earth darkens. Gods and devils are frightened.]

Feng Bujue darted his flush. The cards spun and interlaced in the air, and they almost reached Wild Trace Sword Shadow in an instant. The speed and strength were significantly increased.

[Wild Trace Sword Shadow strikes to take the upper hand, determinedly breaking the opponent's strike. My goodness! My

goodness!]

Wild Trace Sword Shadow gripped his sword with both of his hands, lunged and dashed forward to directly confront the five rays. He wanted to take advantage of the space and worm through the gaps between the rays to approach Feng Bujue and make this fight a close combat again.

[A short shout echoes. The sword moved forward with a vigorous aura shrouding his body to shield him from the attack. In just a blink of an eye, a sound suddenly tore off the air; wind and clouds torrentially drift in the sky. A flow of impure air current came and blinded people.]

[Shadows of light crossed, and Wild Trace Sword Shadow appears all of a sudden. Added with a trail of madness, his cold, arrogant eyes bring him more imposing manners as the brave swordsman crosses his heart to kill the strong opponent!]

Among the five incoming cards, the sword could only stop three, and he could only dodge one. As for the last one, it had passed three centimeters under Wild Trace Sword Shadow's left arm. A wound was cut open, and his blood streamed out almost five meters from it. However, this injury couldn't prevent his storming movements. Wild Trace Sword Shadow was still moving forward to reach Feng Bujue.

Feng Bujue was prepared as he understood that those five cards couldn't end this game. His opponent could definitely break the attack and try to approach him. Thus, he was ready.

Body-Spirit Congregation Technique was activated, and the wrench was tightly gripped in his hand. Feng Bujue's dynamic vision, speed, and outburst were all enhanced. Wild Trace Sword Shadow was also bleeding. Now, they had the same conditions. The only difference was, Wild Trace Sword Shadow had to come near the opponent; if not, he had no chance to win. On the other side, Feng Bujue was using his strength to wait at ease and count

the chances to attack his opponent.

[Sword qi impacted with spiritual power. Shadows stagger. Divine powers collide. The Earth shakes under the cliff, where bodies are hung.]

Feng Bujue wanted to use a single burst of strike to end the battle. Indeed, he got the chance that was about to slip away as his attack had almost reached the opponent's head. Unfortunately, Wild Trace Sword Shadow was wearing a helmet... Although he had chosen to hide his items, when he got hit, the shape of this invisible item had appeared in one second as it was performing the relative functions of a defensive item.

Since none of them could claim victory yet, although Feng Bujue wanted to make a certain distance between them, it wouldn't be easy anymore. Wild Trace Sword Shadow's sword was constantly moving, and his skills were like the wind. Apparently, he was now serious with this fight. The difference between a top professional gamer and an ordinary player who wasn't specialized in fighting like Feng Bujue now put the latter in a difficult situation again. Feng Bujue could hardly dodge the constant attacks from his opponent.

[Close combat. Heartless strikes. Ruthless technique. Blood is shedding, dripping on the earth, dying it into a place of scarlet.]

[The two are striking out continuously. Spirit power leads to hell. Sword shadow cuts the living path. During their combat, eventually, Wild Trace Sword Shadow gets the upper hand. The intimidating sword is slashing. and Feng Bujue's life is in danger. Suddenly...]

[The Earth and Sky are shivering. Rumbling thunder hangs upside down. Clouds break into pieces. The sky falls. In just a short while, purple thunder soars up the to the sky, opening the gate to hell. In darkness, a chilling aura is coming from a far distance.]

The surrounding had changed accordingly with the narration.

Since thunderbolts and inexplicable fireballs descended from the sky all of a sudden, the two of them had to stop fighting and stand aside. To Feng Bujue, it was an escape.

They then looked at the cliff from far away and observed a figure who was slowly walking towards them.

[In front of their eyes is an incredible scene. That's a figure that can frighten people, the deceased who has fallen into the unbroken world, a demon reborn from hell.]

This man looked sturdy and heroic with a prominent imposing manner. He got a waist-length black hair, except for the two small locks of gray hair that outlined his face. The man was wearing a black battle gown accompanied with a white satin traveler's clothing. A tiger skin shawl covered his shoulders. His black-and-red cape was flying in the wind behind his back. The weapon in his hand was a long-handled halberd, which was a combination between a spear and a lance as it had a blade on top to pierce through the opponents and another vertical blade aside.

With just a quick glance, Feng Bujue recognized that it was the 'The Sacred Halberd God's Sigh'. This divine weapon was cast from melting meteors. Needless to say, fact was that its owner was the Unrivalled God of War Plight.

No one knows why the narration had stopped since this man appeared.

"Cold wind was passing by my lapel, the matchless frigid route is ahead. Who would be willing to have a glass with me? Who could possibly hinder my path? My Halberd takes lives without returning any."

The man who had just arrived cited a poem. When he approached the two players, he immediately spoke up, "You don't belong in this place."

Feng Bujue started to feel nervous, he mused. "Where I am in the

world of Thunderbolt Fantasy... Why is Yan Guiren still here? But the narration seems to indicate that he has been reborn."

He didn't dare to say anything recklessly, but chose to speak in a manner of neither servile or overbearing. "After we can determine the winner, we will leave immediately."

Yan Guiren gave him a deep look, but didn't say anything. He turned around and talked to Wild Trace Sword Shadow. "What if I want you to leave now?"

"Harrumph... You need to ask the thing in my hand first—" He had finished, yet another poker card had been darted to him.

However, this time, Feng Bujue had flung the card unintentionally as it didn't cause any threat to the opponent. He just wanted to shut his opponent up.

"If you want to instantly get killed, it's your business. Don't talk nonsense. I don't want to give grudge to any NPCs in this world. If not, even if I had 10 lives, it wouldn't be enough to survive," said Feng Bujue.

"Feng Bujue, don't worry. I'm not your enemy. It's also the others' ideas..." said Yan Guiren.

"What?" Feng Bujue was dazed listening to him.

'Seal' and 'Mad' have the same pronunciation ('feng'– TL). He didn't know which name of his the man had just addressed. Anyway, in the previous scenario, Rainsford used to call his ID 'Unidentified Mental Disorder', and he also said that Satsuma Diehl had sent him his regard. This meant NPCs in the scenarios could see players' IDs at any time.

Now, the problem was, Yan Guiren's words seemed to imply something. What did he mean after all?

"What have you done..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow spoke with a doubtful look on his face. From what they had said, this uninvited guest was on the same side with his opponent? He couldn't help

but contemplate. "Has this lad accepted a quest that I haven't had? Impossible... I've been fighting with him for the whole time, and from the beginning, besides the main quest that asked to kill the other and the [Hidden Quest] that asked to create a poem to receive a Spiritual Weapon, if he had triggered other quests, I should have them too."

"I..." Feng Bujue was about to say 'I don't know anything', but all of a sudden, one second later, his eyes were filled with white halo. When he could pull himself together again, he was standing in his login space already.

"What does it mean? I was forced to teleport?" He immediately checked the scenario's calculation. Indeed, the contents of the calculation said [Scenario failed. You were killed by NPC. Losers in Killing Game can't receive rewards.]

Feng Bujue didn't say a word. He opened his social channel and found the ID [Wild Trace Sword Shadow], then sent him a friend request. Seconds later, the other accepted his request.

Feng Bujue instantly asked to start a conversation with him. When he was connected, he didn't start with the ceremonial greetings. "You won?"

Apparently, the other was dumbfounded. Several seconds later, he answered,"You were also forced to teleport?"

"True,"Feng Bujue said, "the system said that the NPC had killed me."

Wild Trace Sword Shadow said, "It's weird... me too." He seemed to have some thoughts when he spoke up. "Was the guy with a halberd a BOSS of magic class? And he had directly used some instant killing skill on us?"

"No, not that..." Feng Bujue said, "if he wanted to kill us, it would have taken him only three seconds..."

"You mean we have encountered some kind of BUG?" asked Wild

Trace Sword Shadow. He paused for a second then continued, "Ah! Hey, Feng-Ge, you had sent me a friend request just to ask this?"

"Is there anything else?"

"Ha, ha..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow laughed and said, "We can fight again to see who would win..."

Beep——Feng Bujue determinedly hung up the call.

This is a poem (rawly translated in this chapter) that Yan Guiren often cites whenever he appears in Thunderbolt Fantasy—a Japanese-Taiwanese glove puppetry television series. Visit the link for more information.

BUG: The word usually used when an intended game state is not achievable, due to an unforeseen issue in the game's code. i.e., you are unable to complete a level (or a boss doesn't spawn, etc.) due to an error in the code.

Chapter 104: Intermission (26)

Having seen both of the players turn into a white halo and teleported away, Yan Guiren's countenance slightly changed. All of a sudden, he turned around and saw a figure standing a few meters behind him, where there was not a single shadow just recently.

That man was wearing a black suit. He had a brown hair outline, and a handsome face with a pair of sharp eyes. A wild and imposing aura was emitted from his body.

"God of War from Hell, we meet again," said Yan Guiren.

"You shouldn't show yourself to them," said Simon.

"You've sent them away?" asked Yan Guiren.

Simon didn't answer him as if he only minded his own business. "Whether you have done that on purpose or without a purpose, if I find out again that you've intended to reveal anything that they shouldn't know... at that time, they'll not be the only ones who need to leave."

"Your true body's in a strange world that's even higher than the Heaven Realm." Yan Guiren turned away, avoiding the other's eyes. "You and them are the same, just projected images. So, do you really want to fight with me?"

"Stupid question." Simon was always arrogant and didn't respect anybody. "At least my projection is not weaker than the one who has borrowed the Sacred Demon Primeval Fetus to come here."

"Is it?" Yan Guiran wore an indifferent visage, then turned around with his halberd.

The two of them were in the state of mutual hostility. The air was tense between the Plight's God of War and the Hell's God of War.

"Muah, ha, ha, ha, calm down, you guys." A despicable laughter

intervened them as a man wearing a black suit appeared between them all of a sudden. White light flashed from Woody's glasses when he smiled. "Warrior Yan, please understand, we all have jobs to do."

After Yan Guiren had seen Woody, he didn't say anything further. He turned away and silently left, as though he didn't want to say even one more word to the other two.

After waiting for seconds until he left, Woody continued to smile. "Simon, you are the referee, you can't come here randomly just because you want to fight with the strong warriors --"

"It's you who let Feng Bu Jue enter this world even if he's still at such low level?" Simon interrupted, "Or, the 'system' you have set up has become more unlikely to control?"

"Oh, hey... ha, ha... It's like I'm wrong, huh," Woody answered, but it wasn't the answer people would expect to hear.

"You want the one you have chosen to get the Spiritual Ability faster than the one Vincent has bet on, don't you?" Simon didn't need Woody's answer either. He snorted coldly. "Harrumph, clever play with trivial matters."

"If you've seen it through, I don't need to explain anything." Woody shrugged. "Thanks for your trouble to come here."

"If I see you doing little tricks again, I will slaughter you just like the other trash." Simon had never been someone who liked to joke if he had said so.

"Mua, ha, ha, ha. Thanks for your mercy." Woody smiled. "Hey, yeah, the boy that you've appreciated, Valliant Ghost Devouring Heaven, he's now fighting against some hotshots in the Killing Game also. Although you are a referee and you didn't bet... muah, ha, ha... do you want to check it out?"

"No thanks." Simon glared at Woody and didn't turn his head. "Such level of fighting isn't even a cricket fight."

At the same time, in another scenario of Killing Game playing mode.

In a ruined city, a fierce battle had already started between the current strongest forces in Thriller Paradise.

This was a game of three versus three. One side included the three Gods of the Four Great Gods from The Immortals, namely, [Vishnu], [Brahma] and [Yama]. On the combat ranking list, they were ranked from #3 to #5 respectively.

The other side was consisted with players from Order Studio: #8 in the combat ranking list [Fearless Hero], #9 [Zen In Scary Dream] and the player who had topped the ranking list, [Valiant Ghost Devouring Heaven].

The three from The Immortals were at level 26. They were wearing the same uniform, which looked like military officer uniforms in deep blue and dark gray colors. The badge of ‘The Immortals’ was placed on the outer edge of their left arms. It had a design of a partial solar eclipse. The words ‘The Immortals’ were prominent in the front of the design.

Vishnu was a man who was a little bit over 20 years old with short hair, medium height, and proportional muscles. His appearance wasn’t just ordinary. His title was [9-faced Magic Armor].

Brahma looked some years older than the former. He got long hair that scattered behind his back, and a beard; his build looked much similar to Longao Min. His title was [Seize The Sun And Moon].

However, Yama was an ID of a female player with a slender body, who didn’t look much older than her teammates. Her blue hair draped on her forehead and neck, covering half of her face. A side of her face, which was not covered by the blue hair, was as beautiful as a jade, accompanied with tender facial features. Her title was [Punishment Rope].

From the Order's side, their badge had depicted a white balance weight scale over a blue sea background. Their uniform was just a white suit vest, and the players could dress themselves with whatever they liked. This white suit vest was quite special. Originally, the back of the vest had the word 'Justice' written in traditional Chinese characters. After the players had purchased this item, they could change the default writing once, which was limited to four words max. Moreover, this garment didn't occupy the 'upper body' slot, since it was considered just an 'accessory'. This was because it could only be 'draped over the shoulders', and players couldn't 'wear' it.

Of course, such costumes were expensive. This one cost 500,000 coins, which was beyond the prices of armor costumes. By the way, the consumption of this sort of garments was still high. First, the Order Union's members had equipped themselves with this suit vest after changing the word 'Justice' to 'Order' and made it their unique uniform. Next, there were many players who wanted to hurt their balls (apparently, they were all male players); they bought this item just for fun. Even though they were wearing their newbie costumes, they wanted to drape this kind of vest on and change the writing to something like 'Only Me-The Supremacy' leaving others half laughing and half crying.

Now, we are going back to the three players from Order Studio. Fearless Hero was wearing a white suit under his coat. He was a tall, outstanding-handsome guy with short hair. His title was [Spear Chivalry]. Although he was the first player who had reached level 20 in Closed Beta Stage, in the Open Beta stage, the Studio didn't give him quests to level up anymore. So, currently, his level and the other three were the same, which was level 26. And, another event that was worth mentioning was his rank on the combat ranking had declined from #6 to #8 within the first day of Open Beta.

Zen In Scary Dream was 25 years old with a medium build, not

fat, not thin and an honest face. He got a draping hairstyle, which was divided with the ratio of 3:7 on his head. His level was 21, coming along with the title [Stern-faced Killer]. He was one of the key professional gamers that Order Studio had sent to the game when the Open Beta was released. Martial World Studio had the well-known combination called ‘Saber Sword Smile’, so did the Order Studio, which people called ‘Born in Dream, Die in Intoxicant’. Zen In Scary Dream was one of them.

His level was an obvious evidence to show the intimidation of the Order Studio in gathering information. With the assistance from the triple crucial supports, namely, Items, Finance, and Information, top players from Order had just taken 24 hours in real time to catch up with that 48 hours of the Close Beta stage.

However, besides the suit vest that Union had provided, Zen In Scary Dream only had the default costume of the newbies. This gave others a feeling that this player was in a horrible financial shortage. At the same time, he had some unnecessary consumable goods (similar to the potato chips that Little Tan had bought, just to satisfy players’ needs virtually) in his hands, including a cigarette in his right hand and a beer in his left hand.

As you have read till this part, surely you got it clear that Zen In Scary Dream had three big interests: smoking, drinking and making his hair curly.

If you want evidence, there is a crooked son who wanted to do things like: Learning to be immortal, riding the crane to the heaven; turning stone to gold. Smoking, drinking, curly hair, nothing is better. ~

And now we finally talk about Valiant Ghost Devouring Heaven. He was the youngest superstar professional gamer since the beginning of Order Studio, a true innate fighting genius.

In this world, everybody can be good at anything, but none of them could have a chance to promote what they are good at. This

is a matter of luck. Taking Feng Bu Jue as an example, if he had been born at the time of the Republic of China, perhaps he could have mingled with the Ministry of Education or in the worst case, at least he could have been an editor for some newspaper. Then, he could have written something about holding grudges for a lifetime, delivering some stunning speeches that could make other speechless. If something happened, he could have criticized the whole bureaus or other people just like they were his grandsons. Furthermore, he wouldn't have been worrying about his clothing or feeding himself. Moreover, he would definitely be admired by some female artists, and he could have married to two of them. The first wife should be a typical lady-like, and the other was one of his student, someone who was 10 years younger than him. Apparently, these are just hypotheses. Unfortunately, Feng Bu Jue was born at the time of a flawless legal system and institutions, a harmonizing society, such an outstanding era of effective spiritual civilization construction. Thus, he could only write some novels to earn a living from loyalties.

With the same theory applied on Valiant Ghost Devouring Heaven, it would have happened the same. If he had been born in a world of swordsmanship and magic, Taoist technique or airbending, he would absolutely become a peerless hotshot with an unimaginable future. Too bad, he was born on Earth in an era of peace.

Thus, slashing or killing somebody should be done in a virtual game.

Currently, Valiant Ghost was at level 22. Although he had been forced to take a day off on the second night of Close Beta and the server had been closed the next morning, he didn't lose much time on playing the game.

When the Open Beta was released, he was at level 15. Since it was almost twenty hours in real time, his level right now was considered reasonable. In fact, as a professional gamer, a star of

Order, the leveling up of Valiant Ghost could be considered ‘Passive Playing’. Compared to such players like Zen In Scary Dream, who had been at level 1 when Open Beta was released and was now at level 21, Valiant Ghost, at level 22, seemed to be lacking.

However, even though his level was four levels lower than the other’s, Valiant Ghost had been ranked #1 on the combat ranking list, and he had been there for quite a long time. This spoke up many things.

In the game, he had modified his hairstyle to a long flame-red colored hair. Under the white suit vest was a set of black camouflage costume covering a slim and not too tall body. His build and that of other teenagers who weren’t 20 years old yet weren’t much different.

Anyhow, the system had judged him, on the basis of pure fighting capacity, as the strongest player. Moreover, he got a title that people would hardly forget just at the first glance: [The Fear Disseminator]

From a short story called ‘The Taoist Priest of Lao-shan’. Check the link for more information.

Mingou: Republic of China (1912-1949), used instead of reign name by the nationalist government, then by Taiwan.

Chapter 105: Intermission (27)

Among the six of them, five were flying and dashing back and forth in between the ruins for more than 10 minutes. The combat power of Fearless Hero and Zen In Scary Dream were originally in bad conditions, moreover, they were fighting two-on-three. Naturally, they were falling into a disadvantaged situation.

At the same time, Valiant Ghost was sitting far from them and watching the game just like nothing there was related to him.

This wasn't an appointed match as it was a random arrangement. Since the powers of the two teams were similar, they had encountered each other in this game.

Although Valiant Ghost stayed still, the other three from The Immortals didn't dare to look down on him. This was also the first time that they had met this teenager, who had topped the ranking list. As they hadn't known the details, they couldn't eliminate the case wherein that teenager could use some skills and ambush them from the side. Thus, the three of them were still keeping an eye on the situation over there.

Anyway, the three of them didn't intend to attack Valiant Ghost before they could finish the battle here. In case that brat didn't get along well with his teammates, and he would just sit there and watch the fun, they would just let him watch then. Currently, they were taking the upper hand; after they had killed the other two players, the game would turn into a match of three-on-one. By then, no matter how strong he was, facing the three strong warriors on the combat ranking list besieging, it would be unlikely for him to withstand them.

"Hah ~~~" Valiant Ghost yawned, looking at the battle that was ever-changing afar from him. He muttered, "So boring~~~."

At this moment, Yama had caught a flaw of Fearless Hero—he treated this as a 'boring' battle.

According to Yama’s title, which was [Punishment Rope], her weapon should be a long whip. At this moment, Yama flashed and flung her whip like a slithering snake. As Fearless Hero had just directly received a strike from Vishnu, he has yet to regain his balance, as such, the long whip had easily arrived and coiled his neck.

Yama’s wrist flickered and pulled, wanting to take this chance to break her opponent’s neck.

In just a blink, Zen In Scary Dream had arrived and slashed her whip. A force came out and blocked Yama’s force that was sent along the whip. Fearless Hero seized the chance and swayed, getting rid of the coil on his neck in the process.

In that short fragment of time, people could witness the tremendous fighting ability of Zen In Scary Dream. Seeing Fearless Hero was in danger, he didn’t hesitate to speed up and slash a strike that forced Brahma to back off, letting him turn around to rescue his teammate. As Brahma was the one who had the slowest pace among The Immortals’ group of three, Zen In Scary Dream just needed to throw one strike at him to seize the time and walk away.

"Tut!" Fearless Hero rubbed his neck and felt like it was burning. He couldn’t help yelling, "Little devil!" He headed to Valiant Ghost and shouted, "Until when do you want to continue on watching this funny game?"

"Yeah, if you can’t hold it anymore, just say it, no need to ask me until when I will stop watching you guys playing. Ahh~" Valiant Ghost got up lazily. "Your jobs here (this refers to the jobs Order Studio has assigned their workers) are to seize the time and improve your Fighting Specialty, and also to gain Skill Value through fighting," he started to stretch his neck, "even if you got killed, it wouldn't affect this. That’s why I didn’t move to let you accomplish your tasks."

Fearless Hero and Zen In Scary Dream had jumped off from the battle range and came next to Valiant Ghost. Seeing that the brat had finally moved up, the other three from The Immortals pulled themselves together and prepared to fight against the peerless warrior.

The reason why they had been afraid of Valiant Ghost Devouring Heaven, even when they had met just once, was because of another player, the one who was ranked second on the combat ranking list, [Shiva]. As he was the strongest among the Four Great Gods of The Immortals, he had used the ID which represented the ‘God of Destruction’; he was also the leader of The Immortals Union. If they played one-on-one, among Vishnu, Brahma, and Yama, none of them could defeat him even once.

When the members of The Immortals had seen the ranking lists at the Mall for the first time, they got stunned. A brat who wasn’t on the highest levels list could be placed ahead of their leader on the combat ranking list. Perhaps they believed that this boy had used Auto or had some supernatural powers.

"Little Devil, do you mean that if you take an action, your teammates wouldn’t need to move?" Vishnu asked.

"In fact, if Uncle Fearless didn’t drag our fighting competence down, perhaps I don’t need to move, but we will still win." Valiant Ghost, in reality, was a teenager who could blend in and get along well with other people. However, once he had entered the game, he would become a brat who somewhat got mental problems.

"What did you say!" Fearless Hero jumped indignantly.

He had soon felt irritated with this Valiant Ghost Devouring Heaven kid. Back in Close Beta Version, after he had reached max level, he had more time to play deliberately. Then, he had queued to play a three to six players melee. When he had entered the scenario, he met three other players from the same Studio, and two of them were the junior workers in his team. He immediately

decided that everybody would help each other to upgrade their Specialties and eventually let him win the game. No one ever thought that this Valiant Ghost brat would mockingly declare that he wanted to go against the three of them and ask them to all jump in at once. At that time, Valiant Ghost was at level 15, thus his seniors wanted to give him a lesson, which led to a tragedy later. Of course, he had a grudge, but it was momentary. Fearless Hero wouldn't hold a grudge towards the teenager just because of a game he had lost; anyway, he thought this brat was a little bit annoying. Unexpectedly, at the first night of the Open Beta, he was assigned to the same team with Valiant Ghost Devouring Heaven and Zen In Scary Dream to play the Killing Game on three versus three and train their specialties for the whole night... At this moment, Valiant Ghost had enumerated his shortcomings in front of their biggest competitors, The Immortals; even if he were a Buddha, he couldn't press down his rage.

"A... Don't be sulky. It's just child's talk." Zen In Scary Dream consoled him with a moderate tone as his face was like that of a dreamy senile man. This expression was totally opposite to his agile and skillful fighting style. "Don't look at me as who I am now, when I was young, I was much like him..." He took out the liquor bottle, gulped half of it, hiccupped and said, "I was young and wild like him..."

"What is 'who I am now'! You think you are very good now?! Smoking, drinking and curly hair?!?" Fearless Hero shouted, "And, you're only a few years older than him! You're still very young!"

"Ha, ha... Alright, I'm up now. We should solve this quickly." Valiant Ghost cracked his knuckles and walked forward. "Tomorrow, I will talk to the manager. From now on, no matter what kind of playing modes I'm going to play, teaming up with me will cause you guys to become very tired though."

Seeing the opponent walking forward alone, Brahma sneered, "Hey, kiddo, are you too naive to think that you could finish the

three of us alone?"

"Good point. Even our leader couldn’t do that. What do you think, Yama?" Vishnu turned and asked her.

"Harrumph… Go die." Yama snorted coldly.

However, the complexion that Valiant Ghost was wearing was somehow too leisured and it was almost lazy.

"I don’t care what you guys think." He didn’t even take out any weapons; he just stretched one of his arms and gestured a ‘please’. "Don’t waste my time, all of you come together!"

Chapter 106: The Black-and-White Demon Domain (1)

The so-called ‘Reality’ is perhaps just a kind of illusion someone had cast on us that we can’t control.

…

[Feng Bujue, level 15]

[Please select the playing mode you want to join.]

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

[Confirmed. Generating scenario…]

[Loading… Please wait…]

"Welcome to Thriller Paradise," a young female voice greeted him this time.

Since playing the previous one-on-one Killing Game mode didn’t take much time, the Multiplayer scenario that Little Tan and others were playing hadn’t finished yet. Feng Bujue then queued to play Single-player Survival Mode again. This time, he had selected the new mode available for players at level 15 and above, which was the Single-player Survival Mode level ‘Nightmare’.

[Loading completed. You are now entering Single-player Survival Mode (Nightmare).]

[This mode offers an explanation of the plot. There are chances of Side/[Hidden Quests], together with special Worldview.]

[Rewards for completing the scenario: Two random Jigsaw Puzzle pieces.]

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

A very typical road had appeared in front of Feng Bujue’s eyes,

bordered by external walls of houses. The sky was quite hazy. There were no skyscrapers as the tallest buildings only had around six or seven stories. From the first glance, this seemed to be a small town.

It was worth mentioning that the CG opening scene this time was totally in black-and-white.

The system's voice sounded.

[This is a regular evening, and you are walking home.]

[The small town where you were living had recently encountered a big storm. Your own place was seriously damaged, and almost all the other surrounding houses have collapsed.]

[Although you were safe and sound, you needed to find another place for shelter.]

[Temporarily, you are arranged to stay in a vacant room in a small town, which is situated in an abandoned row house in 3-chōme.]

[In legends, there are ghosts around that town, so no one dares to come closer. However, after the big storm, you and two other families, who had lost their houses in the severe storm, had to stay there and become neighbors.]

The short introduction of the scenario ended there. Feng Bujue could now move again. It almost happened at the same time as Feng Bujue heard the system prompting: "Main Quest has been triggered."

He opened the menu to see the contents of the main quest. This was actually an extremely simple quest with only two words [Go home].

"Oh, it's a haunted scenario eh..." Feng Bujue muttered, "No time restriction. This 'Nightmare' level scenario doesn't seem to be as rushing as the Saw scenario."

He started to check his pockets to see if he could find any map or ID. Feng Bujue was searching his pockets while observing the surroundings. It was weird that after the introduction was over, this world still remained in black-and-white, just like he got color blindness. Moreover, he faintly heard some low noises. The sound was too light and low; he didn't know where it came from. Whenever he concentrated on listening to it, the cracking noise disappeared. When he loosened his mind, it echoed again.

Dozens of seconds later, Feng Bujue had finished searching all of his pockets and only found a bunch of keys in the right pocket of his trousers, which had three pieces.

[Name: The Three Keys]

[Type: Related to the plot]

[Quality: Normal]

[Functions: Unlock doors]

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

[Remarks: Find the corresponding door locks to use the keys.]

Feng Bujue picked the keys and brought them close to his eyes to observe. From the appearance of the keys, they all looked pretty normal, and according to the shapes of the cuts and shoulders, the matching locks wouldn't be too complicated.

"Assuming that one of them is the house's key, what about the other two..." Feng Bujue contemplated, "From the appearance of the electricity pole and trash bin, this should be in the 20th century... perhaps car keys shouldn't be the folded or electric style at this time. I guess they should be the same type with these keys."

He came to the crossing and looked at both sides. "There's no parking lot near here. So, even if one of these three keys is the car key, that car isn't parked near here."

He scratched his head. "Seems the information isn't enough...

Am I a player in this scenario or I’m playing the ‘I’ here... If I’m the latter, will ‘my’ identity affect the plot? What will happen when I got ‘home’?"

With his current situation, these matters were inseparable. Feng Bujue decided to follow the Main Quest first; since it was the ‘Nightmare’ scenario, although everything looked calm, it could trigger the instant death if he made a wrong move. Even though there was no time restriction, it wasn’t safe to wander around this small town.

"Anyhow... although it said something about ‘an abandoned row house in 3-chōme, which seems to be an address, where is 3-chōme?" Of course, Feng Bujue didn’t know the routes in this small town. Even if he knew the address, it would be useless.

"If ‘I’m on my way going home’... my initial direction will be..." Feng Bujue turned around and looked at the other direction. Perhaps it would be a Y-shaped cross. "Yeah, I’m going to find a map or someone to ask." He didn’t want to use up his luck in choosing between the two turns. Needless to tell the reason why.

When he had just come to this idea, someone slowly approached him. It was a woman who had long black hair, wearing a coat accompanied by a pair of trousers, scarf and even a face mask to hide the lower part of her face. Since Feng Bujue had been standing on this road, this was the first pedestrian he had ever seen here. By the way, this was just a ‘small town’, so it was understandable why there weren’t many people.

"Excuse me, may I ask--" Feng Bujue came to her in an attempt to ask for the way.

It turned out the woman had interrupted him just when he had gone half of his way. "Am I pretty?"

"Eh? What?" Feng Bujue immediately felt something was wrong. He instinctively thrust his hand into his bag.

"Am I pretty?" The woman turned to him and asked again. However, her face was hidden behind the face mask, and there was a thick scarf wrapped around her neck. Basically, it wasn't exposed for people to see.

"Beautiful!" Feng Bujue could react now. The one standing in front of him now was possibly the legendary... Having heard him said that, Kuchisake-Onna immediately took off her face mask, revealing her whole face. Both corners of her mouth were cut terribly, just like they were torn apart, and the cuts almost reached her ears.

"Am I prettier this way?" asked the woman again.

Feng Bujue suddenly felt lucky that he didn't cosplay himself to the perfect appearance of the Joker. If not, now he would have been a perfect match with this sister. Looking at the monster who could scare children until they cry, Feng Bujue opened his eyes wider and earnestly said, "Yeah! Stunning!" At the same time, he was gripping the wrench tightly, ready to strike at any moment as he muttered in his head, "This bigmouth, I've already given you two compliments. If you dare to take out the sickles, don't blame me for giving you the second plastic surgery!"

Seconds later, Kuchisake–Onna spoke up again, "What did you want to ask me?"

Feng Bujue was hesitating whether he should continue asking her or not. Who would be willing to give their address to a monster! However, he came to his sense again that he didn't actually live here, so he asked, "Would you please show me the way to 3-chōme?"

"That way. Turn left. When you reach a cross, make a left turn and then go straight ahead." Kuchisake-Onna pointed at the Y-shaped cross. After she was done, she put the mask on again, fixed her scarf and left.

Feng Bujue didn't have the intention to follow her and say

thanks. Seeing that the woman had disappeared in his sight, he sighed and loosened his grip on the wrench. "Damn it! I've met a monster even when I haven't been home yet... When I come home, it will be lovely to enjoy a bunch of ghosts there."

Although he had such thoughts, playing such a thriller game, he obviously knew there should be some monsters or ghosts in the house. Feng Bujue immediately took the way Kuchisake-Onna had shown him.

The sky became darker. Adding to the scene in black and white down there, it produced a very bizarre atmosphere. If there were another player standing alone on this empty street, he would instantly have goosebumps.

A burst of cold wind swept over. Feng Bujue adjusted his coat to cover himself better. At this moment, a silver lightning suddenly struck across the dark sky, lighting it up for a short moment. Seconds later, the thunder came along. Besides the wind, it seemed it was about to rain.

When Feng Bujue lifted his head to look up, he accidentally saw a strange thing at a high place.

On an electrical wire, right at the corner of the street that the light couldn't reach, stood a human-shaped creature, crouching and sitting there. When the lightning lit up this black-and-white world, Feng Bujue finally saw its appearance. That monster looked like an old woman wearing a white kimono. Her hair was tied up into a round bun, and her face was filled with wrinkles. The monster's eyes were bulging from their sockets. She had a dark skin covered in pimples and wrinkled hands with fingers stretching out like ghastly claws.

The lightning was over, and that figure hid itself again into the darkness. Feng Bujue couldn't see it clearly, however, he wasn't interested in coming closer to check what kind of monster it was. Anyway, unless it jumped over here, Feng Bujue would act like he

didn’t catch a glimpse of it at all.

Feng Bujue cocked his head and continued walking forward, speeding up his pace as fast as if he was running away. He hadn’t met anyone else along the whole way. When he reached the 3-chōme’s nameplate, he stopped.

Rain started to shower right at this moment.

This rain was as heavy as if someone was pouring buckets of water onto Feng Bujue’s body. He then quickly found his destination, checked the name of the road and looked at the house to see the three plain rooms connected to each other. This should be it.

Feng Bujue seized the time and ran to the porch. He wiped the lock of wet hair in front of his forehead and took out the key.

According to the plot, this house hosted three families, so he got two neighbors. As Feng Bujue didn’t know which was his room, he had to check each of them out.

He didn’t know if he was lucky or not, but his first attempt with the first key at the first door had succeeded. Feng Bujue slid open the wooden door. The room was a space filled with darkness with a special smell of deadwood.

Feng Bujue groped for the switch at the area near the door. After he clicking it, the light in the room was turned on.

Chōme = [Japanese addressing system] Municipality is divided first into town (chō or machi) and then into city districts (chōme). A row house (Nagaya, means "tenement house") is an architecture term in ancient Japan, referring to a house with a long ridge. Also, indicates a house with a number of residences connected under a single ridge-pole. They are houses with residences packed side-by-side, and often sharing the same walls.

Kuchisake-Onna: Kuchisake-onna ("slit-mouthed woman") is a figure appearing in Japanese ghost stories, possibly dating back to

the Edo period. She is a woman who was mutilated by her husband, and returns as a malicious spirit. When rumors of alleged sightings began spreading in 1979 around the Nagasaki Prefecture, it spread throughout Japan and caused panic in many towns. There are even reports of schools allowing children to go home only in groups, escorted by teachers for safety, and of police increasing their patrols. Recent sightings include many reports in South Korea in 2004 about a woman wearing a red mask, who was frequently seen chasing children, and in October 2007, a coroner found some old records from the late 1970s about a woman who was chasing little children. She was then hit by a car, and died shortly after. Her mouth was ripped from ear to ear.

Although some stories describe her as a former patient of a mental asylum, a more common story describes that in the Heian period, her husband found out that she was cheating on him with another samurai. He used a sword to cut her mouth from ear to ear and asked, "Who will think you are beautiful now?"

3-8: Chinese way to refer International Women's Day. This is extended to refer to women in a derogatory sense, most commonly used against women who appear crazy or maliciously gossiping.

Chapter 107: The Black-and-White Demon Domain (2)

"This room only has four bare walls... it is~" Feng Bujue entered the room.

The room was shabby with wooden frames and wooden pillars. Cracks appeared here and there around the room, while some spots of cement filler made the room look like it had been repaired recently. There was only one window around one meter wide in the room, and it wasn't a glass one. A rough, simple crossbar was installed above the window to hang the curtains. If the wind blowed into the room from outside, the rain would surely enter the room through the outer wooden grille.

The room was divided into two spaces, separated by a door frame that didn't have a door. The first room where he was now could be considered the living room, which was around 10 square meters. The floor was also made from wood; a cupboard at chest-length stood against a wall. Stood amidst the room was a small, round and short table, with three pieces of tatami (1) placed next to it.

The ceiling was quite low; a wire was installed in the middle of the ceiling to power up a light bulb, which was illuminating now.

Feng Bujue went to explore the next room. This room was even smaller than the 'living room' as a set of mattresses placed on the ground had occupied half of the space. There was a closet near the door, and this room didn't have a light bulb. In other words, the one who stayed here had to come to the living room, switch off the light and then grope in the dark to get back to this room and lay down on the mattress to sleep.

Apparently, there was nothing else in the room, and Feng Bujue needn't be afraid of touching or tripping over anything while walking in the dark.

"Too arrogant~" Feng Bujue closed the main door and talked to himself, "Only provide power, no water... shared toilets." When he was still outside the room, he had noticed a small booth that looked like a public telephone booth in the yard of this house. It should be a simple toilet though.

"Current Quest, accomplished. Main Quest, updated."

He hadn’t been sitting long enough to warm his ass up and the system’s notification prompted. Feng Bujue opened his menu to see a check mark placed next to the Quest [Go home]. At the same time, the newly updated quest said [Wait in the room until dawn.]

"What?" Feng Bujue felt irritated. "I have to wait the whole night long?"

At this moment, the rain outside had become heavier with more furious thunders reverberating. Although he had pulled the curtain, gusts of strong wind still crept into the room through the wooden grille. Some shadows were slightly moving outside. Looking at them through the curtain, he didn’t know whether they were the shadows of trees and branches dancing in the wind or something was wandering outside... Although his room had power supply, the only thing that used power in this room was the lightbulb. Not to mention a TV, it didn’t even have a radio. Even if Feng Bujue weren't being tortured by his fear, his boredom would persecute him..."I’ve thought that Nightmare difficulty level would require extremely hard fighting competence..." Feng Bujue came to the cupboard in the living room. "Turns out it has such settings..." He pulled the drawer and saw a vacuum flask, two cups, and one teapot. All were presented on a round wooden tray.

Since everything here was still in black-and-white, Feng Bujue couldn't distinguish the colors of these items. He tried to lift up the items and discovered that the thermos bottle was still full. So, he took them out and put them on the low table.

Then, he continued to search the cupboard and found a small

round box of tea, which was labeled with the word ‘Tea’. There was no other information like name, brand or production date.

"Hm... Although they said that this place had encountered a big disaster and people have to find temporary shelter, but can they survive with these things..." Feng Bujue said, "No water to drink. If I want to pee, I need to go out. If I want to bath, I have to go to the public bathing house. It doesn’t even have bowls and chopsticks... By the way, even if I can have meals in this house, I have no way to wash the dishes." He used the hot water in the thermos bottle to rinse the cups and the teapot, then opened the box of tea and put some tea into the pot, making himself an unknown drink. Afterwards, he poured himself a cup of it.

Since players couldn't change their costumes in the Clothing Tab when they were in the scenarios, or could take them off, Feng Bujue could only try to squeeze water out of his costumes and continue to wear the wet clothes, waiting until they could dry themselves up.

At this moment, he had made a pot of tea. Holding the cup in his hands, whatever it was, it could ease the coldness on his body a little bit.

"Limited information and clues. Moreover, there are so many Death FLAGs that could make an instant kill. This way, they could conveniently intensify the degree of terror in the game... This has set the tone for a scenario at the Nightmare Difficulty level." Feng Bujue thought, "Some inadvertent choice could bring many disasters pouring on my head." He seemed to understand something while recalling what had just happened. "If I said something wrong or showed that I was in fear, I’m afraid Kuchisake-Onna would kill me instantly. The same thing would occur for the monster sitting on the pole..."

He lifted his head and looked at the window. The rain was still pounding hard outside. "Looks like I don’t have any time or space restrictions. But if I want to ignore the main quest and search

outside, I would possibly trigger some Death FLAG out there. Generally, in this scenario’s worldview, one should have powerful Spiritual Fighting ability to have a certain degree of freedom... If not, nothing could be ensured..."

He took a sip of hot tea then continued to mutter, "Behave and work on the main clues... at most, I would get constantly scared, but in terms of fighting, I wouldn't fall into an impasse." He put the cup down. "However, it’s too boring. Do they really want me to sleep in the scenario? And, there isn’t a single piece of newspaper in this room..."

"Ah——"

Suddenly, a bizarre sound arose.

"Wuu—— hmm—— "

Right after that, two other long sounds echoed, pretty similar to an old hag’s voice.

The noise came through the wall, which was also his neighbor’s room.

"What do you want to play..." Feng Bujue turned his face to that direction and said, "Doing a Shaman dance when it’s raining heavily out there?"

Feng Bujue thought this situation should be a part of the main clue, so he needed to make some reaction.

"Hello—— you over there, are you alright?" Feng Bujue yelled at the wall.

Then that noise muted.

"What the... hung up?" Feng Bujue was sitting cross-legged on the ground; having heard nothing from the other side, he then started to move on all fours. He tried his best to eliminate the noise while silently moving towards the wall. Then, he stuck his ear to the wall and eavesdropped.

Squeak——

There came the squeak from the door being pushed open then the walking steps. Seemed the one living next door had come out of the room.

"Is it going to knock on my door?" Feng Bujue moved to his door, but all that he could hear was the grumbling noise of the heavy rain and gusts of wind outside. He had been waiting there for a while, but the other party didn’t knock on his door. Actually, he didn’t even hear anyone approaching his door.

As Feng Bujue wasn’t feeling threatened at all, he decided to open the door and see if something had happened to his neighbor. He got up, one hand slowly pulled the doorknob, while the other was holding tight on the wrench. He slowly pushed open the door and peeked from the small slit behind his door...

Tatami: A tatami is a type of mat used as a flooring material in traditional Japanese-style rooms. Traditionally made using rice straw to form the core, the cores of contemporary tatami are sometimes composed of compressed wood chip boards or polystyrene foam. With a covering of woven soft rush (igusa) straw, tatami are made in standard sizes, with the length exactly twice the width, an aspect ratio of 2:1. Usually, on the long sides, they have edging (heri) of brocade or plain cloth, although some tatami have no edging

Chapter 108: The Black-and-White Demon Domain (3)

Half of a senile, ashen face appeared behind the slit of the door. The bloodshot eyes of an old woman, which had been turned into black hue in this world of black-and-white, were staring at Feng Bujue.

At this moment, the door had not been fully opened yet. Feng Bujue had two options. One, determinedly pull open the door and greet her with the wrench; second, take a look, wait for a moment and then think about it again...

"Did I disturb you?" the other spoke up.

Feng Bujue didn’t answer her question directly but tried to probe. "I’m sorry, are you alright? I heard someone screaming."

"My old illness. If I did disturb you, I’m very sorry for that."

"Nothing. No problem. It was me who didn’t get the situation. I'm sorry," answered Feng Bujue.

Having heard that, the old woman looked at Feng Bujue one more time before she turned around and slowly walked back to her room.

Feng Bujue closed the door and muttered, "Is she a human or a monster..." He headed to the place matted with tatami. "If she is human, she must have a very serious rheumatism. If she is a monster..." He sat cross-legged, took the teapot and gave himself another mouthful of tea. "Since I’ve entered this scenario, I haven’t met any normal people. All are monsters."

Squeak—— squeak—— another kind of noise echoed above his head.

"Now what?" Feng Bujue faced up to see the cross beam under the ceiling. The noise came from there.

All of a sudden, the bulb over his head flashed twice, and one second later, the wire connected to it broke apart, resulting in a blackout. Bang~ it fell broken on the floor.

The room instantly became a space of darkness. At the same time, lightning struck outside through the window and the curtain, leaving a strange shadow on the floor.

Two seconds later, another source of light lit up.

Feng Bujue was calm. He took out his flashlight, switched it on and shone it directly to the ceiling while mumbling to himself, "Please tell me it is a rat..."

Unfortunately, it wasn't a rat.

It wasn't more than seconds since the light had been off and Feng Bujue had turned his flashlight on; he now discovered that the thing hanging under the beam wasn't a bulb anymore—it was a corpse.

That was a female corpse dressed like a housewife. She looked young and not more than 30 years old. The corpse had a twisted face with bulging eyes and open mouth. There was a dab of drool at the corner of her mouth.

The dead body was facing Feng Bujue just like she was watching him from above. Under such ambiance, it wasn't a surprise if this female corpse suddenly attacked Feng Bujue.

But what happened next had exceeded his expectations again.

Abruptly, he lost control of his body and returned to the state when he was watching the CG of the plot introduction. The scenes in front of his eyes started to change.

Next, the shabby room in Feng Bujue's eyes turned into a foggy street, and he was standing on the footpath.

Even stranger, the system's narration played again.

[It's an afternoon in November. You alone are going to visit a

friend living in the town.]

"What kind of situation is this? Playing the plot introduction again?" It was the first time Feng Bujue had ever encountered this situation. However, he was still very sincere and listened to every word from the system.

[One hour ago, the sky was still clear and the sunlight was shining everywhere. There was no drifting cloud in the sky. However, a fog came without any prior indications. You were enveloped in the dark. Fear was twirling around you. Your will was about to break as you madly ran away from a non-existent threat. Eventually, you got lost in the fog.]

[It's now a chaos in your mind as your memory becomes unclear. You don't know exactly whether everything around you is real or they are just your nonsense imaginations... You don't even know if you can arrive where you intended to visit.]

After this narration was over, Feng Bujue could move again. Moreover, he received a new Quest.

"Main Quest has been triggered."

"Find your friend's address and go there."

"No way... two Main Quests?" Feng Bujue actually saw another Main Quest appearing in his menu. The one which read [Stay in the room until dawn] was still there without a checkmark, and now, there was another quest that appeared below it.

"Yeah... what does that corpse mean? Why was I brought here? So I have to play many characters in this scenario?" Feng Bujue mused, "Is it... I'm still in that room, and this is just like one of those flashbacks before death?"

The plot of the Nightmare Mode was becoming more and more bizarre. The Main Quest only had one line to say what the player had to do, but it didn't reveal any information related to the final purpose of the scenario. At this moment, Feng Bujue had no clues

about the plot, and he could only let his nose to be led.

The dense fog suddenly surged and slowly hovered around him. There was no wind. It was just like the fog had its own will to wander around.

Just like he had done before, Feng Bujue checked his body to see if he could find any items related to the plot. Turns out the keys had disappeared, and now he had a piece of paper in his shirt pocket.

He took it out. The paper read ‘No. 4-5, Rokubancho’.

"F*ck that... Not again!" said Feng Bujue.

This time, there were still shadows of people near him. In the dense fog, those shadows appeared and disappeared, vanished and reappeared... This meant he wasn’t alone here. Feng Bujue could even hear their footsteps. It seemed like they were just walking around him, maintaining a certain distance. No one had ever come close to him.

Clatter, clatter, clatter... Those annoying sounds were still light and far away. It was vague. If he intentionally listened to it, it would disappear.

Feng Bujue strode, carefully moving forward to get through the darkness that could suffocate people. There were vehicles running randomly on the road. With his current vision, those vehicles were running slowly in the small town. They were like a herd of giant monsters moving slowly. Those hazy shadows came from far to near, suddenly came, suddenly went.

Although he was submerging in this dark and eccentric atmosphere, Feng Bujue didn’t sink into it. He was still very alert to observe and analyze the surroundings.

The cold and humid air flooded this sea of darkness. Even the random light of some vehicles that swept over him couldn't light up the space much. Feng Bujue tried to use his flashlight, but it

couldn’t penetrate the dense fog in front of his eyes. His vision now was less than three meters.

He couldn’t even see the road, let alone find a strange address in a bizarre small town.

After walking for a while, he saw a streetlight pole not far from him. The pole was rigid, jutted to the sky, releasing a dim, weak sphere of light. Feng Bujue fumbled along the parapet on the street side and quickly run towards it.

There was a bus stop next to the pole. Feng Bujue strode to that place to see if it had the town map or something like that.

The result surprised him. It was a map indeed.

Soon, Feng Bujue found the location of this bus station and the location of Rokubancho. According to the map ratio, the route should be around two kilometers. With his walking speed, it would take him 20 minutes max to reach there.

When the route was clear, it was much easier. Feng Bujue had a good memory; if he had read the map, he wouldn’t get lost. To prevent any unexpected events, he even remembered the names of all the streets near his route. Then, he departed.

Several minutes later, he remembered something else. If he used [Plant Victory From A Thousand Miles Away] now, what would he see?

From the current situation, perhaps this scenario didn’t have a final BOSS since it had been formed by different types of monsters. At the same time, the plot was very twisted, odd and confusing. Anyway, all of this was caused by individuals. For instance, evil spirit monsters could create illusions. If he used the skill, perhaps he could have some more clues to make a significant development.

Moreover, this skill wouldn’t consume anything. He was an idiot if he didn’t use it. Upon this thought, Feng Bujue’s mind had flickered.

Unexpectedly, one second later, his own face appeared in front of his eyes. It was a pale, frightened face with rolling eyes with pupils not showing any trace of emotion.

There was no information in his menu. What he had experienced was just a head-splitting pain in his brain. Just imagine that such pain inside his skull was like an iron hammer pounding on the finger..."What is it?" Feng Bujue rubbed his forehead. "What was that? What is happening in this scenario? Is my skill inoperable in the Nightmare Difficulty Level?"

It was like something else had happened in this scenario, but he couldn’t know. Everything was mysterious and unclear that made people shiver without feeling cold.

Feng Bujue had spent 30 minutes walking through the route. There was a certain difference between his calculation and reality. Moreover, groping in this bizarre fog had affected his speed.

Nevertheless, he had successfully arrived at his destination. It was a Yokan house with a small garden in the front. Flowers were blooming there, but he couldn't smell any fragrance with this kind of dense fog.

The iron gates weren’t locked. They could be pushed open with a light force. Feng Bujue directly walked through the garden and approached the front door of the Yokan house. He knocked, but no one answered. He then waited there for a while. Still, nothing happened.

Feng Bujue tried to pull the knob. It opened. He pushed the door and entered the pitch-black lobby. Although the place was furnished, it brought people an absolute empty feeling.

[Current Quest, accomplished. Main Quest, updated.]

[Explore the Yokan House.]

A flickering light flashed from the corridor in the second floor. With this obvious guide, of course, Feng Bujue was more than

happy to follow it. He mounted the steps to the second floor. Firm steps. Stable breathing. However, the wooden treads squeaked every time he stepped on them, which was really annoying.

After he reached the second floor, that faint light had disappeared. Nevertheless, Feng Bujue still had the flashlight. There was a turn in front of him. He quickly approached the first door opposite to him, and without any hesitation, he pushed it open.

Right when he opened the door, a strange smell stormed into Feng Bujue's nostrils. It was a dense mix of perfume and blood.

Standing in the middle of the room was a large double bed. There was a woman lying there. A corpse to be exact.

Although she wasn't wearing anything, her body was completely decomposed. Black blood had dyed the whole bed. Her eyes were still open, facing the door as her empty eyes were gazing at where Feng Bujue was standing still.

Next to the bed stood a hunchbacked monster. It had the neck and head of a hawk, a human upper body and the lower body of a spider with a giant silk bag and eight legs.

The monster's mouth was filled with blood dripping from its corners. It seemed the uninvited guest had disturbed its dinner.

Seeing someone entering the room, some squawk resounded from the monster's throat as it crossed the bed and approached Feng Bujue. Feng Bujue didn't want to do a close combat with this dude, whose bones and shapes were so strange. He took out his pistol, then aimed for the monster and shot five bullets in a row. With the distance of fewer than five meters, in a limited space like this room, no matter what, with his Fighting Specialty Grade D, all the bullets hit the target.

Unexpectedly, that monster couldn't even bear just one strike of his. After the first two shots had hit its chest, it had lost its ability

to move. In the next three shots, it fell motionlessly on the floor.

"What the heck..." Feng Bujue looked at the monster whose appearance was so nauseating as a feeling of being incapable of understanding this scenario was gradually growing up.

He retreated the gun and walked towards the female dead body on the bed to check if he could find any clues. The body was laid straight on the bed, not moving an inch. Feng Bujue suddenly realized that the face of this body was somehow familiar.

"Wait a second... isn't it the hanging corpse?" Feng Bujue got it all of a sudden.

Right at this moment, the female corpse moved. The decomposed body abruptly sat up, facing Feng Bujue as its mouth opened wide and from it came a mournful scream.

Feng Bujue felt as if his eardrums were torn apart. As he was about to swing his wrench to shut the woman up, another odd thing happened... He lost the ability to control his body again. What he was seeing had turned into computer graphics again. The bursting female corpse, the Yokan House behind the small garden... All had vanished. The scene changed once again.

In just a blink, the scene in front of Feng Bujue's eyes had changed into an office. He was sitting behind a wide office desk. The computer monitor on his desk was a CRT one, and its CPU was also placed on the desk together with piles of documents and stationery.

[The company you are working at encountered some problems that can cause it to close. The director has decided to lay off some staff.]

"Ugh, aren't the changes too much? My comprehension ability has limits!" Feng Bujue actually couldn't understand his current situation.

[You, as the youngest vice director of the company, was assigned

to do the layoff. You have to fire many seniors whose profiles are more profound than you. At the same time, you have to explain everything to them. Thus, you feel extremely pressured.]

"Hey! What kind of plot is that! Please leave me in the haunted house for a night or let me kill the monster in that Yokan House!" Feng Bujue screamed in his mind, "Why am I suddenly in such a realistic social situation like this! This is the most horrendous story! And, is this related to the previous two stories? Is it just one person facing all of these? Impossible! This guy's house was destroyed by a storm. In the morning, he goes to deal with firing people; at night, he meets ghosts at home, and his friend raises a monster uncle in his own Yokan House? Can such a person be considered human?"

[After the lunch break, the office becomes boisterous again...]

The short introduction ended like that. It just gave him some unnecessary settings before throwing him a new Main Quest.

[Main Quest has been triggered.]

[Work until your shift ends.]

There was only one thing remained, which was that his surroundings were still in black-and-white.

Feng Bujue could move his limbs again. Anyway, what he wanted to do now was to bang his head onto the monitor. "It said that I have to work until the shift ends; at least, you have to explain what is 'my' job... Moreover, when is the end of the working time in this company..."

Everybody was busy in the office: working or holding the files; running back and forth; or sitting at their desks while typing on the keyboard. None of them were lazy.

Some young office ladies were typing hurriedly on their computer. Let alone snacks or checking the mirror, they didn't even chat with each other. The other male staffs were even more

serious; they were wearing the face of having constipation just like they were facing strong opponents. There was even a guy wearing a white ribbon on his head, which read ‘Willpower’, just like a student who was about to take the entrance exam.

"Yep... this is the power of layoff." Feng Bujue said, "Performing so diligently, they must be showing it to me."

"Hirata-Kun!" A voice interrupted Feng Bujue’s thought.

Feng Bujue turned around and saw a bald man in his 40s wearing a black pair of glasses.

"He’s talking to me..." Feng Bujue thought, "So my name is ‘Hirata’... who would give such name that could break balls and kill people..."

"Yeah, right," Feng Bujue looked at the other and replied.

"This is the financial report of the previous quarter. The director’s off work early today." The middle-aged man gave him a file.

Feng Bujue thought, "The director got off work soon, what do you mean by giving it to me, the vice director... Even if he takes a crap, you can still put it on his desk, right? You want to brag about your capacity to me, don’t you? Or are you afraid that if you put it on the director’s desk, someone will put your good report in the shredder machine to troll you?’

Feng Bujue sighed then mumbled, "Why do I need to think about this... it doesn’t matter to me at all."

"Hirata-Kun, what did you say?" the middle-aged man didn’t hear what he said and suspiciously asked again.

"Eh? Ah... Ah, I got it. I will give it to the director. Just leave it to me," answered Feng Bujue casually.

The middle-aged man respectfully bowed to him in a manner of a junior. "Thanks for your trouble, Hirata-Kun." Then he turned and

left.

"What are all these things about... Does this scenario want to say that being jobless is more horrible than ghosts?" Feng Bujue smiled, loosened his collar and threw the report aside. Then, he started to search for the clues.

There were so many things on his desk, also, there were so many people in this office that he didn’t believe he couldn't find the basic information about ‘Hirata-kun’.

Yokan House: Japanese terms. A western house built for formal reception. A few nations' leaders had constructed this separated western house adjacent to their dwellings.

Cathode Ray Tube

The headband is called Hachimaki. It is a symbol of perseverance or effort by the wearer. Kanji for Konjou meaning "willpower" and "perseverance" associated with a gutsy/never give up attitude. Since wearing a hachimaki is believed to strengthen your spirit, the proper use of a hachimaki would include during a strenuous workout (such as martial arts training), or before undertaking something that will challenge your perseverance and determination (a student taking a standardized entrance examination for college). (Image) (Source)

Kun: is generally used by people of senior status addressing or referring to those of junior status, by anyone addressing or it can be used when referring to men in general, male children or male teenagers, or among male friends. It can be used by males or females when addressing a male whom they are emotionally attached to or have known for a long time. Although it may seem rude in workplaces, the suffix is also used by juniors when referring to seniors in both academic situations and workplaces, more typically when the two people are associated.

Chapter 109: The Black-and-white Demon Domain (4)

The calendar showed that today was November 24, 1990. Feng Bujue was working at an electrical devices manufacturer, which was considered a big company in town even though it was far behind the big companies in the cities.

Before Feng Bujue started to investigate, he checked his pockets as usual. The three keys appeared again, which meant he had to use them soon.

As a person living in the 50s of the 21st century, seeing a computer in front of him, he would definitely turn it on and work on it later. Then... well, no then. Staring at the black monitor and the flashing cursor, to someone who knew sh*t about DOS like Feng Bujue, he could only roll his eyes.

He then reluctantly started to read the paper files on his desk. After he had spent 20 minutes, he determined that those were useless. Thus, he had to check each drawer of his desk. It wasn't out of his expectation as he found a locked drawer. He tried the keys he had, and indeed, there was one key which could unlock that drawer.

When he pulled out the drawer, Feng Bujue saw a big envelope. Inside that big envelope, he found a smaller one, which had three words -- 'Letter of Resignation'.

Feng Bujue sneakily observed here and there then opened both of the two letters. The big one had Hirata Shuichi's profile. This guy had graduated from the University of Kyoto. No doubt why he could be the vice director when he was just 30 years old. It was unknown why he had to stay and work in this small town.

Inside the smaller envelope was the resignation letter. Feng Bujue took a look at it. Afterwards, he somehow understood the

situation. This Hirata dude was a good guy. He wanted to keep as many workers who had families with difficulties as much as possible, and he had also recognized that he should resign in order to do so.

After he had read them all, Feng Bujue put them back to the drawer, locked it carefully and then came to the toilet.

The reason why he decided to hide in the toilet was that he wanted to use [Planned Victory From A Thousand Miles Away] again. He didn't want to use it in the office. In case that head-splitting happened again and he held his head while falling from the chair, it could create a mess in the office.

After taking a deep breath, Feng Bujue activated his title granted skill again. The result was exactly the same as the previous one. The pain, which was like it had come from deep inside his bones, shot over his brain. However, he didn't have any other clues or data except for the image of his face. This face was similar to the face he had seen with the horrified, speechless countenance, and bulging empty eyes.

While Feng Bujue was holding his head, pulling himself together from the headache and dizziness, he heard the toilet door being pushed open. From the sound of their footsteps, Feng Bujue guessed that there were two people coming.

Then they came to the urinals, dealing with their private businesses while talking to each other.

"Hey... Did you see anything at the staircase?"

"Ah, yeah. That disgusting director's guts are getting bigger."

"Shhh! Watch your mouth, don't let others hear that."

"Sh*t... Just let them hear. I don't want to work here anymore. That bastard Fukui has turned this company into something like this. If it isn't because of him, then who else to be blamed?" That man spit indignantly, "Always makes stupid decisions, then blames

responsibilities on the others. I heard that it isn't just one or two days he has been misappropriating the public fund. This company is about to close down... He has joked about it also. Recently, he has just bought a luxury Yokan House and moved in... Such a corrupted insect that makes people lose their jobs."

"Sigh. Even if we know that, the lowest echelon workers like us have no voice."

The two of them had come near to the washing basins. After the sound of washing hands was over, there came a sound of lighting up cigarettes. Each of them took a cigarette then continued their conversation. "Hirata-Kun is the most pathetic one in this story. He always cleans up the mess that asshole creates. I guess it's 80% that it's his idea to let Hirata be in charge of laying off people."

"Good guys will not receive good stuff... I've heard that Hirata-Kun's house was destroyed badly in the storm. He and his wife could only move to 3-chome."

"The heck? Could people live there?"

"Who said no?" The other blew out smoke. "Anyway, the most pathetic thing is his wife who gave him a green hat."

"True, she was flirting with the director at the stairs. Even us, who are just outsiders, couldn't hold that."

The other also blew out smoke. "I heard that Hirata-Kun had given up his career in Tokyo and returned here for Haruko several years ago. Haruko could work here thanks to Hirata-kun running back and forth to beg for help. And now that woman is with that disgusting director for his money. She even does something dirty in front of her husband. It's nauseous."

Feng Bujue was surprised while listening to these two NPCs' conversation. This scenario is totally a three-disaster one. Hirata Shuichi, this man didn't just pathetically suffer! His home got destroyed in the storm; his wife cheated on him with a scumbag;

and he would soon be jobless. Moreover, it seemed he didn’t have money either. Giving up his career and youth to exchange for nothing. Moreover, he encountered ghosts daily. This kind of life, he should have killed himself soon.

"Hey... Seems that there’s someone in the next stall." The two of them suddenly lowered their voices.

"We got busted... but who’s there..."

"Crap... When I walked past the office, it seems Hirata-Kun isn't there. Is it..."

Their voices became lowered to the point that Feng Bujue couldn't hear it anymore.

As he was still thinking about how he could get out of this place, he didn’t expect that his problem would be simply solved like that as he lost control of his body again.

"No way! Again?" Feng Bujue thought, "Don’t tell me that this scenario has four or more main clues! Would you please leave me alone?!?"

The answer was yes. Moreover, it was done.

At this time, the narration didn’t play, and the scene in front of Feng Bujue didn’t turn to computer graphics, but a projector screen on the wall. He, at the moment, was in a close room formed by four cement walls without a window, and the main door wasn’t in his sight either.

When he could pull his nerves together, he found that he could see colors again. The strange rumbling noise in his ears became clearer.

At this time, Feng Bujue was wearing a special suit designed for mental disorder patients. Both of his arms were crossed in front of his chest, and the sleeves were tied behind his back. His neck, waist, legs and both of his ankles were tied with special belts, fixing his body on a chair. He could only maintain his sit-up

position; if he wanted to move, he would have to wiggle hard.

What discomforted him the most was that his eyelids were taped to his sockets, disabling him from closing his eyes. At this moment, he could feel that his eyes were extremely dry and very irritated.

That strange, rumbling noise was emitted from an old, small movie projector placed on a table behind him. This machine was playing and projecting the black-and-white images onto the wall in front of Feng Bujue's eyes. And, the last image was the toilet stall where he was last at.

Snap~ Snap

Someone just stretched out one arm and snapped twice in front of Feng Bujue. Feng Bujue shifted his eyes and saw a man, who looked to be about 30 years old, wearing a plaid suit. His plaid suit was old-fashioned, but its material and the seams were delicate which spoke up its luxurious value.

That man was wearing a black pair of glasses with a normal hairstyle and average appearance. His complexion looked nice, but his eyes, which were gazing at Feng Bujue, were full of suspicions.

"Hirata-kun, are you alright?" he asked.

"Who are you?" answered Feng Bujue.

That man changed his countenance, immediately took out a mini flashlight, shone it on Feng Bujue's eyes and observed.

Feng Bujue's eyes became more irritated with the light stimulation. "Hey, hey! Don't do that! My eyes! Who are you? Doctor?"

"I'm Doctor Watanabe. You don't recognize me?" asked the man.

"Why am I here? What do you want to do?"

"I've told you. Doctor, don't waste your time."

Another voice came from behind Feng Bujue's back. It was his blind corner. However, the owner of the voice soon came in front

of him.

That person was around 50 years old; he had gray hair on both of his temples, outlining a cruel and brave appearance. He was holding a cigarette, which had been half burning.

"Tachibana–Keibu, please don't interrupt me. It's a very crucial moment right now," said Watanabe.

"Sh*t..." Tachibana ground his cigarette indignantly, then thrust his hands into his coat pockets. His eyes were as bright as torches, looking at Feng Bujue, or staring at Hirata Shuichi to be exact.

"Did you remember anything? Hirata–Kun?" asked Watanabe.

"I..." Feng Bujue didn't know how to answer him. Currently, he could confirm three things that the all three stories he had just been through were from Hirata Shuichi's memories. He decided to speak the truth to see what information this NPC would give him. "I was on my way to home, and I saw Kuchisake-Onna..."

As soon as he spoke up, Tachibana yelled, "Damn it! You bastard are trying to fool me, aren't you?" He then wanted to grab Feng Bujue by his hair, but doctor Watanabe had stopped him.

"Keibu, calm down please!" Watanabe shouted at him to make him stop.

"Keibu..." Feng Bujue had been thinking about his current situation, and now he had a plucky conclusion. "Did I kill somebody?"

"Did I kill somebody?" Tachibana repeated his words then sneered. Soon, his sneer had turned into a loud laughter. "Kiddo, you admitted it now. I still thought that you would try to deny it until the end."

"Doctor Watanabe, are you a psychiatrist?" Feng Bujue turned and asked.

"Yes, it's true," answered Watanabe.

"So you must know the Dissociative Identity Disorder?"

Watanabe hesitated for a while before speaking up again, "Of course, I know it."

"What do you mean? This kiddo wants to play lunatic to escape his crime?" Tachibana rose his voice. His flame of anger seemed to be burning his hair.

Feng Bujue ignored him. "I am not Hirata Shuichi."

DOS: DOS dɒs is a family of disk operating systems[1] primarily consisting of MS-DOS and a rebranded version under the name IBM PC DOS which were introduced in 1981, as well as some later compatible systems from other manufacturers: DR-DOS (1988), ROM-DOS (1989), PTS-DOS (1993), and FreeDOS (1998). MS-DOS dominated the x86-based IBM PC compatible market between 1981 and 1995.

Keibu: Japanese word to address a police officer.

Chapter 110: The Black-and-White Demon Domain (5)

Feng Bujue said, "You can call me... uh, Mister F."

"Damn it..." Tachibana cursed then stormed to Feng Bujue. It looked like he was about to hit him. With his appearance, it was possible!

Doctor Watanabe was trying to stop him while talking to Feng Bujue. "Mr. F, do you know where Officer Yamada's body is?"

"No. I don't know who Yamada is, but I could guess what had happened," said Feng Bujue.

"So then... Mr. F, does Hirata know about your existence?" asked Watanabe.

"Before... Perhaps he didn't know about my existence, but now... I'm not sure." Feng Bujue answered, "I just have a vague memory of Hirata's committed crime. So, I have something I want to ask you, Doctor Watanabe."

"Doctor! This brat has just made up a name and his f*cking identity disorder to cheat us!" intervened Tachibana.

"Screening the authenticity of those symptoms is my job. Keibu, please believe me and let me finish my job," said Watanabe.

"Sh*t!" Watanabe stepped out of Feng Bujue's sight again and stood in a corner behind his back. Soon, the sound of him litting up his cigarette arose.

Watanabe sighed and talked to Feng Bujue, "What do you want to ask me?"

"Yeah... I have just watched some video, is it true?" Feng Bujue asked.

"Yes," answered Watanabe.

"Why would I have to watch the video?"

Watanabe scrutinized Feng Bujue's eyes. After he had arranged his words, he answered, "You... No, right after Hirata-kun got arrested, he appeared to have a very serious illusionary disorder. He insisted that he didn't kill anybody." He paused for a while then continued, "He told the police that he had only killed a demon."

"So you are testing to see if Hirata's mentality is abnormal or not, right?" asked Feng Bujue.

"Yes."

"What kind of movie I've just watched?"

"The police have provided assistance to replay some related scenes," answered Watanabe.

"Didn't you reverse the time order while showing it to me?" asked Feng Bujue.

Watanabe was surprised. "Yes. It would be easier to wake you up..."

He hadn't finished, yet Feng Bujue interrupted him, "Can you show me the video once again in the right time order?"

Watanabe and Tachibana exchanged looks. Since the other was still angry, he didn't want to talk and just nodded slightly.

Watanabe came to the table, did something, and the movie projector started to work again.

"Doctor, would you please remove those tapes? I want to blink," said Feng Bujue.

"Okay." Watanabe agreed readily. Actually, he didn't want to do that, but the previous Hirata always yelled and screamed whenever he saw the images playing on the wall and then closed his eyes tightly. Afterwards, Tachibana-Keibu had arranged such setup.

Feng Bujue had some ideas in his brain, but he needed more clues to prove his reasoning.

The projector started to play again. It was still the black-and-white images. There wasn't any sound device next to the projector. Besides the strange noise from the projector, there was nothing else. Indeed, they didn't need sound.

The contents of the recordings were simple, and the length was actually short as they had just replayed some critical points in order to help Hirata Shuichi, who was in his insanity period, restore his memory. Actors and actresses in the movie were all people from the Police Department, and the cameraman was Doctor Watanabe.

The first recording was the time when Hirata was working in his office. The first image depicted his desk; next, it was a staircase where a man and a woman were hugging each other intimately; the last image took place in the toilet, where two males were talking to each other while smoking.

"This part came from Hirata's two colleagues' oral depositions," Watanabe explained, "they said that Hirata had overheard their conversation in the toilet and perhaps it resulted to his murderous intentions."

Feng Bujue nodded while concentrating on observing everything.

The second recording, which was also the most crucial one, started to play.

The screen had shown the entire Yokan House before the camera shifted to the house's address—No. 4-5 Rokubancho. A small garden stood in front of the Yokan House. The second image was the interior of the house, including a spacious empty lobby and the staircase leading to the second floor. The third image was the room wherein Feng Bujue had encountered the monster. The plot of the third image included an officer playing Hirata while holding a fake pistol. He pushed open the door while another female officer playing Haruko was lying on the bed. Another officer played the department director. When he saw the man with the gun, he stood

up from the bed in fear, saying something while crossing the bed to approach the man, attempting to snatch the gun from him. Then the officer who played Hirata fired the gun and killed him.

"This recording replays the procedure of the case, but no one had witnessed it..." Watanabe turned and threw a glance at Feng Bujue, "and Hirata-kun's oral depositions can't be accepted. Thus, we could only base on investigating the crime scene to guess what had happened."

"By the way, what is the name of the dead?" Feng Bujue asked.

"Fukui Shinichiro." The husky voice of Tachibana-Keibu came from behind. "A manager in your company."

The recording had quickly come to the third recording. In this part, the one who was playing Hirata was asking some passengers on the street.

"You can see how Hirata asked her the way to 3-chrome. At first, he was calm, but then he was terrified. I assumed that Hirata-Kun's mentality was on the edge of being broken at that time. He had forgotten his address and started to have illusions," Watanabe said.

The screen switched to another room. Hirata came in and closed the door. Next, an officer came and knocked his door.

At this moment, Watanabe spoke up again, "At that night, an old woman next door heard Hirata screaming, so she paid him a visit. Turned out that Hirata answered her that he had never screamed." He paused, "But at that time, the old woman could see a strange shadow from the slit of the door. She then immediately called the police."

"After the police had arrived, they found Haruko's dead body hung on the crossbeam while Hirata was calmly sitting at the coffee table and drinking tea. Police also found Yamada's missing pistol in the house."

The video ended here. The room then sank into a short while of silence.

It was Tachibana–Keibu standing behind who broke the deadlock. "So, Mr. F, are you satisfied now? Spit out Yamada's whereabouts and admit your crime." He said impatiently, "Or... are you going to pretend that you lost your mind again and address yourself as Mister A, Mister B or something?"

Feng Bujue ignored him and sunk down in his own thoughts. After almost five minutes had passed, he spoke up again. "What is the date today?"

Chapter 111: Hirata's World (6)

"December 2," answered Watanabe.

"Is the time of the first recording was on November 24th?" asked Feng Bujue.

"True."

"Could you tell me the time of the second and the third recording?" Feng Bujue continued to ask.

Watanabe didn't answer him immediately. He seemed to need more time to think. However, Tachibana-Keibu, who used to object others' opinions, continued from behind, "The day Fukui got shot was November 26th. In the late afternoon, he asked all the helpers in the house to leave. The reason was to meet your wife, Haruko Sato." After he had come up to this part, he hesitated for a while as he looked like he was trying to use the more appropriate words. "Personally, I think that a bad guy like Fukui couldn't pay off his sins with his death. However, you are now in my hands since the weapon was found in your place. I will not spare you just because I sympathize you."

"Fukui's body wasn't found until noon of the next day. Since he was shot to death, the investigation has been carried out very carefully. At that day, Hirata-Kun was still going to work as usual. His appearance was really calm. Haruko Sato was absent and the third recording is what happened on the evening of the same day," Watanabe added.

"So the time Officer Yamada went missing should be from November 24th when Hirata left the office until the noon of November 26th?" said Feng Bujue.

"The night of November 25th, he went out for patrolling by bicycle, and no one had seen him ever since," continued Tachibana–Keibu.

"Did they find the bicycle?" asked Feng Bujue.

"I’m asking you where the man is now!" Tachibana shouted.

"So you mean it can't be found?" Feng Bujue mused, "Oh, so that’s it."

"Kiddo, do you want to get hit with this tone of yours?" Tachibana threw the cigarette butt and he was about to storm over him again.

Feng Bujue paid no attention to him and just continued, "As far as I know, social security in Japan isn’t bad. The total number of policemen takes a large amount in the population. If it’s in the big cities, only special force or criminal officers can have guns. But in such a small town like this, I guess... security matters and criminal cases should be handled by a small group of officers. Thus, it isn’t strange that Yamada has become a target." He paused for a while then continued, "That’s my reasoning. Assuming that Hirata had the plan to steal Yamada’s gun, he would have had two options. One, steal it. Two, just snatch it."

"Of course, stealing needs technique, let alone stealing something like a police’s gun! Once he got arrested, he must be jailed for sure, and the conspiracy of killing Fukui would be exposed. Hirata had committed his deed at any cost, but it was under the primary condition that he could kill Fukui. Before that, he must not fail. So... snatching is more serious than stealing, and of course, the related crime would be more serious. However, to a man who had a plan to kill someone, he had soon known it."

"If he had to snatch it, no technique would be required. He just needed to seize the chance in the evening at a quiet place and assault Yamada when he hadn’t recognized the situation yet, then take the gun. But if it had happened that way, Yamada shouldn’t have been missing... At most, he should have only just fainted somewhere on the roadside. Currently, Yamada had gone missing indeed. This speaks up the fact that during the time Hirata was

taking the gun, something unexpected had happened. Perhaps he had only wanted to make him blackout for a while, but he failed to do so then he had to kill the officer..."

"Bastard!" Tachibana finally burst out this time. He stormed forward and grabbed Feng Bujue's collar. "You finally admitted it! Spit it out! Where is Yamada's body?!"

Feng Bujue continued to narrate calmly, "I don't know. I just made assumptions from the clues you've given me... Ouch..." While he was still speaking, Tachibana had hit his belly hard. His Survival Value directly plunged down by 30%. Moreover, he got the 'Paralyzed' status.

"Tachibana-Keibu!" Watanabe stepped forward and pulled the uncle away. "Don't abuse the suspect!"

"The suspect? This brat has killed at least two people!" yelled Tachibana.

"Well, Tachibana–Keibu. That's enough," Watanabe advised him.

Feng Bujue tried to press down his pain. His breathing wasn't stable, and it took him a really long time to recover. As he was unconsciously sinking in his joy of reasoning and acted as he pleased, this punch had woken him up and told him that he was still in a Nightmare difficulty level scenario. Although the two NPCs in front of him were the kind he could communicate with, there would never be an 'absolute safe situation'. Any insignificant mistake could kill him. A wrong word or even a bad behavior had a chance to trigger the Death FLAG. Any random NPC could finish him in just a blink of an eye.

"Ha... ha... ha... ha..." Feng Bujue panted, gulped and continued, "If Hirata had killed Officer Yamada on his patrol way, his bicycle should be found too."

As Tachibana seemed to get his nerves together, Watanabe loosened his grip, and both of them turned to look at Feng Bujue,

wanting to listen to him more.

"When Hirata found that he had accidentally killed the officer, he simply had two possible options. First, take the gun and run away; second, hide the body and run away. Even if he had chosen the second option, he would have had no way to bring along the corpse and the bicycle at the same time. At most, he could only hide the bicycle nearby and move the corpse later..." When he came to this part, something else popped up in his mind. "Oh right, does Hirata have a vehicle?"

"No. In fact, he doesn't have a driving license either," answered Watanabe.

"Then we can cross out the possibility that he had bumped Yamada to death and hid the corpse and the bicycle in his car trunk." Feng Bujue had been musing for around 10 seconds and arranged his thought before speaking up again, "I have three assumptions. The first one, after Hirata had assaulted Yamada, he hid the body in a secret place while the bicycle was still on the street and someone else had taken it, and, that person didn't witness the murder case. That's why the one who dared to take the bicycle could be a homeless person. This person perhaps had left the town. Or, maybe when that person heard about the case, since he or she got scared knowing it's one of the items related to a murder case, he or she then threw the bicycle into the river or even fragmented it."

"The second one, after Hirata had attacked Officer Yamada, Yamada didn't die or lose his consciousness; moreover, he saw Hirata's face. Hirata had no choice then. If he let Yamada go, he would soon be arrested. Thus, he had to use the gun to force Yamada and confine him somewhere, or even kill him already. In this case, Yamada had brought his bicycle along while Hirata was forcing him to do so."

"The third one, after Hirata found himself murdering the officer, he took the gun and ran away. But after he left, someone else had

helped him clear the scene, including the body and the bicycle."

"What do you mean? You have partner in this?" Tachibana-Keibu barked coldly.

"This is just a reasonable assumption. This possibility exists. For example, someone saw what Hirata did and coincidentally knew him. Thus, right after Hirata ran away, he then cleaned the scene to hide the case. Later on, he could use this to blackmail Hirata and take his money. Or, he could even control Hirata to kill someone else for him using the same gun," answered Feng Bujue.

"Enough! You talk too much! How long do you want to pretend like this? Spit out Yamada's whereabouts!" Hirata-Kun got on Tachibana-Keibu's nerves to the extreme.

"Wait a minute. I still have something unclear..." Feng Bujue said, "On the afternoon of November 24, Hirata had the reason for his crime; on the evening of November 25, he got the gun from Officer Yamada; on the afternoon of November 26, he came to Fukui's Yokan House, caught the infidelity and killed people," he gazed at Watanabe, "if no one had witnessed the case, how did you know that Haruko was there when Hirata had stormed into the room?"

"It's based on Hirata's description and the investigation of the scene. He said that when he opened the door, he saw Haruko on the bed and there was a monster attacking her. Thus, he shot the monster. When we asked him where he got the gun, he answered that he didn't remember anything," said Watanabe.

"So Haruko hadn't died at that time?" Feng Bujue asked.

"On the evening of November 27, when the police had received the report, they came to Hirata-kun's room and found the dead body of Haruko Sato. From what they had investigated at the scene, they confirmed that she had committed suicide. The time of her death was estimated to happen around the afternoon of the same day. At that specific time, Hirata was working at his office as usual," said Watanabe.

"In other words, on November 26, after Hirata had killed the man at the Yokan House, he took Haruko home. And on the next day, he came to work as usual while his wife killed herself at home." Feng Bujue muttered, "There's no chance that Haruko Sato would commit suicide because of her secret lover. And, she didn't report to the police either... This means her suicide would be because of her mental struggling, and her fear or the guilt towards her infidelity to her husband."

"We've known these, you don't need to repeat them," said Tachibana impatiently.

"What you have known are perhaps just only these three events in the recordings," Feng Bujue continued, "and what you don't know is... Officer Yamada's whereabouts, which is hidden inside Shuichi Hirata, who has lost his mind now." He shifted his eyes to doctor Watanabe. "So, Doctor Watanabe here wants to help you to wake up Hirata's memory?"

"Do you recall something? Mister F?" asked Watanabe.

"I'm sorry. What I've seen are just the contents of the three replays, but they are a little bit different from your video. I have seen the monsters in Hirata-kun's imagination," said Feng Bujue.

Watanabe sighed. "After a human brain had suffered from a serious stimulation, the memory would be affected. For instance, if a person was abused when he was young. Since those memories are too harsh and much beyond what a person could bear, his brain would seal the related memories as he would completely forget these bad memories, just like they have never happened. In some cases, these memories wouldn't be 'sealed' but 'modified'. In Hirata-kun's case, he could only remember his wife was being attacked by a monster, but what happened in reality was..."

"I know it," Feng Bujue intervened him, "I have knowledge in this field." He suddenly wiggled his irritated neck due to being fixed onto the chair. "In case the memory is 'sealed', possibly, it can lead

to Dissociative Identity Disorder. And, if it is ‘modified’, it can become illusions."

"Too much babbling! Where is Yamada?! Do you know it? Do you remember it?!" Tachibana–Keibu shouted at Feng Bujue’s face; he looked like he wanted to hit him again.

Although Feng Bujue didn’t want to receive another punch, he couldn’t get himself any room to struggle. As he was tied there, he could only let the other punch him. He didn't want to try the Body-Spirit Congregation Technique either. From the actions and words of these two NPCs, if he suddenly performed such supernatural powers like that, it could... When he could successfully break out, Watanabe would retreat in fear, but Tachibana would take out the gun and shoot him. This kind of development would surely lead to a fatal consequence for him.

"If we want to know where Yamada is, I have to return to..." Feng Bujue seized the chance and said.

"What are you saying?" Tachibana’s face was full of suspicion.

"I have to go back to that black-and-white world to investigate," Feng Bujue answered.

Watanabe looked at him and frowned. "You said... you wanted to go back into Hirata’s mental world?" He probed, "How to do that? Watching the video again?"

"No... It’s useless now." Feng Bujue said, "I’ve just watched it, right. I’ve just watched the normal images. By the time ‘Hirata’ was watching the video, I was in his mental world and experiencing his twisted memories. After that, I got here. Do you have any method so I can return to that place?" He pondered, "Moreover, it should be before the evening of November 25th..."

"Very good. You are willing to cooperate now. It’s time to talk to the doctor." Tachibana’s tone suddenly changed. Too calm. It was more than disturbing.

Feng Bujue was dazed. "What?" he looked at Watanabe, "haven’t I been talking to Doctor Watanabe all the time?"

Watanabe interrupted, "You can find the memories related to the case, and you can also recognize your mental situation. Moreover, you are now focusing on the blind point in your memory regarding Yamada. We don’t need to worry about it anymore."

"What?" Feng Bujue had no clue what they were talking about. "Why do you..."

Before he could finish his question, he had suddenly lost the ability to talk since his perspective changed into that of watching the computer graphics again. The scene in front of his eyes changed one more time.

Feng Bujue had a dizzy feeling that this scenario was playing him so much. At first, he thought that it was just a ghost haunting scenario; then, he thought there was something spiritual happening at the same time. It turned out that those three events were from the same chain, but the time order was reversed. Moreover, they were just the twisted memories of a mentally-ill patient. The plot setup had turned into a real murder case in reality.

Next... actually, he didn't know what would happen next.

Zizizzz ——

That was the sound coming from an incandescent light bulb. An annoying dazzling white light had woken up Feng Bujue in his short-period absence of mind.

He closed his eyes and turned around. After two seconds, he could eventually adapt to the sudden increase of intensity of the light. Now, he could clearly see his surroundings.

Feng Bujue was wearing a patient uniform, which had black-and-white stripes, just like a prisoner uniform. He was sitting at a table while his hands were cuffed to the armrests and both of his legs

were tied together.

There was a lamp on the table, together with some paper documents. A man was sitting opposite to him, wearing a white blouse. He looked more than 50 years old with wrinkles across his forehead. He was holding a piece of paper and drawing some circles on it. His other hand was holding a mini recorder.

This room wasn’t completely close. There was a tiny fan hung high above and a window with grille. Moonlight crept into the room through the window. A large bed stood in one corner of the room while there was a flush toilet in another corner. The four walls of the room didn't have the boring gray color of cement anymore as they were painted with a mild and brighter hue. Feng Bujue also saw a small window on the main door. This window wasn’t made from glass, but of thick iron meshes. There was another tiny window under it, which looked like it could only be opened from outside. That should be the place where they delivered meals to prisoners.

"So.. Hirata-Kun, if you are ready, we can start," said the man in the white blouse.

Feng Bujue sighed. "I’m sorry, please tell me three things."

The man in the white blouse contemplated for two seconds; his eyebrows slammed together. "What are those?"

"Who are you? Where am I? And, what date it is today?" asked Feng Bujue.

The other took a deep breath and exhaled heavily. "Sigh..." He pressed the button on his mini recorder and spoke up, "March 9, 2005, patient number 0098, Shuichi Hirata. File recorder, Taro Takakura."

Takakura put his recorder aside and talked to Feng Bujue, "You don’t recognize me?"

Feng Bujue didn’t care about him as he tried to cock his head and

press his face on the back of his hand. After he had done it, he could confirm that he didn’t age for 15 years. Although he was wearing a prisoner costume, when he checked his menu, the costumes in his clothing slot didn't change. No matter what, from NPC’s point of view, no doubt that this person was Shuichi Hirata in his 40s.

"You..." Takakura seemed to be very keen. "Who are you? Hirata? Watanabe? Tachibana? Or someone else?"

This amount of information was huge to Feng Bujue. However, he could react promptly. "Do I have Dissociative Mental Disorder?"

"Yes," Takakura answered. He held the documents in his hand and sighed again. "Since you’ve been jailed in 1991, there were numerous famous doctors that was involved in finding treatment and doing research on you. Currently, it could be confirmed that you have three personalities. The host personality is Shuichi Hirata. And, the other two included a psychiatrist named Watanabe and a policeman named Tachibana. So, who are you? Or are you not anyone of them?"

Feng Bujue leaned against his chair. "You can call me Mister F." He looked at the ceiling. "Watanabe represents Hirata’s rationality and wisdom. Tachibana represents Hirata’s consciousness and self-blame. About the true Hirata... I don’t know. I’ve never met him."

"Mister F? Rationality? Consciousness?" Takakura snorted, "alright, Mr. F. What are you representing for? Your identity, your profession..."

"Me?" Feng Bujue smiled. "I’m a reasoning novelist. I came from a higher dimension, and I have entered this body." His face was relaxed. "I’m taking step by step to break out from the cage built by thoughts, whose host body is Hirata-Kun, the one I have never met before. Perhaps it could be something else. I’m from the chaotic world of twisted and obscure memories, breaking through the mental world of my subconsciousness. Then I’ve collected some

important pieces of memories before I’ve come here." He leaned towards the man. "Now, I'm strongly suspicious whether you, Doctor Takakura, and this cell, are true or just another kind of cage..."

Chapter 112: Hirata's World (7)

Takakura took another deep breath, turned and spoke to the recorder on his side. "Number 0098 has generated another personality called Mr. F, a reasoning novelist. Mr. F has a super-realistic conception symptom, very different from the host personality—Shuichi Hirata. He thinks that he's a creature who came from a pretty high dimension, and now he's possessing the body."

Feng Bujue had waited until he had finished to ask what he really wanted to ask. "Doctor, if it's the year 2005, Hirata's case should have been settled. What is the final result?"

"He planned to murder two people, one of them was a policeman. The details of this case are very serious. Anyway, considering his purpose and his mental status, he was sentenced to be jailed for the rest of his life," Takakura answered.

"Is it an asylum?" asked Feng Bujue.

"This is one of the cells specified for mentally-ill inmates," Takakura continued, "we will carry out quarterly assessments for all inmates here." He paused for a while before continuing, "It's also why we are talking now."

"What Hirata has been like during this period of 15 years?" asked Feng Bujue.

"More ordinary than you are now," Takakura answered, "when Hirata-kun could gather his mind, he told me that whenever he recalled the details of the case that year, he would enter a black-and-white world. No matter how many times he has been through, he would still see the memories of those ghosts. Sometimes, Watanabe and Tachibana will appear. At that time, Hirata-kun will mumble and grunt a lot. I've been trying to talk to the other two personalities. What they know about the case are the same with what the police had recorded. I think that these two personalities

didn’t remember what actually happened that day as they have just made what the police told Hirata their memories." His eyes shifted from the documents to Feng Bujue’s face. "How about you, Mr. F? You seem to be very interested in that case, which means, you don’t actually know what had happened, right?"

"Yeah, I was about to ask, it’s been 15 years already, and if the judge had concluded that he had murdered two, so... have they found Officer Yamada’s body?" asked Feng Bujue.

"Seven years after the case had happened, Officer Yamada’s body was found," Takakura answered, "it was also the time I’ve started to contact you."

"So... that year, even though they hadn’t found Yamada’s body yet, how could they have convicted him with ‘murdered two people’?" Feng Bujue asked.

"It is..." Takakura said, "from the situation at that time, the details of the case were obvious. Hirata-Kun’s mentality was cracked. Moreover, no barristers had stood up for him. Even the attorney the court had appointed for him also said that he was guilty. So... basically, whatever the prosecutor said are all considered as facts, and all the evidences were pointed to one truth. Killed the officer, took the gun, murdered another one then gone crazy."

"Bullsh*t," Feng Bujue said, "when they haven’t excluded all the possibilities, how could they be sure that it’s the only truth? Perhaps Yamada had killed Fukui, hid the gun in Hirata’s house, then strangled Haruko Sato, who was in the house at that time to death, and made it look like a suicide case. Afterwards, he ran away... And that’s how we can explain why Hirata was going to work as usual on November 27."

Takakura gazed at him for the whole two seconds. "Ha, ha, ha. Mr. F, if you appeared 15 years ago, you could have used Shuichi Hirata’s identity to defend yourself. Perhaps you could get rid of

this." He picked up another file on the table. "Unfortunately, at this moment, there are two points that could turn your assumption upside down. First, there's no relationship between Yamada and the other three Fukui, Hirata, and Haruko. Police had soon investigated this. No relative relationship or business affair... Since they weren't related, he didn't have any purposes to do this. Second, the place where Yamada's body was found was under the ruins of Hirata's house, which was damaged by the storm. After seven years, they had finally sold that property, and when they had excavated the place to construct the foundation for a new building, they found the body. The time of his death was estimated to be seven years ago. Although the body was just a skeleton at that time, the fatal external wounds were still clear. No doubt that this was a case of murder and hiding the dead body."

"Yeah," Feng Bujue mused for a while. "Alright, in fact, I'm only dissatisfied with the trial process, so I have just made up a presumption to defend myself."

"Hirata-Kun's crime is obvious, Mr. F," Takakura said, "so, if I have satisfied your curiosity, how about you cooperate with me now and answer some of my questions?"

"Indeed, you are not real, either," Feng Bujue interrupted Takakura. He mumbled in his mind, "I finally got the meaning of this scenario."

Takakura's face darkened as he didn't say another word.

"You said that not long after they found Yamada's body, you've begun to contact Hirata. I got it when I heard that," Feng Bujue said, "seven years after the case, when Hirata knew they had found Yamada's body, he has generated another personality... it's you."

"Ah, are you saying that me, Watanabe, and Tachibana are the same existence?" said Takakura.

"No, I think that your level is higher than theirs. I think... Hirata's mental world has four levels," Feng Bujue continued

casually, "November 1990, after Shuichi Hirata had killed two people and saw his wife suicide with his own eyes, he got insane. Since then, his thought has been confined to a very deep and dark level, a world of chaos and intimidation."

"One month later, the case had been developed. Hirata had been through many interrogations, and he also got a certain amount of information from the course hearing. Then, he had generated two other personalities—Doctor Watanabe and Tachibana-Keibu. They are the two personalities that could drag him out of the deep memory of a twisted, disorderly black-and-white world, and bring him to the second level of his world, giving him time to gasp for breath. Moreover, they have assisted and urged him to erase the memories of those bizarre, monstrous things, trying to find a way to restore his true memories."

Feng Bujue licked his dry lips. "A psychiatrist can only hypnotize the suspect to carry out interrogations. He can’t do such recording stuff. I should have known sooner that the space of Watanabe and Tachibana is from his mental world... That place is hidden deeper than your place here, mingled between the logical thoughts and distorted memories." He stared at Takakura’s eyes. "And you, or the cell we are sitting, is the third level."

"What am I representing?" asked Takakura.

"Also memories," Feng Bujue said, "you represent the period of this eight years... the normal, reliable memories in Hirata’s mind." He leaned against the backrest, faced up and attempted to rub his nose as an old habit, but suddenly realized he was cuffed, so he had to continue, "Time has worn out something. Throughout the seven years of receiving treatment for his mental illness, the other two personalities have also helped him reduce the pressure, plus the news of finding Yamada and his death time, all have led Hirata to the third level."

"At this level, he can talk to you. Also, he can be objective and calm enough to analyze the situation and accept his current status.

If Hirata could stay here, at your level, and he wouldn’t return to the other deep levels, even if he could never restore his memory, at least he could live as a normal person." Feng Bujue’s eyes shifted to the recorder. "In the recorder are the conversations between you and him... or, the memories that he has arranged himself. So I say these memories are the normal ones, and they are reliable. He doesn’t want to blend them with other things, but the existence of the recorder speaks up the fact that Hirata’s time in here is limited."

Takakura expressed a begrudging complexion. "Mr. F, what you’ve said are true. However, I’m sorry to tell you that there are only three levels here," he sighed, "my place is the level that is nearest to reality." His eyes raked through the room. "The recorder... those files on the table are all from Hirata’s memory. And this room is the projection of the real cell that confines Hirata. By the way, there is no table, chair or lamp in his real cell."

"Only three levels?" Feng Bujue said, "How could it be..." He wore a suspicious face, thinking, "Hirata could have a purpose to restore the missing memory, and he has restored the part where he had killed Fukui even though it’s distorted. It’s the same with the part where Haruko Sato hung herself. Perhaps those had been appearing gradually before he got convicted; but why did he have no impression about the memory regarding Yamada and his death? This personality named Takakura could only prove a limited information. He has no clue about the details of his murder case..."

"Impossible, if there’s no more levels, it means that the death of Yamada isn’t related to Hirata," Feng Bujue said determinedly, "that memory doesn't exist in his head, thus, no matter which level it is, we can’t find it."

Takakura shook his head. "The truth has been pointed out..."

"Give me a mirror," Feng Bujue stopped him.

"What do you want?" asked Takakura.

"I need to get out of here," answered Feng Bujue.

"At most, you can only return to your real world. And when you go there, it means that Hirata will return here to me or fall deep into the other two levels." Takakura looked like he was giving him a piece of advice.

"I don’t want to go up there," Feng Bujue said, "I want to go to the next door."

"The next door? What do you mean?" Takakura asked.

"You won’t understand," Feng Bujue finally showed the posture of a living form who came from another higher dimension, "just give me a mirror."

In just a blink of an eye, Doctor Takakura disappeared, leaving Feng Bujue alone in the room. A small framed mirror appeared on the table in front of him. There was a plastic support behind the mirror to help it stand still, and the mirror was leaning against its stand.

Feng Bujue moved his chair twice to adjust the angle that he could face the mirror at a close distance. He looked into the mirror. The man reflected there wasn’t him. It was a man who looked more than 40 years old, bearded and paled.

"Shuichi Hirata, we finally met," Feng Bujue talked to the face in the mirror. In the black-and-white world, he had read about Hirata’s profile, which had a small photo of him. Although the face in front of his eyes was a dozen years older, he could still recognize him.

Chapter 113: Hirata's World (8)

"Who are you?" the face in the mirror talked to Feng Bujue, "I don't know you."

"Who I am is not important," Feng Bujue answered, giving him a sharp look, "the most important thing is, who are you?"

"Of course I'm Shuichi Hirata," the other replied.

"No, you are not. You are just like him," Feng Bujue said, "don't pretend, I know there are other personalities living inside you. Your existence is unknown. Hirata doesn't know you; Takakura, Watanabe and, of course, Tachibana don't know you either." Feng Bujue boldly affirmed, "You are the leader who led the case 15 years ago."

"Oh, oh, ha, ha, ha, ha..." the man laughed out loud, "whoever you are, you are much better than that fool."

"You can call me Mr. F," said Feng Bujue.

"You can call me Shuichi Hirata," said the man.

"If you are Shuichi Hirata, then who is the one jailed in prison for mental disorder inmates for those 15 years?"

"An idiot whose name is the same with mine," answered the man.

"Understood," Feng Bujue said, "then I would like to ask when have you and that idiot been parted?" Feng Bujue followed his flow and threw him a question.

"After we graduated from the university," answered the man.

Feng Bujue smiled. "Well, would it then be easier for our conversation if I call you Hirata and that idiot Shuichi, is it okay?"

"As you please," said Hirata.

"After you guys had graduated, you, Hirata, wanted to stay and thrive in the big cities, while Shuichi was keen on going back to

work in his small hometown, is it?" asked Feng Bujue.

"You have understated your question, you idiot." Hirata in the mirror revealed a cold, merciless grin. "He had given up the chance to work in Tokyo. Moreover, he had purposely broken up with Miss Mikako, who was the daughter of a CEO of a big corporation. Many men were staring and drooling at her. Then, that idiot returned to his tiny hometown and married the girlfriend from his childhood and worked at that small company. Look at his consequences. That contemptible Haruko slyly cheated on him and went with Fukui while he was selling his life on working. However, the company still collapsed because of a disgusting man who had been the mediator and pocketing the budget. Six years of my life, the career of my whole life had been buried in that idiot's hands."

"Oh, so it happened like that..." Feng Bujue said, "The year you guys graduated, Shuichi had made an important yet sorrowful lifetime decision. And that's why you have split up from him to become an independent personality. Shuichi has the kind of personality who had decided to return to his hometown and get married. And you, Hirata, the one who had ambition, ability and were cold and merciless enough, still finally lost in Shuichi's hands." He paused for a while before continuing, "Until six years later, on November 24, 1990, when Hirata overheard the conversation between his two colleagues, he had totally collapsed. Then you took the upper hand and took control of the body."

"You are right, Mr. F," Hirata answered.

"You hated Shuichi down the guts. You hated his decision that year. You hated the way he controlled the body, and you hated him the most for ruining your future." Feng Bujue continued, "You wanted to take revenge by eradicating his life."

He had mused for two seconds before he continued to reason the details of the case, "As a well-educated man, with your excellent capability, moreover, you are ruthless enough, in this sort of

conducting crimes, you are much better than Shuichi. If you wanted to kill Fukui, you would have had many ways. However, killing Fukui wasn’t enough... From the details of the case and considering that after Shuichi murdered Fukui, the sentence he would have received would be insignificant... his colleagues and even Haruko would go to the court and be his barristers. Perhaps he would have been jailed for only several years." Feng Bujue smiled. "Thus, you went to kill a policeman, took his gun and killed Fukui. In such a serious case, even if Shuichi had wings, he couldn't have escaped."

"Yeah, you are really brilliant. Logically, it is explainable to kill a policeman. Even if Shuichi couldn't remember anything, with the obvious evidence, he couldn't say anything. In case you had killed a random passenger on the street to intensify your crime, you wouldn’t have any purpose for the murder. At the same time, as Shuichi didn’t know anything about that fragment of memory, he would be directly considered as a patient of Dissociative Identity Disorder. Thus, his murder case to Fukui could also be explained as a distorted mental problem."

Feng Bujue exhaled. "Phew... that’s why I say people who are good at planning are all dangerous." He retreated his neck. "Yeah, if I had conducted this crime... on the morning of November 25, I would have brought all the tools to solve the body to the place I had chosen to take my actions. The ruins caused by the storm would be a good choice."

"First, it was a familiar place to you. Next, no matter whether it was in the morning or at night, if some of your acquaintances accidentally saw you there, it would be easy to make up an excuse."

"In short, at night, you would find a random officer who was on his patrol with a gun, then find an excuse and lure him to that place. Then you would ambush him and hide him right there. In fact, you didn't want to hide him for a long time. It would be good if no one found him before you killed Fukui. Unexpectedly, the

police hadn’t paid attention to that property, that’s why they had only found the body seven years later."

"What? So those all came out from your assumptions?" asked Hirata.

"Yes. Actually, I should have thought about it earlier. But right at the beginning, I didn’t know about your existence," Feng Bujue answered, "Shuichi wouldn't do these things. He is far behind you. Even if he wanted to snatch the gun, he wouldn’t kill the person. At most, he would only struck him from behind, hoping that no one could figure it out before he successfully killed Fukui." His eyes rolled in as he beamed a smile. "But you, Hirata, isn’t like him. If the assumption were that you were the murderer, I’m sure I could come up with the details I’ve just said."

"Well then, just guess what would have happened after that," Hirata said.

"What had happened after that was simple. At the time you took control, Shuichi was in the state of having no memory at all," Feng Bujue answered, "after the noon of November 26, no doubt that you knew Haruko had left the place and went for Fukui. Thus, you put a piece of paper which read the address No. 4-5 Rokubancho and a gun into your pockets. You arrived at the area near Fukui’s Yokan House and then shifted the control of the body to Shuichi.

"As he had been cluelessly woken up all of a sudden, seeing the gun in his pocket, he was terrified. Then he found the piece of paper and dazedly came to Fukui’s Yokan House, barged into the room on the second floor, and ruined their good stuff. With his despicable characteristics, Fukui would definitely storm to him while cursing out loud to shoo him away.

"Rage, pain, confusion or the effects of any kind of your psychological hints, there are numerous possibilities leading to the case in which Shuichi shot the gun aimlessly while his mind was in chaos. This was inevitable. This was a trap you have set up for

him.

"Then, Shuichi had the second part of his memory. Not long after he shot the gun, you took over the control of the body again and continued your next step..."

Chapter 114: Hirata's World (9)

"Apparently, there's something Shuichi wasn't able to do. For example, leaving Fukui's body there," Feng Bujue said, "but you, Hirata-kun, your existence explains everything. To me, the moment you've appeared, this case became as easy as a piece of cake.

"You couldn't submit yourself since doing that would affect the level of the punishment. You then brought Haruko Sato home and scared her until she didn't dare to report anything. In her eyes, her tender husband had suddenly changed to a murderer. Moreover, she bore the responsibility regarding the death of Fukui, so it wasn't too difficult to threaten her. Next, what you have done with the gun was you hid it anywhere that the police could find later.

"The next day, you just pretended that nothing had happened and went to work at Shuichi's company. You are stronger than him. He doesn't know about your existence, but you have all of his memories. You came to his office on purpose and waited for the police to come and interrogate you. When the police came, you would be arrested to support the investigation of the case. It turned out the body had only been found on the afternoon of November 27, so no one had come for you until you finished your working time.

"On your way back home, perhaps something had popped up in your mind, and you returned the ability to control the body to Shuichi—because you wanted to see the drama of how he would react when he comes home and meets Haruko. At that time, Shuichi's mentality was on the edge and about to collapse. He was so panicked to the point that he didn't even remember his way home. This was when the third part of the memory began.

"When he returned to his room and saw his wife hanging herself there, his nerves completely collapsed. He screamed, and the old lady next door heard that so she paid him a visit. You moved the

body again and went to meet the old lady, purposely letting her see something strange in the room and then shooing her away, waiting for her to call the police. In short, you didn’t want to report the case yourself because it would create the pleadings.

"Finally, as you wished, the police had come and arrested you. They also found Yamada’s pistol. This explains why you were still calm enough to drink tea.

"After being arrested, your great revenge has been successful. You then returned to your world of consciousness and stayed there until today.

"And about Shuichi, he got crazy and imprisoned. The three distorted fragments of his memory had become terrible images, torturing him day and night. He had experienced this for 15 years. If nothing unexpected happened, this would continue until he dies."

"Ha, ha... Ha, ha, ha, ha..." Hirata opened his eyes wider, revealing an odd grin as he pressed his face onto the mirror. "That idiot deserves that."

"No. Actually, we can’t say that Shuichi’s choice is right or wrong. We can only say that good turns don’t return to good guys," Feng Bujue said, "but if it’s not because of you, he wouldn't be backed into this corner."

"So what do you want, Mr. F?" Hirata coldly sneered, "would you be able to change it?"

"No, I can’t. I can only give you and him an escape," answered Feng Bujue.

"Escape? Humph... Funny. He’s the one who bears the torture, I don’t need to—"

"There are three levels of memory here. Those days that Shuichi had been through was the deepest and most terrible level." Feng Bujue intervened him, "I don’t know how many levels you have,

but from your mental status, it should be only one. Yes, 15 years. Ah, no, 21 years, you still have been undergoing some terrible memory, which is the same as the ones in the deepest memory level Shuichi has. Am I right?"

"I don’t know what you are talking about." Hirata’s eyes flickered. His tone showed that he was lying.

"My consciousness isn’t created by this body. I can freely move between the prisons of thoughts. The more I know, the deeper I can access. Currently, I can always take over Hirata’s body. At the same time, I can come to your world and then throw you, yeah, to somewhere, who knows," Feng Bujue lowered his tone.

"It’s impossible!" Hirata shouted, "You—"

The mirror cracked into pieces before he could even finish his sentence.

Feng Bujue stood up. All the cuffs which were confining him had disappeared and the costume on his body had returned to the purple coat. He poked his hand into his pocket. The three keys were still there, and there was only one key he hadn’t used.

He walked towards the door of the patient room—the door that represented the prison of his thoughts—and unlocked it.

Beside the door, a white light flashed and swallowed Feng Bujue. One second later, he had experienced the scene transition again. But this time, it was under his control since he was entering an unknown world... Hirata’s world.

"Hirata-Kun... Is it true?"

A young and tender woman appeared in front of him. She looked over 20 years old, wearing a puffer jacket.

Feng Bujue was wearing his Joker costume, standing in front of her. This looked odd. Anyway, in that NPC’s eyes, she might only be seeing Shuichi Hirata.

The two of them were standing on a bridge, a familiar place for proposals, breaking up, suicides, street arts or other legendary risky events. The urban background around the bridge had indicated that this was a huge city. Although it was late at night, in a city where skyscrapers jutted up to the sky like a dense jungle, the scene was still luxurious and exotic as usual.

"Uh... what did you say?" Feng Bujue probed.

"Hirata–Kun, you've just told me that after you've graduated, you have to return to your hometown and get married to Miss Sato." Tears lingered on her eyes while she was talking.

"Miss Sato... so this female character is Mikako. Shuichi had chosen Haruko and Hirata..." Feng Bujue thought, "These years, Hirata has undergone the breaking up scene with Mikako everyday... That's Shuichi's decision, but it's also his memory. There are numerous times when he saw his lover crying and leaving, but he had no way to change it... The destiny he missed continuously happens in front of his eyes—this is one of the cruelest tortures."

He tried and found out that he could freely move. He could even take out the wrench or the gun. Anyway, it was not appropriate in the current situation. It seemed that this world and the previous black-and-white world were the same. The deeper the mental level was, the higher the level of freedom would be. At the levels closer to his rationality, his body would be restrained.

"Ah..." Feng Bujue smiled and flung back his head as he swaggered to Mikako. He then pulled her into his embrace with just one arm. Of course, his manners were still with him as he didn't kiss the woman.

"I will never leave you for the rest of my life. I love you," he said as if he was making a vow, saying something he had never ever uttered in his real life, just like he could addictively do it over and over again. Since he was just saying something on behalf of Hirata-

Kun, he could spit out these sort of words.

In fact, Feng Bujue's former girlfriend used to request him to tell her those three words, and his answer to her was, "Such a thing like 'I love you', a man can only say it once. When you are about to die, I will tell you that."

Since then, no more blind girls wanted to be with him. Such bliss to this world!

[Current Quest, accomplished. Main Quest, accomplished.]

The system's notification arose on time. Feng Bujue opened his menu and saw the three unfinished Main Quests—wait in the room until dawn, search the Yokan House, and work until end of working time—didn't have the checkmarks next to them. However, all of them were crossed.

A new quest appeared. That spot was blank before, just like this quest had always been there, but he couldn't see it. It read [Repair Hirata's mental world].

Right after the system's voice resounded, the quest appeared and instantly had a checkmark next to it.

In papers, Feng Bujue should hear the recommendation of teleportation, but it was odd that he didn't hear anything and suddenly returned to the first-person point of view and started to observe the computer graphics.

"Eh? So this scenario has an ending CG?" Feng Bujue thought, "Ah... yeah, true. More meaningful than just fighting."

After this ending CG, the system would prompt the teleportation option.

The image in front of his eyes started to change... This was a cloudy afternoon in a familiar street. The surroundings were colorful, which meant that this was the real world in this scenario.

Feng Bujue soon realized that this was the street that he had been

when he had just entered the scenario.

The image changed again. Two shadows were coming from afar, a man and a woman. The man was a gentleman wearing a well-fit suit. The woman looked elegant with fine temperament, wearing a dark coat.

Feng Bujue recognized them. They were Shuichi Hirata, who looked just a little bit over 20 years old, and Mikako, whom he had just met.

The conversation between them echoed in his ears.

"Are we there yet? Hirata-Kun."

"Yeah... There's a small part. We're almost there."

"Traffic in your hometown is so inconvenient."

"Yeah, ha, ha... a very old-fashioned place." Hirata scratched his head. "Taking the train and following me to such a rural area. And now we have to walk, it's hard for Mikako."

"Huh~" Mikako shook her head. "No, together with Hirata-Kun here... walking is alright..." She shyly bowed.

Feng Bujue spoke up in disdain, "Hey, what's this? The revised plot after I've decoded the worldview? Your uncle had fought for this Good End just to see such a flashback?! Hirata, you should die!"

"Ah, yeah, you know, there's a room ahead of us, not far from there, a very old one. When I was young, I heard old people say that there are ghosts dwelling there," said Hirata.

"Hey! Why do you need to mention that? Making a Death FLAG?" Feng Bujue immediately had a bad premonition.

"There are no ghosts in this world. It's just human imagination," Mikako said.

Hirata smiled. "Haha, you're right..."

At this moment, the screen zoomed to a far corner and turned into the general view of the whole small town. Lightning suddenly crossed through the dark gloomy sky, and one second after the lightning struck out, Feng Bujue saw a strange figure, wearing a white kimono, hiding on a pole not far behind Hirata and Mikako...

Chapter 115: Intermission (28)

This was the last image the scenario had shown Feng Bujue. After that, he got teleported. When he returned to his login space, Feng Bujue opened the menu to check the calculation for his rewards.

[Scenario completed. Calculating for rewards...]

[EXP received: 5,000.

Game Coins received: 50,000]

[Items received: None]

[Completed/Received Quests: 3/6]

[Special, [Hidden Quest] completed: 0]

[Decoded Worldview: 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: 500]

[EXP increased by Skill Value: 5,000.

Game Coins increased by Skill Value: 50,000]

[Rewards for completing the scenario: Jigsaw Puzzle Pieces x 2 pcs]

[Calculation completed. Please continue.]

"Hey! Isn’t this cheating!" After Feng Bujue got teleported, he didn’t care about his rewards calculation; quite the contrary, he couldn't help but yell, "This ending isn’t better than typing a line ‘Shuichi Hirata dies with a satisfied face in his cell!’ Such a standard and shocking horror movie ending is too depressing!

Logically, with this setting, the plot would be changed like... after they graduated, Hirata and Mikako returned to his hometown, got married and then ghosts had killed them all? Isn’t it a mistake?!"

He panted and exhaled as he stared at the screen. He had obviously completed the scenario, but he didn't feel relief or a sense of accomplishment when he was able to finish a Nightmare Difficulty level scenario. Quite the contrary, he somehow felt depressed.

Anyway, Feng Bujue was always Feng Bujue. He soon pulled himself together. Being a young man who could stand against waves and strong wind, it was okay if he had encountered one or two novels with a bad ending. He considered himself a speck of dust in this mortal world. Deeply inhale... Heavily exhale...

"Sigh, everything should be considered from a positive point of view. EXP and coins being added by Skill Value from Single-player Survival Mode at Nightmare Difficulty Level are the standard rewards of Multiplayer Survival Mode." He thought, "Moreover, I can have a random item. Such malicious ending should be soon forgotten."

In fact, generally, Feng Bujue was lucky enough to finish this scenario. ‘Instant Death FLAGs’ which delivered an instant death after being triggered were everywhere. At the beginning of this scenario, the black-and-white world was one of the tests given to challenge the player’s Fear Value. Although Feng Bujue had lost his sense of fear, being a man who had lived for twenty-three years with a normal sense of fear, he understood well that those things were too scary to ordinary people. He just couldn't have a proper reaction. If it were another player, he would have soon made wrong choices.

Since the system had generated scenarios based on players’ experience, besides the Newbie Tutorial, whenever Feng Bujue would enter Single-player Survival Mode, he always met solving-puzzle-like scenarios, where he was provoked with rush and

intimidation, and he had almost no chance for a fair fight. Moreover, instant Death FLAGs were everywhere.

Not long after that, Feng Bujue understood it. If he depended on his unchanged Fear Value to play Single-player Survival Mode... it wouldn’t be simple. If he wanted EXP, clearing the scenario was the primary condition since he would have nothing, even a bit of EXP, if he died in a Single-player Survival Mode. However, if he spent the same amount of time to play Multiplayer Survival Mode, even if he got killed along the way, but his teammates could eventually finish the scenario, at least he would receive EXP relative to his contribution to the development of the scenario. If he had to compare between them, apparently, playing multiple-player mode could ensure that his benefits would be better since the ratio of an individual’s mistake, which could be covered by the others, was pretty high. For instance, the scenario of the hunter’s island. Among the five players, one had lost connection, one submitted himself to death, but they still made it at the end.

...

The familiar white halo started to materialize, and two cards appeared inside the glass columns. Jigsaw Puzzle Cards only had names without details or descriptions. Feng Bujue eyed the two cards. They were Jigsaw Puzzle Piece: Sunglasses and Jigsaw Puzzle Piece: Spinner. Basically, they weren’t related at all. If he put them together with his Jigsaw Puzzle Piece: Monkey, it would be...

An image of a monkey wearing sunglasses and standing on a spinner flashed over his mind.

"Yeah, I shouldn't think about it," he mumbled to himself.

Anyway, if the card sets function had been opened, he should try his luck. He took the Jigsaw Puzzle Piece: Monkey from his storage, put it together with the other two cards he was holding in his hands, opened the menu and chose ‘Combine’ option.

The results he got was a system’s reminder that read [Can’t check a reasonable combination]. In other words, two among the three or all of these three cards couldn't be considered a hand.

So, Feng Bujue determinedly threw all three of the cards into his storage. 10 slots of his login space storage were not occupied though.

"Anyway, the card series could be exchanged for 100% items graded Excellent; it’s not easy to make a series indeed," Feng Bujue thought.

When he was at the Auction House in the Mall, he had checked for those cards, but he had never found one. Might be it was because the Open Beta had just begun and the Jigsaw Puzzle Piece Cards were kind of rare, so they had no suppliers now. Perhaps players had kept them for their own sake since they all thought that the Jigsaw Puzzle Piece Card was one of the effective ways to get the items graded Perfect and more than that. If they sold them now, it wouldn't be a good deal. And, there was another possibility. Whenever a Jigsaw Puzzle Piece Card was displayed on the shelf, people would buy them immediately with the selling price. That’s why Feng Bujue hadn’t seen anyone selling them when he was wandering around the Auction House.

In short, Feng Bujue wouldn’t easily sell his Jigsaw Puzzle Piece Cards. He thought that these card sets were somehow interesting and he wanted to make a hand.

"Alright, I don’t think that I will receive such children toys like the children bat after this second time of lucky draw!" He then moved to another glass column with his murderous aura permeating the whole room. He smoothly operated without waiting for the system’s notification, choosing receiving item as his rewards.

This time, according to the shape of the white halo, it wouldn’t be the children’s baseball bat. Of course, it wasn’t a stone either.

However, Feng Bujue had a very bad feeling seeing the shape of the object inside the halo.

[Name: The Broken Bench of the Eighteen Bronze Statues (Number 5)]

[Type: Weapon]

[Quality: Broken]

[Attack power: Weak]

[Attributes: None]

[Special Effects: When used to attack humanoid creatures, it will absolutely not break. Moreover, it has a certain chance that the target would receive [Bleeding] effect.]

[Remarks: Folding stool, can be seen and hid inside any residential areas, available everywhere; when sitting on it, user can hide their murderous intention. It is not considered a cool weapon. Even if police catches you, they can't do anything. It's honored to be voted as the top of the seven street weapons.]

The stool had a round seat with the ladder-shaped bracket support. It was made from iron and painted in black. Its appearance suited the description which said 'Broken' pretty well. Old, incomplete, but better than nothing.

Chapter 116: Intermission (29)

From his friendlist, Feng Bujue saw Little Tan's and others' statuses were still [Playing], so he paid a visit to the Box of Fear again. The number of goods there had been increased thrice compared to that of the afternoon. Moreover, it was still increasing. At this moment, even if he just read the names, he wasn't able to read them all. Thus, he could only search randomly.

And it went like that for an hour. Feng Bujue returned to his login space and checked his friendlist. He then saw his friends' statuses had changed to [Idle] one by one. These three had almost left the scenario at the same time. Basically, there were two possibilities. The first one, they all got killed at the same time; and the second one, of course, they had finished the scenario and got teleported.

Feng Bujue still thought that the second one was more likely to be the case, mostly because he did believe in the ability of the two ladies. He didn't send them messages but invited them directly to his conference room. As soon as Little Tan received the invite, he casually added Feng Bujue to the team and handed over the captain role to him.

Like Rain was the first one who entered the room. Looking at Feng Bujue's expression, she instinctively asked, "Lost the Killing Game?"

"Sort of..." answered Feng Bujue.

At this moment, the door opened again, and Dispirited, with a smile on her face, overheard their conversation. "Captain, losing is losing. What do you mean by saying 'sort of'?"

"No need to mention that." Feng Bujue felt he could only use these words to answer.

The door, which had just closed, opened again. Little Tan arrived

while holding some snack. He spoke up with food in his mouth, "Yo, Jue-Ge, is that Joker's appearance?"

"Yep. Your humble servant styled it himself," answered Feng Bujue contentedly.

"I don't dare to compliment this taste," Like Rain's comment splashed him a bucket of cold water.

"Hm, hm..." Feng Bujue immediately shifted his countenance to be more serious and changed the topic. "Hey, besides the Killing Game, I've just tried Single-player Survival Mode at Nightmare difficulty level."

"You lost it too?" Dispirited teased him maliciously, revealing her mischievousness.

"I made it. I did it." Feng Bujue's face was somber. "Anyway, the feeling when I passed the scenario is—how can I describe it—not better than getting killed in the middle of the game."

"So the plot is a Bad End one." Like Rain sensitively smelt something.

"Ah... anyway, personally, I don't recommend you guys, especially Little Tan, to try that game mode," said Feng Bujue.

"I won't play even if you ask me to! Even if it isn't the Single-player Survival Mode Nightmare difficulty, I don't dare to play..." answered Little Tan.

Dispirited threw him a glance, using her eyes to show her scorn for him. "Well, you even screamed when we were playing Multiplayer Survival Mode. Since we are from the same union, I also felt ashamed."

"Well, you will get used to it after a while. If Little Tan isn't terrified to the point of getting forced to disconnect and he can survive until the scenario is clear, we should acknowledge his ability," said Feng Bujue.

"Yeah... you're talking like you're giving me a way out. But your words are like sabers stabbing me... Good one." Little Tan glumly swallowed a mouthful of snack.

Feng Bujue didn't pay attention to him and started to talk about the main topic. "Alright, now we should discuss what we should play next. Considering that we have four players, if we want to join Killing Game, it should be 2 versus 2. Civil war. Or shall we continue playing Multiplayer Survival Mode?"

"You haven't played Multiplayer Survival Mode with us yet. We should play once," Like Rain answered.

"Agree," said Dispirited.

"No objection," said Little Tan.

"By the way, after this scenario, we girls have to log out," Like Rain said.

"Understood. It's not good to sleep in the cabin game for a long time." Feng Bujue smiled. He still remembered what Like Rain told him this afternoon. "You've played two multiplayer scenarios. One more scenario and it's time to rest."

"So, as we are here in the conference room, we should know about each other's stats before we queue for the new game," Like Rain said.

"Makes sense. We can avoid misunderstanding teammates' details during the game." Feng Bujue nodded in agreement. "We should speak about our personal stats first."

Like Rain spoke up as if she wanted to give them a sample. "I'm at level 15. My title has changed to Spirit Serving Swordsman; the skill granted from this title can passively increase damage when using swords against spirits. My highest graded Specialty is Fighting D, and the worse ones are Curing and Summon. These two aren't unlocked yet. I've just changed my new main weapon too. Currently, this weapon could be used for quite a long time."

She took out an item from her bag, using 3D hologram function to display it on the conference table.

[Name: Canonization]

[Type: Weapon]

[Quality: Normal]

[Attack Power: Medium]

[Attribute: None]

[Special Effects: User’s Spiritual Value recovery speed can be increased by 50%.]

[Equipment Conditions: Fighting Specialty D]

[Remarks: The main power of this sword has been sealed. After killing and accumulating a certain number of evil spirits, the seal will be lifted. At that time, this sword can fully perform its original power.]

"Wow! This is awesome! It’s not a Spiritual Weapon, but it can develop further," said Feng Bujue.

"Spiritual Weapons?" The other three looked at him with curious eyes.

Feng Bujue then displayed his Death Poker on the table and then followed Like Rain to share his stats.

Title: The Plot Seeker

EXP: 11000/15000

Skill Value: 1,580

Game coins: 20,4600.

Specialties: Common D, Weapon E, Investigating E, Fighting D (increased by the mask), Shooting D, Curing F, Spiritual F and Summon N/A.

Bag: 7/10, including [Mario’s Pipe Wrench], [The Eye of Hatred],

[M1011A9 Pistol] (2 bullets left), [Echo Armor], Survival Value Supplements (Medium) x 4, [Dagger], and [Flashlight].

Equipment: [Dance of the Knight], [Casey Jones' mask], [The Death Poker].

Login Space storage: 3/10 including, Jigsaw Puzzle Piece: Monkey, Jigsaw Puzzle Piece: Sunglasses, Jigsaw Puzzle Piece: Spinner.

Skills: [Perfunctory Maintenance], [Lower Side Kick of a Brat], [Body-Spirit Congregation Technique], and [Planned Victory from Thousand Miles Away].

After having Feng Bujue share his stats, the other three were startled. Of course, he didn't describe everything in detail as he just copied Like Rain's way of describing her skill. He just talked something about his skill granted from the title, the highest grade of his specialties, and the unlocked specialties. Then, he showed off his Death Poker.

Anyway, these things were enough to jump to the conclusion that he was incredible now. In fact, compared to the standard of a player at level 15, Like Rain was the best representative for an excellent ordinary player. The difference between her and the other professional gamers were just the time they had spent and the attitude towards the game. Under the circumstances that they were at the same level with similar items, Like Rain's fighting capacity wouldn't be less than Saber Sword Smile from the Martial World or the Four Great Gods from The Immortals. However, she had only trained her Fighting Specialty to Grade D, and she didn't have a Spiritual Weapon yet.

Just like Feng Bujue, besides Summon, his Specialties were all unlocked. Moreover, there were three graded D and two graded E. Whether he had used items to enhance his Specialties or not, such stats were out of reach.

Of course, there were many hidden risks along the way he had

walked to achieve them. In comparison to other players who had trained one or two Specialties only, what he lacked the most was his practical fighting experience. It could be seen in the match he had with Wild Trace Sword Shadow. Moreover, until now, he didn’t have any fighting skill to depend on. [Body-Spirit Congregation Technique] could just enhance his physical strength. To a player who was completely not familiar with fighting skills like him, it was like pouring 97 RON fuel into a tractor... Well, in fact, it should be diesel though.

Players’ capacity and the capacity of their characters were two different concepts. If we considered his [Planned Victory from Thousand Miles Away] as his signature, then, in fact, he was just a player characterized in solving puzzles whose Specialties were pretty high.

"Jue-Ge, this weapon is invincible! How did you get it?" Little Tan asked.

"I completed a [Hidden Quest] in the Killing Game," Feng Bujue answered, "and, let alone the result, that plot isn’t bad. It used the plot of ‘Thunderbolt Fantasy’ and I just needed to compose a poem to accomplish the quest."

"Poem? You can make those stuff?" asked Dispirited.

"What’s the matter? It’s my job..." Feng Bujue said, "your IDs also belong to the Thunderbolt, do you need me to write two pieces of poem for you?"

"No need."

"No thanks."

The two girls immediately refused.

"Okay... Alright," Feng Bujue said with embarrassment, "then we should continue. Little Tan, tell us about your fighting capacity."

Little Tan shoved a potato chip into his mouth and sucked his fingers. From his face, which looked like he was wondering about

something, perhaps he didn’t even know his basic stats, so he had to check his menu first. Seconds later, he spoke up, "Yeah, I’m at level 15, too. My title finally changed, from [The Flustered Ambusher] to [The Nervous Long-range Warrior]. I think it’s a little bit better... The title grants me a proactive still, called Bee Sting that could leave opponents with [Bleeding] effect. My highest grade of Specialties is Fighting D. I haven’t unlocked Spiritual and Summon Specialties. Common and Shooting E, and the other three are graded F. My main weapon is from the shop, Damascus Dagger (1). I sold the chef knife, and I haven’t used [Largo Quicksand] yet. Ah, Jue-Ge, your Winchester shotgun is still here. I forgot to give it back to you."

Feng Bujue flung his sleeves. "You can keep that gun. I have many weapons now." Upon saying this words, he stood up and lifted his stool.

Since the conference table had covered it, now people could notice that from the beginning, Feng Bujue hadn’t sat on the chair equipped with the conference room as he had been sitting on a broken stool all the time.

"Seeing your reaction, my mind could be at ease," Feng Bujue said then retrieved the broken stool into his bag. It now occupied the eighth slot there.

"Hey... is that a weapon?" Little Tan asked.

"True. Moreover, after conducting the experiment, I can confirm..." Feng Bujue said, "sitting on this stool can help you hide your murderous intents."

"Are you going to use this to stealth someone else in the Killing Game..." Dispirited soon understood his mind.

"Certainly."

"Good luck then..."

Feng Bujue shrugged and talked to Little Tan, "Back to the main

topic, can you elaborate your skill, Bee Sting?"

[Name: Bee Sting]

[Type of Special Ability: Proactive]

[Consumption: 7% of the highest Physical Value]

[Effects: Comes to effect after hitting the target, giving the target [Bleeding] effect for two minutes. The effects could be piled up to ten layers. No matter which layer, the duration will depend on the time of the last use to calculate. (No cooldown time. Need to use a cold weapon to cut target's skin in order to use this skill. Only works on one target at a time.).]

[Remarks: If you are not taking the upper hand in strength, don't be afraid to try the war of attrition.]

Little Tan described the general effects of his skill; having listened to him, Feng Bujue nodded. "Not bad, if you can use it with the Physical Value Supplement, you can even wear out a strong player to death."

"Only players?" Little Tan smiled. "I can even use it to deal with a sturdy BOSS though. If I'm playing with another player, he or she can always use medicines or bandage."

"No, your nauseating skill is very suitable to deal with other players." Feng Bujue shook his head. "It will immediately cause [Bleeding] effect when hitting the target. You can use it constantly without a CD (cooldown time). With your full bar of Physical Value, you can make the opponent bleed dozens of times. Although the effective time is short, if you can pile it up, and if your opponent cares about it, he will just waste his bandage. At that time, your [Bee Sting] will surely give your opponent a headache. When the wound is not serious, using bandage is a waste; but when it becomes more severe, then they have to use many blood bottles."

Apparently, Like Rain agreed with Feng Bujue. She added, "It's you who overthinks about wearing out the sturdy BOSS to death."

Little Tan’s face was dulled. "Eh? Why?"

Feng Bujue sighed. "If there exists this sort of BOSS, with its recovery ability, it can always dissolve your skill. This is just a simple rule. Agile monsters are usually weak, and the slow ones will have an intimidating destruction ability or tough defensive power."

"Ah, anyway, to be honest, I don't want to fight against other players. I feel it’s not suitable for me."

"Alright, they just wanted to talk about your skills," Dispirited spoke to him then immediately turned around. "My turn. My level is a little bit lower, level 14. My title hasn’t changed yet, still [The Skilled Gunman]. The skill I got from my title is a passive one, and it isn’t related to fighting since the effect is that I can put bullets of three different weapons in one slot. Obviously, my favorite Specialty is Shooting. It’s graded D now. Besides Summon, I’ve unlocked all the others. Anyway, I’m not as excellent as our captain. My Common, Weapon and Investigating are all E, and the others are F. About weapons... I don't have a signature weapon. I often use three different types of guns."

It could be considered that they had finished exchanging information. Feng Bujue mused for a while then spoke up, "Yeah, I understood the profile of our team. Time to go."

Chapter 117: Deadly Jeopardy (1)

[Feng Bujue, level 15]

[Wang Tanzhi, level 15]

[Like Rain, level 15]

[Dispirited Laughing Bones, level 14]

[Please select the playing mode for your team.]

[You've selected Multiplayer Survival Mode (Normal), please confirm.]

[Confirmed. Random number of members of your party is generated: 4 players.]

[Your team is queuing...]

[Matching completed. Adjusting nervous connection... Generating scenario...]

[Loading... Please wait...]

It seemed that this time, the four of them were 'lucky' enough to enter a scenario for four players. However, abnormality had already happened during the plot's generating process as they hadn't heard the greeting 'Welcome to Thriller Paradise'.

Moreover, the four of them hadn't been teleported as what usually happened when they played Multiplayer Survival Mode (Normal). Also, the system didn't give them CG introduction in first-person point of view. They could only feel that their elevator booths had moved for a certain distance and then they heard the system's prompt.

[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: A random Skill Card that player is able to learn.]

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

One second later, nothing happened. No brief introduction.

"What’s going on?" The four of them in their own elevator booth were having the same thought.

All of a sudden, they felt void under their feet as they immediately fell down.

The floor of their booths didn't give any signals; they just cracked open. Such a sudden event, no one had time to react. Fortunately, this wasn’t an open-door-instant-kill setting as players had just fallen two meters from above into a big slide. An invisible force then drew them sliding forward in their own, separate slide.

This kind of slide looked similar to that in a water park; however, there was no water as they were using some suction force to push objects, gliding away on the slide with a fast speed.

At this moment, the four of them were helplessly sliding forward in the dark. They didn't know their teammates’ locations or see anything as they just continued moving forward pretty fast in their own slide.

Not long after that, this confusing opening was over. They arrived at the end of the glide one by one.

That invisible force pushed Feng Bujue to fall on a chair which had a wide backrest. Then, this chair automatically spun and floated up. When the chair finally stopped, Feng Bujue had arrived at a spacious place. The surrounding was really dark. He couldn't see anything outside the radius of 10 meters.

After he had checked his surroundings, Feng Bujue found that the situation of Little Tan, Like Rain and Dispirited was the same with him as they were sitting on three different chairs. Standing in

front of each of them was a control panel. Each player now occupied a slot. A round space roughly 10 meters in diameter stood in the center. The floor was tiled with black and white patterns, just like a giant chessboard.

When they still couldn't make heads or tails of it, a deep but very stimulating voice arose in the dark.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, together with our audience who I can't tell the genders, welcome to the stage of the 'Deadly Jeopardy'. Please welcome our host, Mister Yu!"

A spotlight pierced through the dark, gloomy space, shining on a path connected to the round stage in the center. Standing at the end of that path was a massive gate in the shape of a skull. At this moment, the gate opened. White fog massively rolled out from there. No one could sure if it was real fog or just dry ice. One second later, more than 10 vibrant spotlights illuminated the whole place. Accompanied by Gangnam Style, a fat guy was dancing the horse riding dance moves from behind the skull gate to the stage. The dark surrounding suddenly boiled up with applause and cheering.

Mr. Yu was a bald guy, wearing a tuxedo that was tailored to fit his flabby body, accessorized with round, small sunglasses and a black top hat. His appearance looked pretty naive and sincere; despite his chubby body, he was flexible enough with his dance moves. He was dancing like a penguin to the center of the stage. When the music ended, he posed as The Thinker by Auguste Rodin...

"Hey, what kind of joke is that? You mean that horse riding moves can survive for more than 30 years..." Feng Bujue said.

"Welcome! Here is—" Mr. Yu raised the microphone in his hand and held it in the middle of the air.

At this moment, the light suddenly turned on. Feng Bujue finally could clearly see everything around him. This place looked like a

live recording studio for big game shows. The ceiling was filled with brackets and support of lighting system. Electricity lines, wires, and cords for sounding were everywhere. The four of them were sitting in front of the round stage in the center. The panel in front of them had a bendable microphone, a bowl-sized button to seize the chance to answer first, and four more buttons for A-B-C-D multiple choices and another display screen.

Behind their back was the audience's seating. Numerous ghosts and monsters, which should be numbered thousands, were cheering from there. It almost had all kind of monsters including oriental ghosts, western demons, monsters, orcs, goblins, vampires, werewolves, Frankenstein, etc. Perhaps in this place, humans were the odd ones out.

"DEADLY! JEOPARDY!" Under the circumstances that there was no stage director to control them, the audience was still excited enough to neatly and loudly cooperate with the host.

"Ho, ho, ho." Mr. Yu laughed with Anzai-sensei's style. Then, he clapped his hands, and a cane suddenly emerged from thin air.

Mr. Yu held the microphone with one hand, while the other was raising the cane. He then said, "So... let me introduce our four players today!" The cane in his hand nimbly spun for several rounds. Next, he pointed at Feng Bujue. "Player number one, Feng Bujue." Then, he kept going on like that to introduce each of them. "Number two, Wang Tanzhi. Number three, Like Rain. Number four, Dispirited Laughing Bones."

"The rewards for the best player of today is—"Mr. Yu used the hand which was holding his microphone to take out a plastic medicine bottle from his vest pocket. There was no label or description on the bottle. "A bottle of SCP-500, 20 pills of [Panacea]." He raised the bottle to show it. With a quick move like a magic trick, he lowered his hand, and the bottle suddenly disappeared into thin air. "Of course, if they all die in the game, this reward will be accumulated."

During this introduction, Feng Bujue didn’t stay idle. He had used [Planned Victory in Thousand Miles Away] to check the final BOSS in this scenario. It turned out what he was reading was the data of that plump host standing in front of him.

His data was as follows:

[Name: Mr. Yu]

[Race: Demigod]

[Level: Beyond the maximum value that the system could check]

[Height: 160 cm]

[Weight: 103 kg]

[Fighting signatures: ???]

[Weakness: ???]

[Skills: ???]

[Level of Menace: Extremely deadly]

At this moment, Mr. Yu said, "Good then. Now, let's listen to the players’ mottos before the game. First, player number one, Mr. Feng."

"Uh.... I think we should closely follow the game’s rules," said Feng Bujue while trying to wink at his teammates like crazy.

Before they had started the game, everyone had understood each other’s situation; thus, the other three obviously knew the effect of the skill Feng Bujue had been granted of from his title. When they heard him say so, they all got it. Don’t resist at any cost... if they went against the rules of the scenario, only death awaits them.

In fact, even if Feng Bujue didn’t say anything to warn them, still, the others wouldn't dare to act recklessly. Although they didn't know how tremendous that sincere fat guy would be, they had to be afraid of the powers of the monstrous audience. So many powerful monsters were here. Just with the massive number, they

could eradicate the four of them instantly.

"Seems it's just a nonsense saying," Mr. Yu smiled, and the audience burst out laughing. He then pointed at Little Tan. "Player number two, please."

"Eh? Me?" Little Tan was dumbfounded. "It's... is it possible to leave here now?"

"Good question. And the answer is, of course," Mr. Yu paused and smiled, "nope."

The audience laughed again. The corners of Little Tan's mouth was forced to curl into a smile.

"So, player number three, please," Mr. Yu faced Like Rain and said.

"Nothing special to say," Like Rain coldly answered him.

"This beauty is so cold," Mr. Yu shrugged then shifted to Dispirited. "Player number four."

"Can I ask about the function of the reward?" Dispirited's performance was practical.

Mr. Yu arched his eyebrows, showing a chummy, reliable expression. "It can cure all diseases."

"Ah, can I ask one more thing?" Dispirited still wanted to ask more but Mr. Yu had interrupted her.

"Excellent! Ladies and gentlemen, before the first round begins, let me introduce our three special guests tonight!" Mr. Yu pointed at a front row at the audience seating. The spotlight cooperated with him well and shone on that area.

The first one on the left was a blonde, Caucasian woman, wearing a black suit, crossing her arms under her ample bosom. She looked around 30 years old, pretty beautiful with a look of disdain and contempt.

"Our first guest, Madam 'Superbia' from The Seven Deadly Sins."

Mr. Yu introduced the woman.

"Harrumph..." When the camera zoomed over her, Superbia snorted coldly and turned away.

Anyway, the reaction of the crowd was so boisterous. Cheering and whistling constantly reverberated the whole place.

Sitting next to Superbia was a young man who looked a bit more than 20 years old and also wore a black suit. This man had pulled up his hair into a ponytail. Accompanying his ashen face was a pair of empty eyes. He was almost lying on his seat.

"Our second guest, Young Master Pestilence from Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," said Mr. Yu.

The spotlight shone on Pestilence. He then covered his eyes with his hands, just like the light could harm his feeble body. He dryly coughed then said, "Cough... Cough... Seems I don't feel well..."

"Every time I see you, you say the same thing... It's alright, you are much better than the Young Master of Kidney Failure," said Mr. Yu.

The audience burst out laughing again.

The spotlight then immediately shone on the last guest. Sitting there was a middle-aged man. His face was full of fortitude with spirited eyes. He was wearing a pair of jeans and short-sleeved jacket. The muscles bulging on his arms were like they were from a sculpture.

"Next, our third guest, the God of Fire, Mr. Hephaestus!" Mr. Yu added, "at the same time, he is the sponsor of the reward of our program today!"

"Actually, I felt bored playing with Cyclops at the mining site. That's why I came here," said Hephaestus.

The audience gave him a scattered applause. A part among them was with Cyclops, and they were giving him 'boo' with a

considerable degree of dissatisfaction.

"Excellent, you guys, our show will begin now—" Mr. Yu suddenly glided to reach the camera, zooming his face into a very good close-up, craning his neck and delivering an amazing announcement: "The Box of Fear is the exclusive sponsor of this show. Sending a text to predict the winner, if you got it correct, you would receive an Excellent Gift from the Box of Fear, equivalent to 1000 Ghost Coins. Moreover, you can also visit the website below to join us directly! Exchange and get gifts from The Box of Fear! Win the prize, watch us on the Deadly Jeopardy! Thanks for watching!"

"That's why this scenario doesn't have a brief introduction or the greeting 'Welcome to Thriller Paradise'." Feng Bujue looked at the fat guy who was doing the advertising and thought, "Turns out that the host will explain everything."

Feng Bujue observed the crowd of monsters surrounding them. Each of them was really tough to mess with. Moreover, perhaps that Mr. Yu had the power to mash him into a pulp in just a second. It seemed that the chance for fighting in this scenario was pretty low. Under such circumstances where they didn't have much freedom in this scenario, not to mention having no clues about the 'Deadly Jeopardy', from what Mr. Yu had said, there should be fatal possibilities during the game. Furthermore, if they wanted to complete the scenario, there might be only one way—play the show to the end.

"First of all, it's the first round, the Required Questions!" Mr. Yu threw his cane into the air. With a slight 'boom', it disappeared, not even leaving a single trace. Next, he took out a deck of cards from his vest pocket. Those cards had the size of an envelope, and the material looked rigid. The logo of Deadly Jeopardy was printed on the back of the cards, and only the host could read the contents written on the cards.

"The rules of this round are, I will call your number in order and

give you guys a question. You have 45 seconds to answer each question. If you get it correct, you will gain 10 points. If you get it wrong or skip your question, your points will be reduced by 10 points. There are 16 questions in total. At the end of this round, whoever has the lowest scores will have to enter the Arena."

After Mr. Yu was done reading the rules, he immediately shifted his eyes to Feng Bujue. "So, please listen to your first question!"

Feng Bujue had no time to weigh what the ‘Arena’ was, so he couldn't help but pull his nerves together and listen to the question.

"This is a historical question," Mr. Yu said with a melodious tone and a good rhythm, "Please answer..."

Gangnam Style: "Gangnam Style" (Korean: 강남스타일, IPA: [kaŋ.nam sɯ.tʰa.il]) is the 18th K-pop single by the South Korean musician Psy. The song was released on July 15, 2012, as the lead single of his sixth studio album Psy 6 (Six Rules), Part 1, and debuted at number one on South Korea's Gaon Chart. On December 21, 2012, "Gangnam Style" became the first YouTube video to reach one billion views

The Thinker: The Thinker (French: Le Penseur) is a bronze sculpture by Auguste Rodin, usually placed on a stone pedestal. The work shows a nude male figure of over life-size sitting on a rock with his chin resting on one hand as though deep in thought and is often used as an image to represent philosophy.

Anzai-sensei: Mitsuyoshi Anzai (安西光義Anzai Mitsuyoshi) is the coach of the Shohoku High School basketball team and one of the best coaches in Japan in manga Slam Dunk. Even the coaches of other teams call him "Anzai-sensei" with respect. His calm and collected attitude contrasts with the temper he had in the past as a demanding college coach, earning him the nickname, "White-Haired Devil".

Superbia: In almost every list Pride (Latin, superbia), or hubris, is

considered the original and most serious of the seven deadly sins, and indeed the ultimate source from which the others arise. It is identified as a desire to be more important or attractive than others, failing to acknowledge the good work of others, and excessive love of self (especially holding self out of proper position toward God).

Pestilence: one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, and is associated with infectious disease and plague. It appears at least as early as 1906 when it is mentioned in the Jewish Encyclopedia. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, in his 1916 novel The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (filmed in 1921 and in 1962), provides an early example of this interpretation, writing "The horseman on the white horse was clad in a showy and barbarous attire. [...] While his horse continued galloping, he was bending his bow in order to spread pestilence abroad. At his back swung the brass quiver filled with poisoned arrows, containing the germs of all diseases."

Chinese medicine believes that a man’s strength comes from his kidneys, calling someone kidney failure is an ironic way to mock people about his sexual abilities.

Hephaestus (/hɪˈfiːstəs/, həˈfɛstəs or hɬˈfɛstəs; eight spellings; Greek: Ἥφαιστος Hēphaistos) is the Greek god of blacksmiths, craftsmen, artisans, sculptors, metals, metallurgy, fire, and volcanoes. Hephaestus' Roman equivalent is Vulcan. In Greek mythology, Hephaestus was the son of Zeus and Hera, the king, and queen of the gods. In another version, he was Hera's parthenogenesis child, rejected by his mother because of his deformity and thrown off Mount Olympus and down to earth

Chapter 118: Deadly Jeopardy (2)

Although Mr. Yu had said ‘Please answer’, he didn’t read the question out loud immediately; instead, he squinted his eyes with a smile. "The first question is always pretty simple, no need to be nervous."

"Did I say I’m nervous? History is my strength," said Feng Bujue calmly.

"Okay, your question is... Di Ren Jie..." after the last three words came out from Mr. Yu’s mouth, Feng Bujue exhaled in relief. He was worrying that the other would give him a question regarding the virtual world, just like questions about Li Yuan Fang or something. Lucky him, that fat guy spit out a real historical figure. His knowledge could be useful then.

"Each of us knows about him, Di Ren Jie, the Grand Councilor in the age of Wu Zhou. I heard that he got good tricks in investigating." Fatty Yu only made half way before he turned around to babble again.

"Please finish your question!" Feng Bujue shouted at him.

"Ha, ha, my bad, my bad," Mr. Yu continued, "your question is, what is Di Ren Ji’s Chinese Zodiac sign?"

"Wut?" Feng Bujue was dumbstruck.

Little Tan and the others originally wanted to give him a hand, but after they had heard the question, they were all puzzled.

"Your 45 seconds countdown begins!" Mr. Yu said, and simultaneously, all the speakers in the studio played the ticking countdown sound.

"What kind of historical question is that... it’s more like testing my skills in math!" Feng Bujue muttered, "Well, fortunately, that Di Ren Jie’s years of birth and death are all integers. Easy to remember though. The year 630 and 700. 2055 is the year of the

pig..."

"30 seconds left," Mr. Yu reminded, his face looking pretty tender.

"The year of the tiger!" Feng Bujue remained unmoved; he didn't hesitate to give the answer.

"Correct answer," said Mr. Yu.

The audience responded with applause. Mr. Yu raised his hand, and the card which had the first question instantly got burned as it vanished into thin air.

"The second question," Mr. Yu turned to Little Tan, "Player number two looks so nervous."

"Excuse me... that first question is really the easiest question?" Little Tan paled.

"Ha, ha...of course," Mr. Yu slightly laughed, "good, pay attention to your question, please. This is a question regarding... sports." He looked at the card and whispered, "list the name of three random athletes who have won the UK Snooker Championship." He looked up and eyed Little Tan. "Countdown time for your answer starts!"

"Must list the full names?" asked Little Tan.

"Yes," Mr. Yu answered, "Keep in mind that you can't give a wrong name. One wrong name given can be considered a wrong answer. And, please seize the time."

"Ugh... Joe Davis," First, Little Tan said the name he was most certain about.

"Correct, one," said Mr. Yu.

"Stephen Hendry."

"Correct, two," Mr. Yu reminded, "30 seconds left."

"Ding Jun Hui!" Little Tan promptly answered.

"Yeah," Mr. Yu mused for the whole two seconds, "absolutely

correct."

"Phew..." Little Tan lay on his control panel.

The encouraging applause echoed.

"Ha, ha... That's why I said no need to be nervous. That question was quite easy, right?" Mr. Yu said, "Almost all are general knowledge." He took out the microphone, cleared his throat and called Like Rain. "Player number three, please listen to the third question."

After he had burnt the second card, Mr. Yu looked at the third card and spoke to Like Rain. "This is a question regarding... a riddle."

Like Rain didn't express anything on her face while Feng Bujue, who was sitting opposite to her, was wearing a face that said 'this is a bonus'.

"Your question is, putting a chicken and a goose in a fridge. The chicken is then frozen to death, and the goose is still alive. Why is that?" Mr. Yu said, "Your time starts!"

"Because it was excited?" Like Rain immediately answered.

"Unfortunately, wrong answer," Mr. Yu said, "the correct answer is, it's a penguin."

The audience immediately released sighs in unison. The screen on Like Rain's control panel instantly displayed -10. Mr. Yu turned to the camera and commented. "Player number three seemed to give the answer from her 'cold jokes'. Too bad it's a riddle."

"Tsk... So the answer is one of your kind." Like Rain coldly snapped.

The audience burst out laughing like crazy. Mr. Yu took his handkerchief, embarrassingly wiped his sweat and turned away from her as he called Dispirited with the fourth card. "Good then. Player number four, please listen to the fourth question."

"A...~ such difficult level... small case, just ask. Ask me!" Dispirited was excited.

"This is a question, regarding... games," Mr. Yu said, "your question is, who are the ‘Demacia Trio’? Time starts!"

"What?" Dispirited opened her eyes wider while wearing a dull expression on her face.

Like Rain couldn’t help her in this case, but Feng Bujue and Little Tan were trying hard to wink. They swung their arms and legs to signal her from the opposite side. They were mouthing the names of that trio, too.

"Ha, ha, you are not allowed to hint the answer," Mr. Yu said, "if you tell her the answer, she will be considered giving a wrong answer."

"Ah! I knew it! The Trio!" One second ago, Dispirited was still pouting her lips, but then she laughed all of a sudden.

Unexpectedly, her answer was, "They are Luffy, Ace, and Sabo!"

Bang —— Bang ——

Those were the sound that echoed when Jue-Ge and Little Tan banged their heads on the control board.

Many audiences had their glasses slipped and fell to the ground.

"Wrong answer," Mr. Yu said, "anyway, this kind of question is the blind spot of female players."

So, now Dispirited’s score was also -10.

"Excellent! We’ve finished the first four questions. Let’s check their scores!" Mr. Yu said, "The scores of the two gentlemen here are 10, and our ladies got -10." He lifted his head, "Our distinguished guests, please share your thoughts with us."

The spotlight and the camera shifted to the row where the distinguished guests were sitting. Queen Superbia tilted her head and arrogantly snorted. Her posture showed that she had

completely disdained talking to Mr. Yu.

Young Master Pestilence gave a dry cough then said, "I think that if we exchange the questions between the female and male players, they will all have a chance to earn more points."

Hephaestus grunted, "Put the Cyclops into the fridge then talk..."

The spotlight returned to Mr. Yu. He reluctantly spread his arms and continued, "Alright, thanks for your comments. Next—" he turned to Feng Bujue again—"the difficulty level will be slightly increased then."

"Why do I have a feeling that my question is the hardest one in the first round..." Feng Bujue joked with his unchanged face.

Mr. Yu ignored him. "From this question, I will not mention the area of the question. Please listen to your question." He grabbed the card and read aloud. "Your question is, the number Pi, what is the ninth decimal digit of Pi? Your time starts!"

"3." Feng Bujue gave the answer within one second.

"Did you just guess it?" asked Mr. Yu.

"Nope," Feng Bujue answered.

"Excellent, correct!" Mr. Yu said.

Applause reverberated from the audience as Feng Bujue' score was now 20.

"Normal people could only remember upto the seventh decimal digit. However, it seems that players like Feng can remember more than that," said Mr. Yu.

"Kind of," Feng Bujue was just humble. In fact, he could remember up to the two-hundredth decimal digit as he had made π his source of passwords. He could always choose six or eight digits among those 200 digits to use as his passwords with a trace to remember.

"Seems player number one is getting farther and farther from the

Arena." Mr. Yu looked at Little Tan maliciously. "Player number two, please listen to your question."

Currently, when Little Tan heard that the difficulty of the questions would be increased, he had become more anxious, just like primary students getting in line to receive injections of vaccination.

"Your question is...'the marriageable age' refers to which age for women? Your time starts!" After Mr. Yu had read the question, he immediately cocked his head to Feng Bujue and said, "You shouldn't try to gesture or mouth the answer. If not, player Wang will get his score deducted."

"Too bad... I don't know..." Little Tan looked at Feng Bujue while the other obviously threw him a despising look. He thought to himself, "What? It's normal if I don't know this stuff... what is that 'this is just general knowledge' look about!"

"30 seconds left," Mr. Yu reminded.

Little Tan felt that he could never come up with the correct answer, thus he just gave a random one. "18 years old!"

"Wrong answer!" Fatty Yu announced with a smiley face. "Your score is now zero."

The next question was for Like Rain. Mr. Yu wiped his sweat while looking at the card. "Phew... Player number three, how are you doing? Nervous?"

Like Rain didn't answer him. Instead, she imitated Superbia's posture as she slowly turned her head aside and gave him a cold snort.

Fatty Yu got hit again; he couldn't do anything but continue, "Alright, the seventh question. Your question is, how many strings does a typical guzheng has? Your time begins."

"21," Like Rain answered quickly.

"Correct," said Mr. Yu. However, he didn't dare to comment further to prevent getting stabbed again.

The audience gave her applause. Then, there came question number eight, also the last question in the second turn.

"Player number four, please listen to your question," said Mr. Yu, "your question is, ‘Geen hills break into Zhangzhou’, what is the next verse? Your time—"

"Eighty-nine hillocks from the western Copper Bird Pavilion," Dispirited gave the answer even before he had finished reading the question.

Although the host hadn’t announced the result, the audience had already given her an applause. Apparently, she got the correct answer. It seemed that Feng Bujue wasn’t the only one good at literature and poetry.

"Yes, correct." Mr. Yu burned the card and smiled. "Our players are very excellent in this round." He beamed a smile that contained deep meaning. "But, someone must enter the Arena anyway. Ho, ho, ho..."

And, he didn’t let the distinguished guests comment at this round, as he immediately jumped into the ninth question, which was specified for Feng Bujue. "Player number one, please listen to your question." He looked at the card. "Ah, this is a special question. If you can answer it, you will gain 20 points more. But if you give a wrong answer, your score will be deducted by 20 points. Be careful!"

Di Ren Jie: (630-700), Tang Dynasty politician, chancellor under Wu Zetian, subsequently hero of legends, aka Chinese Sherlock Homes, in novel Three Murder cases solved by Judge Dee translated by Dutch sinologist R.H. van Gulik.

Li Yuan Fang: a fictional character, appears as Di Ren Jie’s right-hand man.

UK Championship: The UK Championship, known as the Betway UK Championship for sponsorship reasons, is a professional men's ranking snooker tournament. It is the second biggest-ranking tournament, after the World Championship and is one of the Triple Crown events. Mark Selby is the reigning champion (2016).

Cold Joke: In China, a joke that funny by virtue of being not actually funny at all. The name comes from the fact that when one hears a cold joke, he shivers in terror instead of laughing because the joke is so bad. From Mandarin Chinese, "leng xiao hua."

Demacia Trio: three characters Garen, Xin Zhao and Poppy from League of Legends.

Characters from the famous manga One Piêce

Guzheng: The guzheng (Chinese: 古箏), also known as the Chinese zither, is a Chinese plucked string instrument with a more than 2,500-year history. It has 16 (or more) strings and movable bridges. The modern guzheng usually has 21 strings and is 64 inches (1,600 mm) long. It has a large, resonant cavity made from wutong wood. Other components are often made from other woods for structural or decorative reasons. Guzheng players often wear finger picks, made from materials such as ivory, tortoiseshell, resin or hard plastic, on one or both hands.

(a pun, frozen chicken (jīdòng) has a similar pronunciation with excitement)

(another pun, since goose: 一鵝 (yie), penguin: 企鵝 (qie) – TL)

Chapter 119: Deadly Jeopardy (3)

"And, of course, a special question, which comes with a double score, will be a little bit more difficult. Here's your question." Mr. Yu rose the card and read aloud. "Green Lantern... well, everybody knows it," he glared at the screen, "the source of their power is 'willpower'." He looked at Feng Bu Jue. "In DC Universe, while Green Lantern stands for willpower, what about the other lanterns? Please list at least four types more. Your countdown starts now!"

This sort of question couldn't play hard on Feng Bu Jue. Even if it wasn't for collecting material for his novels, he had to read a lot to satisfy his interests. Thus, he just needed to recall the information and spoke up the answer.

"Yeah, I will list them in colors of light order. Red Lantern, Rage; Orange Lantern, Avarice; Yellow Lantern, Fear; Green Lantern, Willpower; Indigo Lantern, Compassion; Blue Lantern, Hope; Violet Lantern, Love. And there's something called Black Lantern, which stands for Death."

The whole stage was in a complete silence. Mr. Yu checked the answer he got in his hand; he kept silent for a while before speaking up again with a firm, determined tone, "Absolutely correct!"

The applause that came from the audience was like a rising tide, just like at the beginning of the show.

"Player number one is really a genius. He got 40 points after three questions already, while the other three players have zero after two turns. Player number one is now basically invincible!" Mr. Yu said then turned to the three guests. "Our distinguished guests, what do you think about player number one's performance?"

After the camera had focused on the seating row of the three guests, Madam Superbia suddenly spoke up for the first time.

Anyway, she just said one word, "NEET."

Pestilence looked like he was paralyzed on his seat while using his bony pair of arms to support his chin. The skin on his arms was so pale it was almost transparent that people could see the vessels underneath. This appearance of his was from a very sick man indeed. "Hey... why don't they have a color for pestilence..."

The cameraman, a translucent ghost, shifted his camera to Hephaestus, whose comment was still impossible to understand. "Tsk. Aren't they just collecting scattered energy from lanterns and rings? Well, such things, if you want to have a mass production of them, you only need a hard-working Cyclops. No matter how many pieces you want, they can always satisfy you..."

"Excellent. Thanks for your comments." Mr. Yu didn't wait for that man to finish his speech; he interrupted him then turned to Little Tan. "Player Number 2, please focus on the 10th question." He burnt the previous card then read out loud the question on a new card. "In English, please spell—Phenylketonuria. Countdown begins!"

As the ticking sound of the countdown arose, Mr. Yu turned his fat body around to talk to the audience. "You know, in English, medical terminology is a troublesome stuff that gives people headaches. Too long and too lengthy to remember..."

"Phenylketonuria, referred to as PKU," Little Tan answered, then he spelled each letter of the word.

Mr. Yu was dazed for seconds, then he used his hand, which was holding the microphone, to adjust the sunglasses on the bridge of his nose. He giggled then confirmed the answer on his card, "Yes. Correct!"

Little Tan's score had increased to 10 along with the applause from the audience.

"Seems this question belongs to Player Number 2's field of

expertise or is his English really that excellent?" Mr. Yu commented.

"Indeed, it’s simple—" Mr. Yu intervened Little Tan while he hadn’t finished yet. "So, next—"

Mr. Yu shifted his look to Like Rain. "Player Number 3, now there are only you and Player Number 4 whose score is still zero. This question will be critical though."

"Ah," Like Rain answered vapidly. From her attitude, it was saying, ‘well, not a big deal’.

"Here’s your question," Mr. Yu rose the card in front of his eyes, gave it a glance and said, "please tell us what is the substance whose chemical formula can be seen on our screen now? Timer begins!" As he has finished reading the question, both the small screen on Like Rain’s control panel and the big screen on the stage displayed the same chemical formula: C6H12O6.

"Glucose," Like Rain thought for a few seconds then answered.

"Correct!" Mr. Yu said.

The audience then cheered and applauded again.

"Seems our players are very excellent. Save the best for last? Or someone has to stop after the next question?" Mr. Yu turned to Dispirited.

"Hey! Did you mean that after this question, my score would be -10?" Dispirited thought and then rolled her eyes at Fatty Yu. "Even if it would be -10, I still have a chance in the next round!"

"Ha, ha... the reason why I said that is because," Fatty Yu raised the next card, "the 12th question is another special question."

The exciting, boisterous noises came from the audience again.

"Here’s your question," Mr. Yu looked at the card and muttered, "please list the name of three players, who were awarded Ballon d’Or (1) in the 20th century. You don't need to provide their full

names, but their nationalities must be different. Countdown begins!"

Dispirited bit her lips as she was confused.

"This question is related to sports. Perhaps it would be very easy to male players. Personally, I think if Player Number One or Number Two got this question, it would be like giving them 20 points for free. Too bad that our female player had gotten this question." After Mr. Yu was done with his comment, he casually reminded, "30 seconds left."

"Beckenbauer, Platini." Dispirited eventually came up with two names.

"Well, they are... correct." Mr. Yu said, "Very thoughtful. Player Number Four has given us two names. They were not only the best players, but they also became presidents later."

"Ronaldo!" Dispirited seemed to suddenly remember this name.

"Player Number Four, may I ask, why do you think that a Brazilian could achieve Ballon d'Or, which specified for European football players?" Mr. Yu asked with a smiley face.

"What? Is he a Brazilian?" Dispirited pushed back the question.

"Ouch, why did you list his name when you don't know him?" asked Mr. Yu.

"Because I've had an impression that many good players go by that name, so I thought... Perhaps one of them would be rewarded that Ballon d'Or something..." Dispirited answered.

"Yeah," Mr. Yu said, "no matter what, that answer is... correct!"

Rising along with the audience's applause was Dispirited's score, which was 20 now.

"Excellent. Ladies and gentlemen, together with our audience whom I can't tell the genders," Mr. Yu said with a stirring voice, "as we reach this stage in the first round, we have four questions

left. Now, let’s check the results of our four players!"

"Player Number One has run far ahead of the others with 40 points. Player Number Two got 10 points, and he still looks very nervous. The cold-faced Player Number Three also has 10 points. And, the last player, Player Number Four, she’s lucky enough to score 20 with the special question." The screen swept through them, one after another along with Mr. Yu’s description.

"Then, if nothing unexpected happens, the player who will enter the Arena would be among Player Number 2, 3 and 4." Mr. Yu then tried to stir up the atmosphere as he pitched up his tone. "Now, please hold your breath and concentrate your mind, we are heading to the last four questions of the first round!"

He eyed Feng Bu Jue while holding the card in his hand. "Your question this time," he paused on purpose, "... isn’t a special question."

"You mean, even if I gave a wrong answer, I would still be safe?" said Feng Bu Jue.

"True. By the way, I need to say that, the top player of each round will receive a mysterious advantage." Mr. Yu gestured ‘1 (—)’ with the hand holding the card, and the way he spoke was really suggestive.

"Advantage, huh..." Feng Bu Jue seemed to have something in his mind. "Well, just ask then."

"Please listen to your question," Mr. Yu said, "your question is... 'And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigor? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will’." He paused right there, waited for seconds then spoke up again, "Who wrote this paragraph? Your time begins!"

"Hmm... Worth the last lap. This question is indeed insidious." Feng Bu Jue beamed a cold smile. From his complexion, it seemed that he already had his calculation. "The epigraph of ‘Ligeia’ has cited this paragraph by Joseph Glanvill to match with the central ideal of the whole text."

"So, your answer is Joseph—" Mr. Yu just opened his mouth and Feng Bu Jue had interrupted him. "However!" he pointed at Fatty Yu, "however, the author of Ligeia is Allan Poe, such incredulous drunk can't be trusted." He smiled. "Glanvill is a famous person who espouses the theory of monotheism, and Poe liked him because of that. In fact, Poe wrote that paragraph, made up some more words, put a dash (-) there and wrote Glanvill’s name, so as people would think that he has cited the work of art from an ancestor. In fact, this is Poe’s."

Mr. Yu said, "so, your answer is?"

"No doubt. Allan Poe," said Feng Bu Jue.

"Absolutely correct!" Mr. Yu swung his arm and burned the card. The audience burst out with cheering and applause.

"Sigh," Mr. Yu said, "player Number 1 has the correct answers to all four questions of the first round. Among them is a special question though. With his current scores of 50, it’s enough for him to be the winner." He raked his eyes towards Little Tan over there. "So, how is the destiny of Player Number Two?"

Little Tan was already covered with cold sweat. He tried to make a dry laugh. "Ah, ha, ha... I’m ready to enter that Arena."

"Really? Ho, ho, ho" Mr. Yu laughed. "Anyway, the questions of the last round are all difficult. Thus, please focus on your question!" He read the content from the card. "We all know that there’s a fictional character called Kick-Ass. When he doesn’t wear the superhero suit, he’s a student. What is the name of this student?" Mr. Yu lowered the card then looked at Little Tan. "Time for your answer begins!"

Little Tan felt dizzy after having listened to the question. He was the kind of man who couldn't hide his emotions, which would immediately be worn on his face—obviously, he didn’t know the answer.

"Hmm..." Little Tan had watched this series before, and even more than once. However, he couldn't remember the name of the protagonist.

"30 seconds left," Mr. Yu reminded him while mocking with the audience. "Ah, I can see that Player Number One knows the answer. Unfortunately, this question is not for him."

The ticking sound echoed nonstop, but Little Tan had no clue at all.

"15 seconds left," Mr. Yu gave him the message again.

"Alright, I don’t know." Little Tan couldn't stand this tensing atmosphere anymore, as he declared that he had given up before his time ran out.

The audience gave him a big boo.

"Unfortunately, the score of Player Number Two went down to zero once again. Currently, he has the lowest score here." After Mr. Yu had said that, he immediately walked to Like Rain’s control panel. "Player Number Three, if you can answer the next question, you will be safe. If only Player Number Four won’t meet another special question, even if she gives a wrong answer, the result won’t change. It could be said that the question number 15 will decide the result of the first round."

"Oh," Like Rain’s reaction wasn't much different from that of the previous turn.

The corners of Mr. Yu’s mouth convulsed. Even though he had talked a lot, the other had still remained unmoved. He could only grab the card and read the question. "Okay. In legends, among the 10 Yama Kings of the Ten Courts of Hell, which Yama Kings are in

charge of the second, the fifth and the 10th courts? Count down—"

Before the other could finish his talk, Like Rain had delivered her answered. "King Chujiang, King Yanluo and King Zhuanlun."

Mr. Yu burned the card. "Correct!"

Applause echoed from the audience again. At the same time, the cameraman was evil enough to focus the position of Player Number Two: he caught Little Tan's bitter face.

Mr. Yu returned to his position, the center of the stage, faced Dispirited while holding the last card in his hand, and said, "Question number 16..." He had paused purposely for 10 seconds, "... It is..." It seemed that he had to pause after spitting out every two words, "It is a special question!"

The boiling audience quieted down instantly.

"At this moment, Player Number Four, Dispirited Laughing Bone has 20 points," Mr. Yu said, "If she gives a wrong answer for this question, her score will decline directly to zero." His tone was really melodious. "Save your anxiety to the very last moment."

"Uh, hey Fatty, if he and I both got 0 point, who will enter the Arena?" Dispirited suddenly asked.

"Argh, fatty..." Mr. Yu's face was glum. "Alright, seems she's talking to me though."

He couldn't deny the fact that in the middle of the stage, besides him, there was only one ghost cameraman. And if we put that poor guy on the weigher, he would roughly weigh 21 grams.

"Ahem... If such situation happens, where there are two players ranked top, there should be another extra question to determine the result." Mr. Yu cleared his throat to hide his embarrassment. "And if there appears a situation where there are two people ranked the lowest, both of them will enter the Arena."

"Huh?" Dispirited smiled cunningly. "Ah, I give up this question."

The audience boiled up again while Mr. Yu remained silent with a smile on his face.

Feng Bu Jue looked at Dispirited and gave her a thumbs up. One, he would like to compliment her wise strategy; two, he wanted to praise her courage and loyalty.

Little Tan was so touched that he almost cried. No matter what that Arena was, as long as he had company, he would feel much better.

"Well, you've given it up even before you know the question; seems I don't need to confirm your decision though." Mr. Yu beamed a meaningful smile. "So, you two, please come to the Arena!"

After he had finished speaking, the seats of Little Tan and Dispirited spun and sank downwards. After they had reached the dark space under the stage, another invisible force then sucked them out of their chair, put them into two other slides and then they started to slide very fast forward.

The big screen on the stage also changed. A vast desert appeared on the screen. Not long after that, Little Tan descended from the sky and landed on all four. Seconds later, Dispirited also plunged down, stepped on Little Tan's abdomen before falling down safely on the ground.

"Who will be the first executioner in the Arena today?" Mr. Yu said, "Although our four players today are not high-graded existence, no matter which grade an existence is, nothing can compare to them when struggling on the edge of death." He used a high-pitched tone to manipulate the audience's emotion. "Well, 'who' or 'what' will take this bloody responsibility playing one on two?" He came closer to the camera while the background music in the stage suddenly became rushing and tensed up strangely.

All of a sudden, Mr. Yu's face changed as he started to read with a fast pace. "Audiences who are watching our show, please pay

attention. At this time, you can still send us a text message or access our website to guess the grand champion of today's show. You will have a chance to receive a Perfect Gift from The Box of Fear, equivalent to 1000 Ghost Coins. Win the prize! Watch us on Deadly Jeopardy! Thanks for subscribing!"

"Hey! Such critical moment, why do you still have the mood to do advertising!" Feng Bu Jue screamed.

"Ha, ha... Seems our Player Number One is a little bit anxious," Mr. Yu said, "anyway, before I announce the first executioner of the Arena today, let's hear what our three distinguished guests have to say about the performance of our players in this round. Perhaps they would give us some of their expectations towards the first executioner too."

The screen switched to Superbia again. She arrogantly looked at Fatty Yu from a distance and spoke up, "If I give you a comment, will you kill yourself in the corner or something like that?"

"Why do you need to give such a request... You disdain me to this level..." Mr. Yu wiped his sweat. "Ouch, I'm afraid not."

"Harrumph." Then Superbia kept her mouth shut.

Next, the screen shifted to Hephaestus. It seemed that the cameraman had figured it out that he better let that Pestilence, the guy who was more reliable than the other two, speak the last.

"Will the executioner be a Cyclops?" Hephaestus's comment was still deceptive as before.

"If it were true, I would kill myself in some corner!" Fatty Yu shouted.

Finally, the camera moved to Pestilence. He slowly opened his mouth and talked to Mr. Yu, "Basically, their performances can show their expertise in the previous round. Especially Player Number One, who seems to be all-round. About the executioner, nothing to be guessed or not to be guessed... Cough, cough, cough.

I’m a knight; naturally, I know what is in that desert. So... you should announce it, Mr. Host."

Chapter 120: Deadly Jeopardy (4)

"Alright, thanks for your fairly proper comment, Young Master Pestilence." Mr. Yu stretched his arm towards the big screen on the stage. "Let’s see the answer!"

Little Tan and Dispirited obviously didn’t hear any sounds from the recording studio. Moreover, they also didn’t see anything like cameras around them. No one knows how the images there could be recorded and streamed to the stage.

After gliding along the slide for a while, a clear, bright sky appeared in their vision. The sunlight had smashed down the darkness while the ambiance surrounding them became hotter. It felt like they had fallen down from a space crack.

This vast desert looked quite tranquil and peaceful. From the first glance, besides yellow sand, there was nothing else. No fairies, no animal bones, no rock. Not a single chance that there existed an oasis. The strangest thing was that there was no wind blowing in this spacious desert. Moreover, the place in front of their eyes was completely flat as they couldn't see any dunes in their vision.

"This sort of condition is very suitable for shooting." Dispirited used her hand to shield her sight from the sun as she observed the place.

Little Tan was a little bit embarrassed as he smiled to her. "Hey... thanks for going with me."

"Oh~ it’s okay... This is also a strategy. During a battle, if there are more fighters, the pressure can be shared. We should make use of it. Well, who asks you to be dull and fragile at the same time," Dispirited answered him with a begrudging tone while loosening her collar. She was wearing a special force uniform, and under such high temperature, of course, she felt really hot.

Little Tan didn't care about Dispirited’s assessment given to him

since he knew she didn't mean it. "But, in this background, where will the opponent come from?" He lifted his head to see the shining sun hanging in the sky. No cloud was drifting on this spacious blue sky. The sunlight was so dazzling that they couldn’t open their eyes wide. "If it comes from the sky, will it be some sort of monsters like a giant black vulture?"

"If it goes that way, then if the monster comes from underground, will it be a giant bug?" Dispirited continued.

They all got it wrong. At this moment, in the studio, Mr. Yu was about to declare the answer. "It comes... from Cybertron... Desert! Ferocious! Tigeeeeerrr!"

The cheering from the audience echoed like a tsunami.

At the same time, the Desert Ferocious Tiger came into Little Tan and Dispirited’s vision.

It emerged from the horizon from afar, using an amazing speed to dash forward, leaving a big cloud of dust behind.

The Desert Ferocious Tiger appeared as a giant robot in a tiger shape. Its outer metal shells also had yellow and white stripes of tiger fur. Although it was still far away, Little Tan had seen this monster, or this Transformer to be exact. Its build wasn’t too big. He vaguely guessed that it would be around five or six meters after having transformed.

Bang——a gunshot resounded.

Little Tan turned around and saw that Dispirited had already laid down on the ground with her gun in her hands. Moreover, she was well prepared and even shot the first bullet out.

In such a bright and spacious arena, where no wind would affect the bullet trajectory, being a player specialized in shooting, if she didn’t do anything before the opponent approached them, certainly, she wasn’t qualified. Even if it couldn't end the fight from a far distance like that, she couldn’t let that huge lump of

steel approach them safe and sound.

Under the best conditions for shooting, Dispirited determinedly aimed for the beast’s head and shot. Unfortunately, her first shot didn’t hit the target. Of course, the reason was because the Desert Ferocious Tiger was rapidly moving. If it had stayed still, under this favorable condition, with a normal sniper rifle, even if there were a player with Shooting Specialty Grade F, he could hit the target precisely.

"Really annoying." Dispirited licked her lips and immediately got ready for the next shot. She pulled the trigger.

Bang——

The target this time was much closer, which she could see through her sniper scope, almost within reach. This time, her bullet hit the target.

Perhaps it was just a coincidence, or perhaps she was just lucky. She didn’t only hit the Desert Ferocious Tiger, but also hit it on the left eye, leaving a black hole on its head. When the bullet hit the tiger, it also sparked out. However, the Desert Ferocious Tiger wasn’t an organic creature as it was a robotic living form. So, such attack couldn't threaten its life.

Bang——the third shot.

After Dispirited had shot the third salvo, she didn’t care if it could hit the target or not. She immediately retrieved the sniper rifle, put it in her bag and took out an MP5 German submachine gun.

Although this gun was bought from a shop, its price was so costly. To players specialized in Shooting Specialty with a certain level, a submachine gun was a perfect choice at the early stage of the game—not more than 3 kilograms, fast speed, low recoil with high accuracy and fast reload. As an exquisite standard weapon, MP5 is reliable with excellent performance. For quite a long time,

it’s still the first choice of some special forces in the world.

Da, da, da, da…

When the distance between them and the Desert Ferocious Tiger was not more than 30 meters, Dispirited started to fire her submachine gun. Although her third shot had hit the monster’s chest, the metal cover there was relatively thick. Her bullet couldn’t pierce through, leaving only a concave spot.

Little Tan also took his Winchester out and held it in front of his eyes. Although his heart was beating frantically and his hands were wet with sweat, he didn’t hurry to pull the trigger. After several scenarios, at least Little Tan had a certain understanding of his weapons. Now, he knew that the shotgun in his hands would perform best at a short distance. If the range was over 10 meters, even if the thing storming towards them now wasn’t a Transformer but a ragged armored tank, he couldn't even give it a scratch.

Bullets from the MP5 swept over the Desert Ferocious Tiger from the front; sparks flashed everywhere. However, it didn’t slow down the tiger at all. When it was roughly 10 meters away from the two players, its two hind legs flexed then the monster jumped up pretty high… The sun was covered, and a vigorous tiger shadow towered the sandy ground. During the short while of several seconds the Desert Ferocious Tiger was hovering in the air, its shadow on the ground had a dramatic change.

Apparently, the Desert Ferocious Tiger had transformed in midair. The tiger head was opened, leaving room for a robotic skull to emerge. The four legs of the beast had twisted and wiggled in odd angles before they contracted and extended again as robotic arms jutted out from the body. Tiger stripes appeared on its limbs like armor. The shot it got on the head now moved to a position that wouldn't harm it. It seemed that the tiger form was to enhance its speed and bear hits.

The whole transformation process looked very complicated, but soon, this jumping tiger had transformed into a robot fighter taller than six meters, coming towards the two players.

After the transformation was done, the robot spoke up. Its tone didn’t carry along any kind of emotion as the robotic voice arose, "Humans... obliterate... remodel..."

Chapter 121: Deadly Jeopardy (5)

To the Desert Ferocious Tiger, human nature was ever-changing, just like the multidimensional universe, always chaotic and impetuous. Humans were driven by their survival instinct, mating desires, and endless greed, which eventually brought them decline and degeneration. Only destruction and remodeling could bring them sunlight once again.

The Desert Ferocious Tiger's attitude towards humans was like what a matriarch of the house who loved cleaning would do when facing a dab of dirt on her stove—if it met humans, it would obliterate them without any hesitation...

BANG ——

The Desert Ferocious Tiger's punch pounded on the sand ground, setting off a burst of dust and sand. The power then forced Little Tan and Dispirited to back off. Both of them stumbled then jumped backwards. Although they didn't get hit directly, this tremor power had cost them 8% of their Survival Value. Moreover, they even got the sluggish effect for several seconds.

There was loud cheering in the game show studio. It seemed that the audience was much satisfied with the executioner's debut.

"This is... thunderbolt striking..." Feng Bu Jue held his cheeks, looked at the live streaming video on the screen and muttered, "Got a Transformer as the opponent... Little Tan's Bee Sting granted from his title will be useless. Although it has the blood shedding effect, it couldn't be applied to this robot as it could only make some oil leakage." He cocked his head. "Dispirited mostly uses guns. Although bullets are much better than swords, facing this kind of opponent, I'm afraid it would be tough to solve the matter..."

At this moment, on the big screen, the Desert Ferocious Tiger had launched its next attack.

Being a robot, it would be a big shame if it didn’t respond with firepower while its opponent had shot it already. Two rectangular launching pads had emerged from the outer side of its knees. Swoosh, swoosh. Two missile heads were shot towards Little Tan and Dispirited, who were backing off constantly.

BOOM —— BOOM ——

Two small bursting scale explosions had carved two holes on the ground, diffusing a cloud of sand. However, Little Tan and Dispirited didn’t get hit. Both of them had successfully dodged the attack, but they still received damage from the shockwaves.

So, such toys like missiles, no matter whether it was the mini type or the intercontinental type, it was only good for attacking big targets; however, it has no way to track down living people. Using the missile wasn’t better than using machine gun sweeping through the target.

"Hey! Mr. Yu." Feng Bu Jue switched on the microphone in front of him, lowered his tone then talked to Mr. Yu, who was standing not far from him, "Can I ask something... Of what criteria or standard are used in choosing the executioner in the Arena? Is it random? Or is it based on races, numbers or the scores of the players?"

Mr. Yu glared at him and smiled. He didn’t use the microphone; he just lowered his tone and answered him, "Just combine all what you’ve mentioned. Ho, ho, ho. It’s based on those two players’ competences."

"In other words, if only Player Wang entered the Arena, he wouldn't have to face that guy?" Feng Bu Jue probed

"Ha, ha... Of course. One person and two persons, the total strength will be very different." Mr. Yu gave him the correct answer.

"That’s how it is..." Feng Bu Jue thought, "No doubt why that fat

guy said ‘the one on two bloody mission’... Seems if only one person enters the Arena, it won't be better. Also, in case there’s only one player that goes there, take Like Rain for an example, she will have no advantage... since stronger players will meet stronger monsters."

He thought for several seconds. "Yeah, taking into account the Survival Value and Physical Value consumptions, we should arrange to take turns and claim the last rank at each round. That’s how we can share the fighting pressure."

"Look! Player Number Four is about to strike back!" Mr.Yu’s amplified scream through the microphone had drawn Feng Bu Jue’s attention back to the big screen.

On the screen, Dispirited’s petite body stormed directly to that giant iron-bone-steel-tendon robot. Moreover, she was holding only one gun in her hand.

Little Tan also didn’t know what Dispirited wanted to do. However, he still gathered his guts and ran forward, shooting the Desert Ferocious Tiger constantly to back her up.

Facing the opponents, the Desert Ferocious Tiger didn’t retreat but still came forward. It mercilessly swept one of his giant arms towards Dispirited. Dispirited flexibly lay flat on the ground and avoided this attack. She immediately got up and bent down on one knee, positioning her arms to aim for the Desert Ferocious Tiger’s chest.

Such short distance accompanied with a colossal target, Dispirited would absolutely not miss it. Also, she wanted to be 100% sure that she could hit the crucial part of the opponent, so she decided to take the risk and come closer, because, she couldn't miss this shot.

Dazzling halo suddenly emitted from her gun, then...

Her shot didn't have a corresponding noise. An echoing eagle cry

resounded in midair, which was exactly the singing when the brave bird snatched its prey. The bullet shot out from the gun muzzle in the middle of the blazing silver halo turned into a giant Silver-winged Eagle, striking the Desert Ferocious Tiger.

One second later, it looked like the Desert Ferocious Tiger got hit by an RPG warhead at its chest. Together with the bursting effect, the robot, which was six meters tall and several tons heavy, was lifted and fell backwards.

[Name: The Sky-splitting Goshawk]

[Skill Card's attributes: proactive; disappear after one use.]

[Skill Category: Shooting]

[Effects: pour user's spiritual energy into the bullet, making tremendous bursting power and damage to the target (this skill must be launched together with a pistol; moreover, that pistol should have at least one bullet).]

[Consumption: 500 points of Physical Value, 50 points of the highest Spiritual Value]

[Learning Conditions: Shooting Specialty E, Spiritual Specialty F, level 10 or above]

[Remarks: simple, practical skill. If only users have the core knowledge of Spiritual Technique, they can explain well the principles of this skill. The more users spend their Spiritual Value, the more powerful their attack will be. Gunmen with poor physical condition will receive [Paralyzing] status for a short while after using this skill. At the same time, the weapon, which is used to launch this Space Splitting Goshawk, can't be used again within the next 15 minutes.]

This was the skill Dispirited had just used. She got this skill from several scenarios before, learned it already, but didn't have a chance to use it.

Apparently, this skill was like a gambling trick. To her current

opponent, Dispirited had decided that it was worth a chance to gamble.

She had precisely analyzed the situation and acted determinedly and effectively. It would be better if she used this skill to determine the result soon rather than saving it and waiting until she was backed into a dead corner. Although she couldn't kill that monster with just one strike, under the circumstances that her Survival Value was still enough, she still had a chance to win this fight.

After Dispirited had struck out her attack, she had to crouch down on the ground, couldn't get up again. She opened her menu to confirm her situation. "Crap... I got [Paralyzing] status," she mumbled.

Her opponent, the Desert Ferocious Tiger over there, didn’t even pause for one second. It was a robot, so it didn't need to take time and breathe like the mortals after falling on the ground. The shot had left a charred concave spot and some cracks on the tiger stripe pattern on its metal armor. Anyway, the circuit in the robot’s head only used a fraction of a second to calculate the damage and reported back to him—"Still can move". Then, the robot got up from the ground immediately.

Bang! Bang! Bang——

Seeing that the situation had developed into a negative direction, Little Tan was constantly reloading and shooting, running like he was flying forward. However, he still wasn’t fast enough.

The iron fist, as big as a fridge, descended from the sky, pounding down on Dispirited. If this strike reached its target, we could use three words to describe the next scene: human, meatball, and halo.

Dispirited was still crouching on the ground; she looked at the massive shadow pressing down on her, but she had no way to resist since her body didn’t listen to her anymore. She couldn’t even roll aside to dodge. She gritted her teeth, waiting for the oncoming

simulated pain.

Right at this moment, a miracle happened.

The Desert Ferocious Tiger’s move suddenly slowed down, just like a high-speed camera capturing images. The robot became sluggish as its iron fist was as fast as the speed of a turtle; it looked like it couldn't make a fatal attack.

The audience inside the game show studio burst out exclaiming.

Mr. Yu, apparently, knew what and who. "Wow, ladies and gentlemen! Someone is using the Sand of Time!"

"No, it’s just some unpurified dust of time or the low-grade one. The real Sand of Time should work more than that."

The camera shifted, and the audience was surprised figuring out who had just given the comment. It was Hephaestus. It turned out that he could still make some proper comments.

Little Tan was holding the Winchester in one hand while the palm of his other hand was bleeding.

He had no choice—to use the dust, he had to break the jar. However, he was in the middle of sand and soft ground; in such emergency situation, he had no choice but to break the small jar with his bare hand.

The Desert Ferocious Tiger’s fist was still approaching, but the delaying effect had given Little Tan time to run towards Dispirited, carry her up and run far away in just one breath.

"Idiot! Where do you want to go? Seize the chance and attack him!" Dispirited shouted to remind him while Little Tan was like Zhu Bajie carrying his wife on his back, running away.

"Ah! Got it!" Little Tan suddenly realized it, dropped his arms and directly threw Dispirited on the ground. Then, he turned around and ran towards the Desert Ferocious Tiger.

Seconds after he had left, Dispirited had recovered her ability to

move again. She stood up with a darkened face and brushed off the sand on her face. "This dumbass, later I will make you cry in the Killing Game!" Although she got mad at him, she was still able to consider their current situation. This wasn’t a good time to be at loggerheads.

Dispirited took the sniper rifle out of her bag. Within several seconds, she was ready to shoot. Under the circumstance that the Desert Ferocious Tiger was almost motionless, she had chosen the most powerful weapon to attack it.

When Little Tan got to the foot of the Desert Ferocious Tiger, he swiftly climbed up from the extending arm of the other and got to its shoulder.

One moment before the [Largo Quicksand] lost its effect, the muzzle of his Winchester was put on the Desert Ferocious Tiger’s head, zero distance. Right when he pulled the trigger, the sound from Dispirited’s sniper rifle also echoed.

Chapter 122: Deadly Jeopardy (6)

The Winchester had blown away a big part of the Desert Ferocious Tiger's head, however, the bullet from the sniper rifle didn't aim for the robot's head. What Dispirited had aimed for was the tiger's chest that was hit before. This shot successfully pierced through the steel cover, hitting its energy core.

There was no violent burst or explosion, and the monster also didn't wiggle desperately in death. It was just like a household appliance that got its electricity cut off, losing its ability to move and to react.

Little Tan's and Dispirited's nerves didn't have time to relax as something strange happened again. The blazing sun hanging on the sky suddenly started to move with a speed that naked eyes could observe. As the source of light was drifting away at high speed, their shadows on the ground were also stretched. At the same time, the temperature was decreasing. They looked up and saw 'the sky' above their head was open, and that blue sky was like the lid of a shoebox, and the sun was like a light bulb installed under this lid. And now, someone was lifting up that lid...

Outside 'the sky', in somewhere pretty far far away, they could see the black and white tiles pattern of the ceiling. An unknown source of light became like a man-made indoor light. Not long after that, a giant face, which looked nice and honest, gradually appeared, towering the whole sky. The eyes from that face were looking down on the two players on the ground. This scene looked absurd, but it could actually explain many things.

It could be described as follows. This Arena was a rectangular box, which had a flat bottom paved with a layer of sand. The four walls and the top lid were also made from cardboard, but visually, they were all disguised as real sky background. Little Tan and Dispirited were like two ants being put into the box, and the Desert Ferocious Tiger was just a miniature toy.

And now, the man outside the box, Mr. Yu, had lifted up the lid, that's why the ants inside the box could see the ceiling and light...

Right after the Desert Ferocious Tiger got killed, the big screen in the studio had stopped streaming live. And, Mr. Yu was still standing at his spot on the stage, not even moving an inch. Of course, as a 'Demigod', it wouldn't be difficult to be present at two different places at the same time.

Little Tan and Dispirited were dumbstruck seeing what was happening above their heads. Mr. Yu smiled at them and then used his plump hand to put two telephone booths into the 'desert'. He talked to Little Tan and Dispirited with a tone that was enough for them to accept, "Just get in." Then, he took the lid and closed 'the sky' once again.

The two of them exchanged looks. Little Tan spoke up first, "No wonder why Jue-Ge indicated us not to mess up... Monsters in this scenario are not only numerous but also too tremendously powerful that heaven finds it hard to accept them."

Dispirited brushed off the sand on her head and retrieved her weapon. "This scenario has many odd features. Until now, we haven't received the Main Quest yet."

"Oh, right. If you didn't mention it, I wouldn't remember," said Little Tan.

"In short, just follow him," Dispirited walked towards a telephone booth, which was closer to her. "Get in, and we can return to the studio. Huh... this place is so hot!"

Little Tan retrieved his weapon and entered the other booth.

The two of them had been well prepared, so when they felt the void under their feet, they weren't too panicked. They naturally fell into a vast sea of darkness, then the invisible force appeared once again and guided them back to their seat. Their seats then spun upwards as they appeared in the game show studio of the

Deadly Jeopardy.

"Welcome back!" Mr. Yu excitedly greeted them.

The audience also burst out cheering.

"Oh wow, that super big something was you?" asked Little Tan.

"Of course it’s me. If I wish to, being present in many places at the same time is not a big deal. However, the process when I got you guys back here wasn't streamed live," Mr. Yu answered him then shifted his body to the camera. "My audience, if you are interested in our behind-the-scene work, please send a text to the number below on the screen, or log in to our website to join us directly. In the last year of the Sexagenary cycle, our program will randomly choose six hundred lucky people who will receive our limited recording version of our game show, which includes some behind-the-scene images that you have never seen before!"

Having finished his advertising, Mr. Yu turned back to the three distinguished guests and got back to business. "Alright, do you have any comments on the performance of Player Number Two and Number Four in the Arena?"

The screen focused on Superbia. She said determinedly, " All men should go to hell."

"Yeah, good one!" Dispirited imitated Superbia’s posture, crossing her arms under her bosom and nodding in agreement.

"Hey! What did I do?!" Little Tan cried.

"There’s not much to compliment about the competences of these two. Anyway, there are two problems, the boy number two has made bad choices." Pestilence always gave an objective, orderly assessment. "First, you shouldn't break the jar with your bare hand. Second, the shot you gave to the Desert Ferocious Tiger on his head is useless. Even if you had shot all of its head to pieces, you would only destroyed its sensors and information gathering system. What had killed it, after all, are the two shots by Player

Number Four. The first shot had destroyed the metal shells, and the second shot had pierced through the energy core."

When Pestilence had just finished, Hephaestus sitting next to him spoke up, "Hey boy, crushing the jar is a dangerous behavior since the dust of time will be absorbed into the cut on your hand..." Hephaestus reminded him seriously, "the time of your left arm has been consumed. If you don’t treat it well, your hand will soon turn into dust."

"Eh? That serious?" Although Little Tan didn't understand it thoroughly, he had a feeling that this was going to be bloody scary.

"Doesn’t matter."

The audience and the three distinguished guests all gazed at the one who just uttered.

Feng Bujue continued with a natural tone, "Could be cured with one SCP-500 pellet."

"Ho, ho, ho, not bad, Player Number One. He immediately came up with a solution," Mr. Yu said, "well then, we are going to play the Deadly Jeopardy, round two!"

The DJ played a short, powerful BGM and the spotlight shone on the center of the stage again. On the auditorium, the audience was cheering, jumping and dancing; it was such a ghostly, magical and flurry scene.

"Alright, some of the audience please calm down. Do not breathe fire around your seats or in the air. The audience sitting in D3 section, yeah, it’s you. Please spit out the monster near you. Do you think I didn’t notice that? That's right, thank you!" Mr. Yu tried to calm down the scene for a while before turning to Feng Bujue. "Player Number One, do you still remember that I’ve mentioned the player who scores the highest in the first round will receive a mysterious advantage?"

Sexagenary cycle: also known as the Stems-and-Branches or

ganzhi, is a cycle of sixty terms used for reckoning time in China and the East Asian cultural sphere. The cycle and its variations have been an important part of the traditional calendrical systems in Chinese-influenced Asian states and territories, particularly those of Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, with the old Chinese system still in use in Taiwan.

Chapter 123: The Deadly Jeopardy (7)

"Even if you forgot, I won’t." Feng Bujue was lazily lying on his seat.

"Ho, ho, ho, so..." Mr. Yu clapped his hands and the control panel together with his chair started to move forward. These two things were attached to the floor, but during this process, the black and white tiles on the floor kept disappearing and reappearing just like they were just a virtual projection, which wasn’t affected by that movement.

"The second round is... multiple choice," Mr. Yu announced the rule. "The rules of this round are that each player will answer their own question one after another. Each player can answer a maximum of seven questions and a minimum of one question." He took out the deck of cards from his vest pocket once again. The logo on the back of the cards wasn’t different from that of the first round. "After I’ve read the question, players can choose the answer from the buttons on your control panel. Once you press the button, you can’t change your answer."

"Is it true that I can’t continue to answer more questions when I got one wrong?" asked Feng Bujue.

"True. And the mysterious advantage you got from the first round is..." Mr. Yu paused again at the critical moment. Drumrolls excitingly accelerated just like the soundtrack accompanied the last jump at an animal circus. "You can skip one question and also get the score of that question in this second round."

"Will the player who got the lowest score still enter the Arena in this round?" asked Feng Bujue.

"Ha, ha, the second round..." Mr. Yu smiled miserably. "The player who got the highest point can send a player to the Arena as he or she pleases."

"Oh, that’s how it is," Feng Bujue said, "I got it. Let’s start."

"Okay, please listen to your first question," Mr. Yu read the question from a card. "This question is worth... 10 points. When is Einstein’s birthday? A. March 13th; B. March 14th; C. March 15th; and D. April 13th." After he had read the question, he turned to the camera. "We all know that the second round is very important. The player who can answer all seven questions will most likely establish a big advantage on the scores."

Feng Bujue mused, not even changing his expression while intervening Mr. Yu. "I want to skip this question and get more points."

The auditorium was in an uproar.

Mr. Yu smiled. "Really? Player Number One, are you sure you want to use this advantage right at the first question? You should know that the later questions will be more difficult."

"Yes," answered Feng Bujue calmly.

"Ha, ha... Scores added!" Mr. Yu burnt the card in his hand. The screen on Feng Bujue’s control panel displayed 60 scores.

"Player Number One, why did you decisively want to use this advantage?" Mr. Yu said, "The other players who had joined our show before you all tried to save this advantage for the later questions."

"Because I don’t know the answer to that question," replied Feng Bujue.

"Why don’t you give it a try? At most, it is just a 10 scores question..." asked Mr. Yu.

"It’s simply a mathematical matter. Assuming that I didn't know the answers for all of the questions. In case I would just guess the answer to the first question, if I got it right, I would have 60 points. If I got it wrong, I would have 40 points. And then, in the next question, if I got it right, I would have 80 points, and if I got it

wrong, it would be the same with the first question, 40 points then," Feng Bujue answered.

"The probability is the same, which is 25%. Same risks, more profit. Of course, I should use the advantage for the first question to ensure that I would then have a chance to answer the second question," he paused for a while, "moreover, in case I know the answer to the second question, I don't need to guess."

Mr. Yu was dumbfounded upon hearing his explanation. The audience kept silent for seconds before bursting out cheering and applauding.

"Ho... Ha, ha, Player Number One is still very calm even when he doesn't know the answer," Mr. Yu smiled.

Loud laughter echoed from the auditorium.

"This is called the rational use of the rules. Next please." Feng Bujue rested both of his arms behind his head. His expression was pretty relaxed.

"Alright, Player Number One we will now proceed to the second question. You can choose to answer or not." Mr. Yu pushed up the small, round sunglasses on the bridge of his nose. "The second question is worth 20 points question. Giving a correct answer will give you 20 points more; giving a wrong answer decrease your score by 20 points." He eyed Feng Bujue. "According to your theory, even if you have to guess, you will give it a try, right?"

"Of course," answered Feng Bujue.

"Please listen to your question!" Mr. Yu looked at the card. "On April 30th, 1943, a famous conspiracy in history had taken place. It's the 'Operation Mincemeat'. The question is, what is the real name of the dead body, which was disguised to be the Royal Navy Major? A. William Martin; B. Samuel Jackson; C. Glyndwr Michael; and D. Charlie Sheen."

Feng Bujue pressed C button without any hesitation.

"Player Number One, once you choose the answer, you can’t change it," said Mr. Yu.

"Ah, I knew it," answered Feng Bujue.

The background music was playing again, which had stirred people’s hearts. Mr. Yu looked at the screen with his somber countenance. "And the answer is..."

"Why do you always act like you are having constipation? B and D are the names of the two actors. Cross them directly. Isn’t William Martin the fake name of the Major in the Operation Mincemeat? Although you don’t know about the Operation Mincemeat, between A and C, you would choose the name that looks more real," said Feng Bujue.

"Player Number One," Mr. Yu turned to him while wearing a bad mood on his face. "How about you taking the host?"

"Good. Let’s change the positions. I promise I will bring you to the Arena," answered Feng Bujue.

"Eh? This is interesting. If Mr. Yu wants to enter the Arena, let’s choose one of us to be the executioner." Pestilence revealed a smile that showed his interest.

Superbia approved his opinion. "Good idea."

"You just want me to die then... Hey!" Mr. Yu said, "Don’t change the topic, I’m going to announce the answer!"

"It’s C." The audience was like they had foreseen his plots.

"Alright, if everyone knows it then," Mr. Yu pulled himself together, "Correct answer! Plus 20 points!" The screen on Feng Bujue’s control panel immediately displayed 80 points.

"Yeah, seems this question isn’t difficult to Player Number One at all." Mr. Yu rose his hand and burnt the card. "Anyway, the next question comes with... 40 points." He purposely paused for several seconds, and the camera had shifted to Feng Bujue, but he didn’t

show any special reaction.

"Do you regret that you have used that advantage already, Player Number One?" Mr. Yu seized the chance and asked.

"Oh, so the scores would be double after each question?" Feng Bujue asked, ignored Fatty Yu.

"Ho, ho, ho... Who knows?" Mr. Yu threw him a sloppy glance.

"Mm..." Feng Bujue smiled coldly then answered the question the other had given him. "If I may regret it, I won't do it. If I do it, I won't regret."

Mr. Yu whistled, and the cameraman immediately split the screen to give both Feng Bujue and Mr. Yu a close-up. "So, Player Number One, do you want to answer the third question?"

"I do," said Feng Bujue.

"Please listen to your question!" Mr. Yu read the question from the card, "Among the following techniques, which one doesn't belong to the Abandoned God of Heaven? A. Flame of God; B. Light of God; C. Hand of God; and D. Judgement of God?"

This matter had a certain degree of confusion since most of the Abandoned God of Heaven's martial techniques had the word '—of God'. Momentarily, Feng Bujue couldn't give out the answer since he needed time to search through the building of memory in his brain.

"Players don't need to rush. There's no time limit in the second round. Anyway, if you still can't answer the question within three to five minutes, I will count down from 10, and you have to give us an answer." After Mr. Yu had finished, he turned to the center of the stage. "Why don't we take the time while Player Number One is still thinking to ask the other players to talk about his performance in this round? Of course, if you guys know the answer, please do not try to give him clues. If not, his scores will be deducted." He turned to Little Tan. "Player Number Two, how many questions do

you think Player Number 1 can answer?"

Little Tan had his head bowed and was studying his left hand. Currently, it didn't have any significant change. As Mr. Yu had called his name, he didn't even lift his head up to answer him. "Dunno, but I believe in Jue-Ge. He can answer all the questions!"

"Player Number Two, Player Number One is taking the lead now. If he can answer all the questions, the player who has the highest score of this round is certainly known. What if he sends you to the Arena?" Mr. Yu threw him a matter which seemed to be hard to answer.

"Wut?" Little Tan lifted his head up looking at Mr. Yu, "Then I will go there. If Jue-Ge has chosen me, it means it would be reasonable."

"Ha, ha... Seems Player Number Two really trusts Player Number One's wisdom." Mr. Yu commented then shifted to Like Rain. "So, Player Number Three, how—"

"Next." Like Rain didn't let Mr. Yu finish his words, using the response of 'too lazy to care about you'.

"Ugh..." Fatty Yu smiled embarrassingly, then turned to Dispirited, "Hey... Player Number Four, do you have anything to share?"

"Captain, if you can answer all the questions, let's throw Little Tan to the Arena." Although she was talking to Feng Bujue, Dispirited threw a malicious smile to Little Tan.

"What have I done?" Little Tan cried with an innocent face.

"Lost the left hand and doesn't have good relations with women, well, for the rest of his life, he and his right hand are mutually dependent." Feng Bujue was using a feeble voice to mock Little Tan. From his deliberate manners, he surely had the answer.

Mr. Yu's eyes brightened. "Ah, Player Number 1, your words are really interesting. Can I quote them later?"

"As you wish," Feng Bujue said, "I have chosen the answer. Please inform the correct answer."

Mr. Yu turned to see the answer displayed on the screen at Player Number One’s control panel. Feng Bujue had pressed D.

"Ok, Player Number One’s answer is D, Judgment of God," Mr. Yu used his trick again—not saying the full sentence and always pausing at the critical moment as long as possible. "Well, this answer is..."

Another character from Thunderbolt Fantasy.

Chapter 124: The Deadly Jeopardy (8)

"Correct!" announced Mr. Yu long after he had split up his verse. The scores on the screen had increased. Now, Feng Bujue had 120 points.

Applause and cheers reverberated from the auditorium. The DJ also played a high-speed soundtrack while the light on the stage also flashed for a while.

"Ha, ha, seems Player Number One is getting better..." Mr. Yu smiled, "Then, he's going to face question number four." He burned the card which read the third question and glared at the new card. A smirk hung on his face as he looked at Feng Bujue. "This question will give 120 points!"

There was an uproar came from the audience. Little Tan and the others also were surprised.

"Player Number One, the four of you," Mr. Yu threw his look here and there, "your basic purpose is to survive and not to compete. In this second round, it doesn't matter who wins; the important thing is who will be the chosen one to visit the Arena." Mr. Yu said, "The scores of Player Number Two, Number Three and Number Four are zero, 20 and zero, respectively. So, you now have a big advantage; if only they all give up at question number two can you ensure your first rank."

"You mean I don't need to take risks continue playing?" asked Feng Bujue.

"Ha ha, I just want to give a hand analyzing the current situation. If you are the planner among the four players, I think your teammates will be happy working with you," said Mr. Yu.

"You said teammates? Ha, ha, so right at the beginning, you have known that our purpose is to stay alive, all of us, and not to compete for the first prize." Feng Bujue's countenance changed as

he threw a cold, malicious smile to the other, just like he was the real Joker. The tone he used to speak up again also changed. "I would like to ask... the setting that the best player can have the prize, does it have other meanings? We are from the same team, will it be significantly different if anyone of us can have the prize?"

"Ugh, it..." Mr. Yu hesitated. It wasn't that he got a tricky question, but he just didn't want to answer.

"And, giving clues or answers to other players will decrease their scores, this rule, of course, aims for team cooperation. If it is a competition, players will not prompt each other. Thus, we don't need this kind of restriction." Feng Bujue smiled coldly, "Mm... I would be able to give you a hypothesis..." He rose one arm, pointing at the name of the show on the big screen. "Deadly Jeopardy, this appears to be a game show where four players compete for the first prize, however, in fact, it's a multiplayer survival game."

Feng Bujue sat upright and adjusted his microphone. "There will be players who will enter the Arena after each round, but it may not lead to death as it is just an additional challenge after each round. Players who don't have the highest scores will relatively have a chance to go there... In simple words, it's okay if you can't answer the questions. Players with strong fighting ability can also get through to the next round." Feng Bujue cocked his head, rested his arms on the control panel, and gazed at Mr. Yu's flickering eyes. "So, what we have been through is to prepare for the last round of this game. Maybe it is the third or the fifth round, I don't know. In short, the last round is the true 'Deadly Jeopardy', and at that time..." Feng Bujue leaned against his backrest again, "the scores we've accumulated should have some effects, which is crucial though."

The scene was absolutely quiet. Besides some sounds from those monsters, for example, the hiccups, which resounded from time to time, a solemn atmosphere was pressing down on the studio now.

Mr. Yu held his microphone. The spotlight shone on him while he was walking towards the camera. His face gradually showed his joy and excitement. "My audience, our Player Number One, he.." This time Mr. Yu's voice was very low, but since the whole place was tranquil, everyone could hear him clear and loud. "Well, he has recognized the rule of the third round. It..." he suddenly pitched up his tone, "it's never happened before! Let's give him a big hand, everybody!"

The audience then boiled up. Applause, whistles, screams, and cries echoed altogether. They could even hear the werewolf howling in the center of the auditorium.

Mr. Yu staggered his fat, short body back to Feng Bujue's control panel. "Anyway, regretfully, I can't tell you the specific rules of the final round."

"I think I've known a lot," Feng Bujue said, "well, question number 4, 120 points, I choose to answer it."

"Please listen to your question!" Mr. Yu rose the card, "Among the following four, which one is the richest?" He paused for a while, "A. Tony Stark; B. Bruce Wayne; C. Scrooge McDuck; D. Forrest Gump."

Feng Bujue immediately pressed C. Mr. Yu slowly asked, "Your answer is Scrooge McDuck?"

"Of course, that duck is not at the same level with the other three guys."

"Your answer is..." After he had paused purposely, as usual, Mr. Yu said, "Correct!"

Feng Bujue's score soared to 240. The applause reverberated in the studio as thunder.

Mr. Yu burnt the card, which had question number four. Looking at question number five, he said, "Player Number 1, if I'm telling you that the fifth question is very very tough to answer, will you

give it up?"

"Well, firstly, do tell the score of this question." Of course, Feng Bujue wouldn’t be that easy to trick.

"The value of this question is," Mr. Yu’s complexion became a little bit strange, "1000 points of Skill Value."

The audience and the three distinguished guests seemed not to be surprised at all. But after they had heard this information, the four players all wore a disbelieving look.

"Wut? Skill Value?" asked Feng Bujue.

"Duh! What else do you think?" Mr. Yu extended both of his arms, turned to the screen and laughed. The audience also laughed along with him.

"I want to answer!" Feng Bujue said determinedly, "Read the question." He then could only think that giving Skill Value would be just a normal concept in this scenario.

"Well..." Mr. Yu sneered, grabbed the card. "Until now, you have only one rating for Fear Value in Thriller Paradise..."

"What did you say?" Feng Bujue goggled his eyes and instinctively interrupted Mr. Yu.

"What’s the matter? Is there anything wrong?" Mr. Yu said casually.

"What is it after all..." Feng Bujue said while attempting to get up. However, Mr. Yu just needed to raise his finger, and an invisible force had pressed him down on his seat.

"Who told you to get up?" Mr. Yu talked to him like an adult teaching a little kid. "Listen to my question."

At this moment, Little Tan, Dispirited and Like Rain all felt a pressure that they couldn't describe. The atmosphere in the studio suddenly became intimidating and heavy at the same time...

Mr. Yu continued reading the question in his hand, "Until now,

in Thriller Paradise, you've received only one rating for your Fear Value, what is it? A. A whole sack of guts; B. Fine courage; C. Freak out; and D. Shaking like a leaf."

Feng Bujue suspiciously looked at Mr. Yu, then slowly stretched his arm and pressed A. As Mr. Yu hadn't announced the answer, the system had already prompted. [You've received 1000 points of Skill Value.]

"Are you a Derivative?" Feng Bujue lowered his voice. This was his first reaction; however, he was wrong.

"Do you suspect that I'm a creature from a lower dimension than yours?" Mr. Yu said, "Ha, ha, ha. Don't kid with me, please." He burned the card and took out the next card. "Question number six. If you can answer this question, you will receive a pass to the 'Inside World' of Thriller Paradise." He snapped his fingers, and a small, black card appeared between his index finger and middle finger. "If you got it wrong, your Spiritual Weapon will disappear."

Feng Bujue's brain quickly processed. Since they had entered the scenario, unusual changes had been accumulated nonstop, which seemed to create a change in quality.

"Enough," an unfamiliar voice arose.

This was a man in suit with a light brown hair, who appeared all of a sudden in the middle of the stage, standing one meter behind Mr. Yu.

Suddenly, Mr. Yu looked stiff as his smile froze on his face. The three guests were like workers chatting in the office who got busted when their boss suddenly entered the room. Their positions and countenances all changed. The audience in the studio looked stunned.

The bomb called Fear had been installed successfully, waiting for the flame... to denote the whole scene.

Simon stood behind Mr. Yu, looking at his fat neck from above.

"Are you going to use your back to talk me?"

"Ah, ha, ha... No, no, I don't dare." Sweat streamed down under his top hat like waterfalls. A trail of nervousness and fear appeared on his face.

Simon threw a look to the cameraman and didn’t say a word. With just one glance, the translucent ghost released a painful cry. Its entire body then got covered inside a strong halo then exploded like fireworks—his soul was thoroughly scattered. And, the camera in front of him also burst out.

"You low life scums, get out," Simon spoke up while standing in the middle of the stage with a tone that was neither high nor low. It was somehow sincere and trustful.

All the ghosts and monsters in the studio were like humans encountering spooky ghosts, screaming like pigs, stumbling and rolling on their way to the exit, just like a chaotic race between chickens and dogs. Dust diffused, and blood shed. Basically, all doorframes were banged broken. Some even smashed the wall or dug the ground to flee away.

Not more than 30 seconds later, only the four players, Simon, Mr. Yu and the three distinguished guest in this spacious game show studio was left.

"Long time no see, Brother Simon, ha, ha, ha." Hephaestus smiled, attempting to set up a closer relationship.

Simon vapidly answered, "It’s you... How is my order?"

"Argh, you know, bro. The weapon that suits you is very complicated to fabricate. And, didn’t we agree that the delivery will arrive before the end of the 21st century?"

"But I can see you are at leisure now," he interrupted.

"Understood, understood. I’m getting out of here now. Ha, ha, please yourself, ha ha.." Hephaestus immediately disappeared after he had finished.

"I didn’t think that I could meet you in a place like this." Simon shifted his eyes to Superbia.

"Harrumph..." she snorted, "your management is wide enough..."

"Public affairs," Simon answered, "if you have any personal stuff you want to tell me—"

"Harrumph!" Superbia didn’t wait for him to finish as she turned into a black smoke and disappeared.

"Why are you looking at me?" It was Young Master Pestilence’s turn to face Simon’s eyes. "I won’t say anything, just watch. Is it not okay?"

"You’ve bet," answered Simon.

"Well, basically, all high-level personnel are all making a bet." Pestilence tried to look innocent.

"I’m a referee," Simon continued.

"Because no one can beat you up. But..."

"But?" Simon lowered his voice into a whisper.

"Alright, alright, I’m wrong. I’m wrong. I’m gonna get out of here." Pestilence dryly coughed then turned into black light and left.

Simon’s look shifted to Mr. Yu. "Alright, please answer me, what does it mean?"

"Hey... bro, can I ask something? What is going on here?" Feng Bujue waved at Simon and asked with a sincere face.

Simon glared at Feng Bujue then clapped his hands. One second later, the SCP-500 bottle emerged from his hand. He then threw the bottle to Feng Bujue and said, "You’ve finished the scenario."

Feng Bujue caught the bottle, didn’t check its properties, but asked immediately, "What is going on? What happened to this scenario?"

"Don’t worry. I’m sure that this situation will not happen again. At least in a short while..."

After Simon had said that, the four players then turned into white halos and were forced to teleport.

...

In his login space, Feng Bujue sent messages to his team. "Did you get teleported too?"

Little Tan answered, "Yeah."

"What happened in that scenario?" Dispirited’s voice arose.

Like Rain’s voice also came, "Seems like the BOSSES in that scenario got some conflicts and they shooed us out?"

"It’s really strange... My calculation said that the completed quests per accepted quest are 0/0. But the rewards for completing scenario are adequate. Is it a BUG?" said Little Tan.

"The man in suit that appeared all of a sudden looks like he is a GM. Maybe we were encountering something really big," said Feng Bujue.

"What should we do?" asked Little Tan.

"What do you want? Didn’t you get the rewards already? Well, if you ask the Customer Service, perhaps they don’t know anything. You shouldn’t complain when you can clear the scenario just playing half of it. Easy, right," Feng Bujue said.

"Bujue, your Fear Rating is ‘the whole sack of guts’ all the time?" asked Like Rain all of a sudden.

"Captain, you use Auto?" Dispirited continued.

"A.. that..." Feng Bujue hadn’t thought about how to explain this matter indeed. He and these two girls were not that close as they were just friends in the game and not for a long time. Should he tell them frankly that he got an unidentified mental disorder?

Then he thought if he just made up a reason to cover it, he could only make it for a while. Perhaps they could get the truth from Little Tan. Considering for awhile, Feng Bujue spoke up, "No Auto. And of course, no medicine to stay calm when playing the game. I just... don’t feel fear."

As he finally revealed it, Like Rain and Dispirited, of course, wanted to know more.

Before they could continue interrogating him, Feng Bujue seized the time and said, "But why it happens that way, I’m sorry I can’t tell. And please don’t ask Little Tan. This is my personal stuff. I hope you can keep it on the down low."

After a period of silence, Like Rain spoke up, "Well, then we will not talk about it again."

Dispirited continued, "I have no idea. Don’t worry. My mouth is zipped."

"Yeah... Thanks. If we don’t have anything else to do, I’ll call it a day," said Feng Bujue.

"Okay, I feel tired. I’m going to logout then," Little Tan replied.

Like Rain and Dispirited also expressed that they would log out. The four of them then said goodbye and left the game.

...

Back to several minutes ago, in the game show studio of the Deadly Jeopardy.

Simon eyed Mr. Yu from above. "Who allowed you to bring them to the studio of the Deadly Jeopardy? You don't want to continue running this show, do you?"

"Yeah, it’s just a simulating projection. They wouldn’t die here..." Mr. Yu wanted to explain.

"What did you want to do just recently?" asked Simon.

"Woody crossed the rules first! He had let Feng Bujue at level 10

enter the Thunderbolt World and get the Spiritual Weapon with ease," Mr. Yu explained directly.

"You meant... you were going to help me change the result generated by violating the rules?" asked Simon.

Mr. Yu was ashen. He knew there were extremely dangerous traps behind these words. If he said ‘yes’, it meant he was abusing his rights as a referee. With Simon’s nature, just give him a true reason, no need to mention a Demigod, even if he were a God, Simon still dared to kill him.

"No!" Mr. Yu said. "I absolutely don’t have that thought."

"First, you gave him 1000 Skill Value points then you prepared to snatch his Spiritual Weapon. Did you really think that you could solve the problem that way?" Simon said, "What do you think Woody would do if he knows your little tricks?"

"Ugh..." Mr. Yu choked on his words.

Simon then coldly said, "He will not hesitate to throw the guy you’ve bet on to the territory of the Derivative Level 1 and let them beat him until he drops 10 levels."

"But... but still..." Mr. Yu still wanted to say something else.

"It’s not a matter that Feng Bujue could receive a Spiritual Weapon. With his competence, he wouldn't have to wait until level 30 to have a Spiritual Weapon. This is my judgment as a referee," Simon said, "from now on, you can stop your little tricks." He snorted, "I’ve finished improving the system. The back door Woody had left doesn’t exist anymore. You guys shouldn't dream of interfering again, even one second."

After Simon had finished, he walked to the fixed camera on the stage. He stood up in front of the screen and spoke up with his eyes as cold as a saber, "Our game starts now. Who dares to put his hand on the table, I will chop it off."

Chapter 125: Intermission (30)

"Is your hand okay?" asked Feng Bujue.

"What? Ah, of course, yes. Even if it’s not okay, it’s just a character in the game..." Little Tan answered, "Jue-Ge, you called me just to ask this? I’m still on duty."

This was the afternoon of the next day, and Feng Bujue was home, talking to Little Tan.

"Ah, no. I just asked, by the way." Feng Bujue started to talk about the main business. "Today I went out and met my editor. We talked about a business that doesn’t relate to writing."

"What is that?"

"The other day, yeah, this Saturday. I’m going to the Television Broadcast station to join a show. Hm, the traffic is not good though. Probably you have that day off, can you give me a ride there?" said Feng Bujue.

"Eh?" Little Tan was surprised then yelled, "AH!"

"Are you okay?" Feng Bujue’s tone was still calm. "You just ate the bacteria you’ve kept on Petri dish because you thought it was jelly, didn't you?

"Finally you want to join TV shows, Jue-Ge! Is there a fire happening?" Little Tan asked excitedly.

"Nope."

"Ah~~~ later on, you can just lie there and earn money."

"You speak like I’m going to switch to another special profession..."

"I mean, finally, you can be like the other famous authors who don’t need to force his typing every month..."

"That’s why I said ‘nope’." Feng Bujue said, "Nothing’s gonna

change. You are thinking too much."

Little Tan was so excited that he completely disregarded Feng Bujue's denial. He asked again, "Oh right, what show is it? Jue-Ge?"

"I'm a writer," he calmly answered.

"Eh? I knew that. I'm asking which show you are going to join?"

"I'm a writer," Feng Bujue repeated one more time.

"Wut?" Little Tan seemed to have a short circuit in his brain.

"Sigh..." Feng Bujue released a deep sigh. "That show's called 'I'm a writer'. It's a game show where contestants PK (player killing – TL) each other to eliminate opponents."

"What? Besides you, are there any other people?" asked Little Tan.

"Don't know and don't want to know," answered Feng Bujue.

Little Tan slapped the table while laughing, "Ha ha ha. Jue-Ge, you're so cool."

"I don't know because the information of the other contestants are confidential," Feng Bujue said. "I don't want to know because even if I know them, it is still useless... Personally, I hope that I would be eliminated in the first round, so I don't have to join more."

"Cut it off! It's a rare chance to go on TV!"

"Your humble servant doesn't want to appear in front of a crowd. Leaving too many images for documentary is not my wish also..." Feng Bujue said. "In fact, the payment is quite high... that's why I..."

"Jue-Ge, did you tell Master Bao?" said Little Tan.

"Not yet. I know you will call him though. So, after I tell you, you can call him." Feng Bujue paused for a while then continued, "I

want to emphasize that you should talk to Master Bao in private, do not gossip anywhere else."

"How can I gossip about that?" Little Tan pitched up his tone.

"Remember the time when my first book was published? The fruits shop owner who lives five or six blocks away from your house also knew it," said Feng Bujue.

"Ha... Ha, ha... That..."

"So... It’s fixed. You will drive me there on Saturday afternoon. Then you are free. I don't know how long the recording will take, so I will go home myself after that. I still have something to change in my public traffic pass," said Feng Bujue.

"Can I go with you and watch it?" asked Little Tan.

"No."

"Really..."

"No."

"Alright," Little Tan said, a little bit disappointed. "So when will your show be broadcasted?"

"Dunno."

"Alright, I will search for it on the Internet."

"Continue your shift... we’ll talk later in the evening." Feng Bujue had maintained his feeble voice from the beginning to the end.

"Okay okay. Bye, bye."

"See you."

After he had hung up the call, Feng Bujue released another deep sigh. "Yeah. I could only pray that this brat would behave."

Two hours later...

Someone knocked on his door.

Feng Bujue responded "Coming" and walked to his door.

Unexpectedly, when he was about to reach the door, the one outside had used the key to open it.

"Aunt Liu, please. If you don't want to wait for me to open the door, why do you have to knock?" asked Feng Bujue.

The one who stood at the threshold was his landlady, Aunt Liu. "Young people like you always have private stuff. What if you have a girl in your house? What if you are in the middle of doing something and you can’t open the door for me? So I had to knock, and when I heard your response, I knew I could enter."

"Your words have conflicts themselves. Moreover, your logics can raise confusion easily..."

"Don’t discuss those things with me," Aunt Liu scanned him from top to toes, "I’ve heard that you are going to act in a movie?"

The first word that jumped up from Feng Bujue’s mind was ‘F*ck!’. However, he just sighed and answered, "Who told you that?"

"I heard Aunt Wang said that in the market..." Aunt Liu started to deliver her unceasing torrent. "Nah, I said, Little Feng, ah, my granddaughter is going to be 10 years old this year. She’s very good at acting, you know..."

Feng Bujue really wanted to bang his head on the doorframe. "Aunt Liu, first of all, I'm only going to the TV station to join a game show. It takes only several hours. When they broadcast the show, it will be edited to be only dozens of minutes. My play will not take more than several minutes," he continued slowly, "moreover, even if I can join a movie, I can’t arrange your granddaughter to join the movie too. You have to talk to the producers..."

"Eh? Really?" Aunt Liu said. "I’ve heard that the security guard of our building said that you want to write and direct your own movie..." Well, according to her, the number of people who got

this rumor wasn’t only one.

"Alright, alright, alright, don’t worry," Feng Bujue waved his hand, taking the chance, "rumor! Just purely a rumor! I’m not working on that field. And I’m not interested in entering showbiz world. I'm only going to participate a game show, which is kinda quizzes."

"Oh..." Aunt Liu nodded, "Oh wow! Little Feng, ah, when will your show be broadcasted?"

"What do you want?"

"What? It’s rare that our acquaintances can be on TV, what’s the problem if auntie wants to watch it?"

"Alright..." Feng Bujue had no way to deal with her. "I’m going there this Saturday, and I will ask the producer. Don’t worry. Several days later, I will pay the rent for this month and the stuff for the cat. Also, I will tell you when it is broadcasted. Is it okay?"

"Okay, auntie’s waiting for your news..." Aunt Liu answered.

"Alright, alright, take your time, off you go..." Feng Bujue pushed and consoled her at the same time, then closed the door. He leaned against the door and sighed, "The rumor had spread, and its variations are so terrifying... Just in 48 hours more, and they will say I'm going to go abroad to receive the Oscar prize. Perhaps some will believe it."

He shook his head, returned to the room and locked all the three locks on his door, including the chain lock. Afterwards, he came to the game cabin, took off his shoes and lay down.

Chapter 126: Intermission (31)

[Scenario completed. Calculating for rewards...]

[EXP received: 1,200.

Game Coins received: 12,000]

[Items received: SCP-500]

[Completed/Received Quests: 0/0]

[Special, [Hidden Quest] completed: 0]

[Decoded Worldview: 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: 0]

[EXP increased by Skill Value: 0.

Game Coins increased by Skill Value: 0]

[Rewards for completing the scenario: Skill Card x1 pcs]

[Calculation completed. Please continue.]

After Feng Bujue had logged in, he went to check the calculation for his previous scenario. It could be said that the rewards from the Deadly Jeopardy scenario were really poor. The calculated Skill Value was zero, and the points he got when he answered the question, which valued 1000 points, didn't appear in his calculation. Anyway, it had been automatically added during his time in that scenario. Now, Feng Bujue's Skill Value was 2580 points.

He didn't know what kind of skill card he could draw, but the

biggest harvest in this scenario was indeed the bottle of SCP-500 which included 20 pellets.

[Name: SCP-500 (20/20)]

[Type: Consumable goods]

[Quality: Perfect]

[Functions: Can cure any abnormal states.]

[Remarks: Click here for detailed information.]

The remarks of this item included a link. When Feng Bujue touched that link, a window popped up in the front of his screen. It was the information of this item.

[Item Number: SCP-500]

[Item Category: Safe]

[Special preservation methods: SCP-500 should be stored in cool, dry place and avoid strong direct light. In order to avoid usage abuse, only level 4 staff are allowed to use SCP-500.]

[Description: SCP-500 is a plastic bottle which contents red pellets. Each pellet, after being swallowed, will effectively cure all kinds of diseases within two hours. This also depends on the particular conditions of the person taking the treatment. Although there are many studies and experiments, scientists who wanted to analyze and synthesize the basic components of SCP-500 all failed.]

This wasn't all the information about the pellet. If he continued to scroll down, there were more records and appendixes, which were all about the experimental requests for this 'panacea' and the records of the results.

This kind of medicine, just like Mr. Yu said, could 'cure all diseases'. In some aspects, it was even beyond the 'curing concept'. For example, a record had said that this medicine could cure people who were infected with mutant Zombie virus, turning them back to human again.

After Feng Bujue had read the content, he retrieved the item. To the setting of SCP, he had skimmed through it before, thus, he somehow got the main effects of this panacea. Now as he had read the detailed information, he just wanted to check what the different features this item had in Thriller Paradise.

The results eased his worries, and it seemed that no matter how damaged Little Tan's left hand was, it only needed one red pellet to restore its normal state.

Then, Feng Bujue walked towards the Storage to receive his rewards.

Since he had continuously drawn some sh*tty items, he had recognized his bad luck and karma. Sometimes, using the word 'possibility' is just a useless way to console oneself. Bad luck is always bad luck. Being the person who carried such a strange disease, how could he believe that he could still be lucky enough to draw out Perfect Items in this game? Thus, this time, Feng Bujue was content with his fate and chose EXP instead. His current maximum EXP was 15,000, which meant he could receive 6,000 points more as it was 40% of his current highest EXP. With this EXP, he could reach level 16 easily.

After that, he went to another glass column to draw his Skill Card.

[Name: Devil Bat's Ghostly Shadow]

[Skill Card Attributes: Proactive skill, permanent ownership.]

[Skill Category: Investigating]

[Effects: cooldown time is 5 seconds. Can be activated when user is running with high speed. After the skill has been activated, within three seconds, user can have two different shadows backing them up. Before the skill is over, user can pass through the targets/obstacles in front of him/her (if the obstacle is a wall, on a scale of a fan-shaped of 2 meters ahead, there should be a gap wider

than his/her shoulder in order to help him/her cross the wall; in case the wall's height is more than three-fourth the height of user, he/she cannot cross it).]

[Consumption: 100 points of Physical Value.]

[Learning Conditions: Investigating E, Fighting E]

[Remarks: the signature of a Running Back number 21 in American Football. This relies on the body's central gravity and special changes in pace to create another shadow in the opponent's sight, which helps to cross through the opponent's blockade.]

"Fast pace moving skill enhanced with dodging skill..." Feng Bujue supported his right elbow with his left arm while his right hand rubbed his chin. "Yeah, I think that it will be a waste if I learn this skill," he mumbled, "this skill seems to suit Little Tan better... His Fighting Specialty is D already, but his Investigating Specialty is just F. Can't learn this. Dispirited's Investigating is E, but her Fighting is just F. At present, in our Union, there're only me and Like Rain who can learn it..." He contemplated then decided to put this skill in the shared Storage of their Union. He would wait to discuss with his teammates tonight about this skill card.

After he had received the rewards and put the skill card into the shared storage, Feng Bujue decided to visit the Box of Fear again. Currently, his Skill Value wasn't small; he could be able to buy some items that were under level 20. This should be enough for him now.

Feng Bujue got used to the room equipped with twisted and concave mirrors and the box standing amidst it. He opened the menu to check the items there using categories.

At first, he tried to find 'Legendary' items. Of course, he just wanted to take a look. This mindset is just like when women go shopping, they will stare at the items behind the window of flagship stores, but it doesn't mean that they are going to buy something there.

Men have the same thought. When they are checking for goods, from their curiosity, everyone will want to see the best items or the most expensive ones. Well, looking doesn’t cost.

"Wow! It exists!" Feng Bujue used filter tool to search through Quality category. He didn’t expect that he could find a Legendary quality item.

[Name: Tessaiga (1) – Iron Crushing Fang]

[Type: Weapon]

[Quality: Legendary]

[Attack Power: Unknown]

[Attributes: None]

[Special Effects: None]

[Equipment Condition: Fighting Specialty A, Spiritual Specialty A, Summon Specialty C, level 40 and above.]

[Remarks: A legendary sword, created by Tōtōsai with a fang of the great monster Inu no Taishou. When player pours spiritual power in it, Tessaiga will change to its basic fighting shape—the Fang Sword. Depending on the strength of spiritual power, technique and the experience of the user, Tessaiga can turn into many shapes. Each shape will have particular attributes and special effects, and the sword’s power will also be different.]

From the description of this item, besides pretty high equipment conditions, the other properties were unknown, which meant a player had to hold this weapon in his hands and pour his spiritual power in it to see the changes in its shapes and attributes.

By the way, taking a look at the price, at least Feng Bujue assumed that currently, no one who could buy this item.

This Tessaiga was priced at 90,000 points of Skill Value. Skill Value was a type of currency players couldn't trade. If they wanted to accumulate Skill Value until they could have 90,000 points, let

alone the differences in levels between players, time was a crucial matter. Items would stay only seven days in the Box of Fear; thus, this weapon would be erased soon.

Of course, one day, if this sword appeared again in some scenario and still no one got it when the scenario ended, it would be put into the Box of Fear once again and be a model there for another week. This would depend on the creation of scenarios.

After he was done checking the ‘Legendary’ item, he was almost addicted. Feng Bujue then started to search for the items he needed. He pondered: in long ranged combat, the Deadly Poker was the divine weapon he couldn’t replace. With this Spiritual Weapon, Shooting Specialty didn't matter anymore. And, since he still had an M1911A Pistol as a long range weapon, he didn’t need more guns.

About melee weapons, he had to think about it... His pipe wrench wasn’t a signature weapon. Till the middle stage of the game, players who had proper fighting skills would perhaps use weapons like saber, sword, spear, hammer, or trident, etc. If he continued to use the wrench as his main melee weapon, it would be extremely unfavorable for his Fighting Specialty’s growth. About that broken stool... not worth mentioning.

Besides, he could consider buying defensive items. He had kept the Echo Armor in his bag for quite a long time. The best advantage feature of this item was it only took one slot for the belt. The remarks of this item read, [User can use the belt to activate an invisible ‘sound’ armor]. If it was an invisible armor, besides the belt, players could equip more items on his arms or legs to have a double layered defense.

So now, Feng Bujue was searching for melee weapons and defensive items.

After he had spent more than 20 minutes to review and compare, he found a suitable item. At the first glance, it was a steel sword

around sixty centimeters.

[Name: Robots Must Die]

[Type: Weapon]

[Quality: Excellent]

[Attack Power: Medium]

[Attributes: Electrical]

[Effects: When used to attack machinery opponents, the damage power will increase significantly.]

[Equipment Conditions: Level 15]

[Remarks: The legendary dwarf craftsman ‘Aure – All Must Die’ had so many embarrassing stories. At the end of each story, a new weapon was forged. For instance, the time that he was so resentful and felt it hard to open his mouth talking about it ever again was when he was taking a vacation at the ‘Sweet Cake Mount’. He got tricked to play ‘Celestial Being Palpitating’ (2) once. Later on, he knew that the opponents were the two cyborgs who could change their appearances as they pleased. Not long after that, he had created this steel sword.]

Tessaiga: Tessaiga (鉄砕牙, "Iron-Crushing Fang") is a sword wielded by the hanyō Inuyasha in the manga Inuyasha: A Feudal Fairy Tale.

Celestial Being Palpitating: this is a kind of fraud by taking advantage of female appearance. It would be planned by a couple, where the female would use sexual suggestion to attract a male victim then take him to the hotel for the business. Then, her male partner-in-crime would appear to catch the infidelity case and seize the chance to rob the victim.

Chapter 127: Intermission (32)

Feng Bujue, of course, was qualified to equip this item. In comparison to the wrench, it both had ‘medium’ attack power and also had additional attributes. About the special effects, the pipe wrench was better when dealing with humanoid creatures, while this steel sword was indeed the best weapon to counter against machinery monsters.

Feng Bujue assumed that this steel sword had two more transcendent features compared to his pipe wrench. First, this was a regular weapon with a sharp blade, so its attack range was wider. Next, although they were both items that came with additional attributes, electrical attribute could not only restrain machinery but could also paralyze other creatures.

Moreover, this one didn’t have the ‘locked’ restriction. Later on, if he had better items to replace it, he could always throw the steel sword to the Auction House and mark it with a high price. Well, with only this reason, it wouldn't be a bad purchase.

After Feng Bujue had purchased this item, his bag was full. However, he couldn’t upgrade his [Newbie Bag], which only had 10 slots, to the [Standard Bag], which had 15 slots, since he didn’t have 1,000,000 game coins. This added to the shock that he had had when he watched the [Tessaiga], so after Feng Bujue had finished purchasing the [Robots Must Die], he left the Box of Fear.

Next, he paid a visit to the Mall to check out the changes of the ranking lists during the time. There was a fierce competition at the Union Combat Competence and Union Overall Competence. Besides the two first rankings, there was a big change for the lower rankings. However, the individual combat competence list and the high levels lists were fairly stable. By the way, it was worth noting that the player who had achieved the max level in Closed Beta, [Fearless Hero], had fallen off the top 10 in combat competence ranking. He also didn’t top the high levels ranking list. Some

strange IDs had quietly entered the top 20 of both ranking lists. And, they were all the official main force of ‘Order’.

…

At the Mall, Feng Bujue bought more four magazines of bullets, then sold the dagger he got from the human-hunting scenario to make an unoccupied slot in his bag. Then, he returned to his login space and prepared to queue for playing a scenario.

Currently, he was at level 16. His stats were as follows:

Title: [The Plot Seeker]

EXP: 3236/16000

Skill Value: 2080

Game Coins: 214800

Specialties: Common D, Weapon E, Investigating E, Fighting D (enhanced by the mask), Shooting D, Curing F, Spiritual F and Summon N/A.

Bag: 9/10, including [Mario’s Pipe Wrench], [The Eye of Hatred], [M1911A1 Pistol], [Echo Armor], [Survival Value Supplements] (medium) x 4, [Flashlight], [Broken Stool], [SPC-500 (20/20)], and [Robots Must Die].

Items: [Dance of the Knight], [Casey Jones’ Mask], and [Deadly Poker] (Spiritual Weapon).

Login space storage: 3/10, including Jigsaw Puzzle Card: Monkey, Jigsaw Puzzle Card: Sunglasses, and Jigsaw Puzzle Card: Spinner.]

Skills: [Perfunctory Maintenance], [Lower Side Kick of a Brat], [Body-Spirit Congregation Technique] and [Planned Victory from Thousand Miles Away].

In a short while, Feng Bujue wouldn't play Single Player Survival Mode (Nightmare). Such scenarios that would crack people’s brain and give them a head-splitting headache, he should only play that mode once or twice a week. No one could endure playing it daily.

And, of course, playing Multiplayer Survival Mode with Little Tan and the others was the best choice since they could earn more EXP if they teamed up with members of their Union. However, even if the members of the Hell's Frontline teamed up all four of them, they could earn only 3% more for their EXP (those additional EXPs weren't shown in their calculation menu). Anyway, it was better than having nothing.

Thus, Feng Bujue wanted to play Killing Game mode again. The last time he had played one versus one had ended in confusion so he wasn't satisfied with it. Due to the so-called 'ecstasy of players against players', although the terror element in Killing Game was much reduced, players who kill each other could still make their adrenaline surge, which brought a considerably stimulating experience.

As he had thought about it, Feng Bujue prepared to play one versus one again. Unexpectedly, when he shifted his eyes to the menu, someone sent him a call request.

"Oh, it's him again..." mumbled Feng Bujue.

The one who sent the request was that player whose ID was [Wild Trace Sword Shadow].

Feng Bujue accepted and instantly spoke up, "What's up, bro?"

"Hey, hope you are doing well... Feng-Ge, do you have free time now?" From Wild Trace Sword Shadow's voice, one could know he was in a good mood.

"I'm talking with you from my login space, what do you say?" said Feng Bujue.

"Ha... ha... right..."

"Don't tell me you want to play with me, or something like that?" asked Feng Bujue with an odd tone.

"What? Aren't we friends?" answered Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"Let me guess... Killing Game, right?"

"Yep."

"Don’t wanna play, don't wanna play, don’t wanna play," said Feng Bujue thrice with an impatient tone.

"Why?" asked Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"I can’t defeat you," Feng Bujue answered directly.

"Ha, ha..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow laughed, "I want to play two versus two with you..."

Feng Bujue was surprised. "No way! You are from a big Union. And you are a hotshot! I can tell you are 90% a professional gamer. Don’t you have fixed teammates?"

"I’m not free to go online during the day. Well, just consider now I have unscheduled time to play, so I’m ready to take a rest," Wild Trace Sword Shadow said, "the other guys from my Studio are all playing in scenarios now. That’s why I came to you."

"Your Union must have recruited many players. No one is at a suitable level to team up with you?" asked Feng Bujue.

"I’ve checked that. There’re not many professional gamers online now; the available ones whose levels are close to mine are just two or three," Wild Trace Sword Shadow answered, "before I logged in, I stayed in the studio to read the members’ profiles. I have some impression towards those IDs. Those morons’ fighting capacity is just 5." He smiled, "Playing with you will be certainly better than playing with them."

"You are really frank. Your Union’s members’ fighting capacity is just 5, and you are not trying to hide it; instead, you frankly told outsiders..." said Feng Bujue.

"Ha... Just a saying. Stuff like competence, good means good and bad means bad. If I give them face, I’m not sure they can progress better. Being stronger is the only way to change the others’ looks

on them."

What Wild Trace Sword Shadow said was reasonable. Moreover, Feng Bujue was the sort of man who would be willing to empathize others. He just smiled, didn't comment anything, then tried to change the topic. "So, bringing a teammate whose fighting capacity is bigger than just 5 like me, you can be more certain on playing two versus two?"

"Feng-Ge, you are so humble. Your performance is worth being proud of," Wild Trace Sword Shadow said, "about your competence, at least both of us know about that. I'm telling you this. The Spiritual Weapon you got is likely the very first item of that category in Thriller Paradise. Perhaps it's the only piece that exists at this moment."

"Ha, ha... Alright, alright. I can't deny that your good will is putting me so high. Okay, I will serve you and join a battle." Feng Bujue's words were quite shameless. He had originally wanted to play Killing Game, and now it was like he was going to 'hold-thigh'. Moreover, this Wild Trace Sword Shadow was some sort of the pride and chivalrous 'big-thigh' in the Martial World Union. Whether it was his equipment, level, or fighting techniques, they were all at the supreme level among players who were specialized in the fighting class.

After Wild Trace Sword Shadow had heard his response, he sent the team invite, "Then we should team up."

'Fighting capacity is just 5' is a Chinese's internet slang that expressed one that is incapable, have low fighting power as well as level, a weakling.

Chapter 128: The Earth's Wastelands (1)

[Wild Trace Sword Shadow, level 17]

[Feng Bujue, level 16]

[Your team is entering Killing Game 2 versus 2.]

[Your team has entered the queue. Searching for other ready teams or individuals...]

[Confirmed. Generating scenario...]

[Loading... Please wait...]

This was the notification Feng Bujue got from the system, which was a little bit different from when he was the captain.

The male voice he heard this time had spoke Mandarin, muttering huskily, "Make your opponents shiver in fear. Make them see what real terror is!"

[Loading completed. You are playing Killing Game.]

[This mode offers an explanation of the plot. There are chances of Side/[Hidden Quests], together with special Worldview.]

[Rewards for completing the scenario: 30% EXP of the current highest EXP required to level.]

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

The opening CG played. On the screen, a long-haired beauty in white coat with prominent curves was walking on a dim-lit corridor.

[In 2000, Crystal Lake Laboratory had imprisoned an evil murderer, who would never be given a death sentence—Jason. The government's team of scientists wanted to do experiments on him to study his necrotic tissue recovery.]

Along with the narration, that female researcher got through a

door. The camera seemed not to follow her inside as it stopped at the corridor.

[However, it wasn't easy to confine Jason. Any careless, relaxed or underestimated moves could create a consequence nothing could fix.]

The CG had reduced a majority of footage in the original movie. It only used some screams when the darkness suddenly fell as Jason, who got out of control now, jumped out, causing that female researcher to be frozen.

[In 2455, mankind had entered the interstellar colonial era. At this time, this place had become the 'Old Earth', a place of mad storms, methane, and polluted oceans.]

[A team of human scientists had returned to Earth for archaeology research. They found the dead bodies of Rowan and Jason, then brought them to their ship.]

The CG ended here. Feng Bujue could move his body now. The system's notification arose immediately in his ears.

[Main Quest has been triggered.]

[Kill all the members of the enemy team.]

"Turns out it's that bad movie." Wild Trace Sword Shadow was standing next to Feng Bujue as they were in the corridor that appeared in the CG opening. It was unknown why the light there was still on, which meant that this place still had sources of power.

"This situation is not right," Feng Bujue said, "why are we in the laboratory but not in a spacecraft?"

"What about it?" asked Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"The 10th movie of the 'Friday the 13th' franchise took place in the spaceships. But the place where we are... cough... cough..." Feng Bujue suddenly coughed, "... is not suitable for humans to survive."

After Wild Trace Sword Shadow had inhaled some air, he also felt a little bit discomfort. He then opened his game menu to check. No abnormal state, but his Survival Value had been reduced by 1%. It seemed that the surrounding atmosphere had some sort of effect that could reduce their Survival Value.

"They found the dead bodies of Rowan and Jason and brought them to the spaceship..." Feng Bujue mocked. "After they were all gone, we are in this 100-year abandoned underground laboratory to play the movie's epilogue."

"In other words, this scenario has just borrowed the setting of that movie, and it isn't related to Jason or other characters," Wild Trace Sword Shadow continued, "Ha, ha, isn't it good enough? Not many twisted details or complicated contents. We just need to defeat the opponents in this closed area."

"There are three events that I hope you should know." Feng Bujue raised his right hand and unfolded his index finger. "First, according to the movie's setting, not to mention the outside of the lab, but in our current location and situation, everyone must die. You and I aren't dead yet perhaps because we are 'Players' or the system has arranged it purposely." He extended the second finger. "Second, at the first time I have watched this sucky movie, I have noticed that, well, let alone the nonsense script and the unqualified director, this movie's plot has a little taste of science fiction. For example, it has the detail where people fix the spaceships, artificial humans, etc. In short, this is a world in which the technology level is very high. If we can find a way to contact with human civilization in this world, sending some SOS signals and getting out of this lab, we can have an unpredictable big harvest. Compare to killing the enemy, it would be much greater.

"The other two players from the enemy team would die sooner or later in this lab. Although they can rely on the Survival Value Supplements to endure for a while, it's just a matter of time. As for us, we can take this time to search for items, skills, etc. Or we can

even use the high technologies in this world to strengthen our attributes."

Feng Bujue unfolded his third finger. "Third," he dry coughed again, "thirdly, this is the most important point, you'd better pay attention... I truly doubt that Jason is the only monster in this lab." He took out his steel sword. "In such a big scale lab, it is more than enough to keep 10 monsters like Jason. If I were the writer, I would expand the plot this way..." He forced a smiled. "Although it's been 445 years, if the system wants to increase the fun for this 2 versus 2 match... then letting some monsters to trouble us is a perfect choice."

After having listened to him, Wild Trace Sword Shadow was frightened at heart. "I think you are a monster..." He spoke up with a face full of respect, "Feng-Ge, just with a short CG, you can think about that much?"

"Momentarily, that's what I have. If I have something else to add, I'll let you know," answered Feng Bujue.

"Worth the title [The Plot Seeker]. Admire, really admire you!" Wild Trace Sword Shadow said with his real emotions.

"Alright, let's check out our opponents' situation first," said Feng Bujue.

As they had opened the game menu to observe, from the opponents' IDs, they could tell that their opponents were from the same team. One was named [The Apocalypse Assault], level 19, and the other was called [The Ultimate Assault], also level 19. Besides the IDs and levels, the only thing that they could know now was just their status, which was now 'Alive'.

"Assault?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow slammed his eyebrows together.

Feng Bujue was sensitive enough to catch something from his teammate's complexion. "You know them?"

"Well, I don’t. But I know that sort of IDs," Wild Trace Sword Shadow said. "Perhaps they are from the ‘Corpse Saber’ Studio... Players’ IDs from Corpse Saber all have the suffix ‘Assault’ or ‘Enthrone’."

"What? I remember that Studio is ranked number five on the combative ranking list," Feng Bujue said, "higher than your Martial World."

"Harrumph... That irritates me..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow’s tone was reluctant. "In fact, those bastards are not strong, but they have ways to top the list."

"Wut? You are saying..." With his intelligence, of course, Feng Bujue understood the implication in his friend’s saying. Thus, he pushed the boat to let the other go on.

"This is not appropriate for me to tell, but you can choose to believe in it or not," Wild Trace Sword Shadow said. "Most of the Studios in this field have the same consensus, of which players from Corpse Saber are cheating."

"Cheating? Are you saying that all the players of that Studio are..."

"They have many tricks. What you could think about, they have all tried," Wild Trace Sword Shadow said. "For example, they took the initiative and created some illegal external auxiliary equipment; about the software, they also had some plug-ins featured with Auto. Outsiders don’t know these, there’s only rumor among them. However, as professional gamers, after having encountered them several times, we all know that more or less."

"The Game Masters just ignore them?" asked Feng Bujue.

"It’s difficult to control, and it’s not worth it," Wild Trace Sword Shadow said, "the game producers only want to make money from the game. To some dirty things, if they don’t interfere with their interests, and if they don’t pour any rain or storm on the crowd,

they won’t care." He shook his head and sighed. "It requires many resources like manpower, time, technique, etc., to control this matter. I think unless you put the evidence in front of the Game Masters, they won’t care at all." He seemed to recall something suddenly as he spoke up again, "Ah yeah, there’s one more thing. I said that those bastards from the Corpse Saber have many tricks, but it’s not only in the game. Sometimes, they would hire people to do some dirty jobs. For instance, they would post something on the game forum or game website to discredit players from other Unions, or make some malicious comparison with their competitors. In short, they are bad people doing bad trading."

"The time when I got the deepest impression was in another game. The game producer wanted to hold a poll where we would vote for the ‘Strongest Guild’. It turned out that the Corpse Saber had bought the votes in the dark to cross out Order and The Immortals. However, no matter what the result would be, the game producers only wanted to earn money. Do they want to control this, you say?"

"Oh, so that is how it happened... Seems you have a deep grudge..." said Feng Bujue.

Wild Trace Sword Shadow waved and beamed a forced smile, "You don’t understand. Only when you are in our position will you know this feeling. Sometimes, you know that you are stronger, but you still lost the game. This loss is vexing and it chills our mind. But it’s a fact." He paused as he eyed Feng Bujue. "I’m sorry. Perhaps you would think that I just made them up."

"No, I believe in you," Feng Bujue said, "I also believe that your Martial World will not cooperate with them to do bad tricks."

"Of course," Wild Trace Sword Shadow uttered proudly.

"My idea is..." Feng Bujue said, "either we go with the flow or just realize that kind of perception." He paused for a while before continuing, "Thus, we have to be serious in killing those two and

letting them know what’s called ‘competence’."

Chapter 129: The Earth's Wastelands (2)

Human beings, human civilization. Mankind lives on Earth just like the cycle with ups and downs. No matter how brilliant one is, how outstanding his achievement is, or how wealthy he is, all will eventually be buried and forgotten by the eternal time.

There is no monument that stands forever, since they will all be pulled down in the end.

No story will be told forever since people will be writing new and great chapters constantly.

'The Old Earth' or 'The First Earth' was a place which people had started to gradually forget just like that.

One day in the 22nd century, in a quiet night, through the clear lens of the astronomical telescope at Arecibo Observatory in the valley of Puerto Rico, the astronomers of United States of America had found a new shining spot. It could be clearly seen near Pluto. Russian and Swedish Observatories soon confirmed this finding; they also predicted that this small comet, whose origin and volume were unknown, was dashing rapidly towards the Solar System.

The press had started to post about this new nova, but they just gave succinct information about it. It seemed that to the majority of readers, news in astronomy was far less interesting than rumors and gossip in showbiz.

After the days had passed, the astronomers were both nervous and curious while watching that comet and predicted what was about to happen there. Soon, they found that the brightness of that nova was amazingly increasing. At present, they could still observe it clearly using ordinary photographic or filming techniques. The closer it got towards Pluto, the more highly-strung the astronomers were. Although they were living in the 22nd century, collision of astronomical objects that happened near to mankind was still an event that went far beyond their imagination. Anyway,

at that moment, the distance between these two heavenly bodies was still pretty far.

And when the unimaginable event was about to become possible, news agencies from around the world started to pay attention to what was happening in the sky. Some students even built the related celestial map. All had proven that they could only helplessly watch that comet ran madly towards Pluto.

Not long after that, the whole world started to report on this incident. The impact event didn't happen as they had imagined. When that comet had crossed by Pluto, it had dragged that whole planet into its scorching lump...

The two heavenly bodies had merged into a massive white sphere that people on Earth could observe with their naked eyes.

Thus, besides the sun and the moon, there was another new celestial body orbiting the Earth. It regularly appeared in people's vision. Every night, they observed this sphere's movements, and gradually, they recognized that each time they saw the sphere, it was getting bigger and bigger.

They started to doubt and fear... Some pointed out the topics like 'Why in this vast universe, that star decides to come here'. Such question was stupid enough. It was like asking why one was born among billions of his fellows.

Scientists had given them some related knowledge in astrophysics. Moreover, they had publicized a part of their study, which was the earth-shaking information: that uninvited guest invading the Solar System was heading towards the Sun. Only the total gravity of the biggest planets could deviate this comet from its destructive orbit. Anyway, no matter what, the apocalypse of the Earth was about to come.

But what happened next was unexpected.

In other words, the Earth had received a death penalty, but the

sentence was commuted.

After this fireball had swallowed up Pluto, its speed became sluggish. Finally, it stopped at a relatively safe distance. And, just like a twin of the Sun, it started to light and warm up this world. Freezing winter had disappeared. The coldest time of the year became like the early summer.

When the first morning ended, the second morning lit up the sky. Such blazing and scorching heat were like a hurricane of heat wave from Hell burning the whole world. No one knew how long they could endure such life. Nevertheless, the melting pace of the polar ice caps had reminded people that this planet would no longer be their homes.

Some people were optimistic; some were skeptical; some were crazy; while some others felt hopeless. Their reactions were different, and the Earth had sunk into an unprecedented chaos. The apocalypse finally appeared in an entity in front of mankind, no longer ‘an environmental problem’, ‘Aliens invading’, or ‘fatal viruses’ that existed only in films or from rumors. It truly appeared in the sky everyday to announce to the world that the end was at hand.

Unexpectedly, ‘the commuted death sentence’ had gathered humans together. In the next 10 years, human science and technology had advanced rapidly, much more than that of 200 years ago.

The whole mankind, regardless of skin colors, races, nationalities, religions, and conflicts, had all united for a common, sole mission, which was to maintain the human survival. They put forth every source, shared their advancement of knowledge, scientists, and every essential thing.

Eventually, 20 years later, mankind took the first step into the era of interstellar colonization. The first mother ship ‘Ark’ flew out of the atmosphere, carrying 1,000,000 people. The second, the

third, and the fourth then followed...

Afterwards, when an exit to escape the Earth was found, humans started to reveal their true colors. War had burst out on Earth and ended when the majority of humans died together with the destruction of 93% man-made vehicles on Earth.

27 years later, the 'Doomsday' ended like a joke. Of course, no one could laugh at it.

That big star then took a 90 degrees turn, sped up again and left the Solar System. No one knew why or how. Perhaps that star wasn't a shooting star, but an alien spaceship. Perhaps it was a special living form. Or, it could be a challenge an unknown God had given to humans.

In short, when human beings were capable of escaping the Earth, the threat of the Earth's destruction no longer existed. Ironically, this planet had been damaged too much by the hands of its dwellers through their nuclear wars to the point that it was no longer a suitable place to live in.

Fortunately, humans had mastered the space-leaping technology. Long-distance interstellar travel no longer only existed in Star Trek. Thus, the survivors on the 'Ark' had found a new home on the Milky Way. An uninhabited planet, pretty similar to the Old Earth, a virgin land where no intellectual living form had ever put steps on: 'The New Earth' or 'The Second Earth'.

In 2386, a new study on technology succeeded called 'the Ant', which was a micro nanobot used to repair living creatures' damaged cells.

At first, 'the Ant' was used to cure broken human limbs. Even if it were a permanent-paralyzed patient with serious shriveled muscles, it could help restore him to the standard state of normal people.

Later on, 'the Ant' had revived a frozen-to-death-for-years

mountaineer found on a snow-capped area. People then laid their eyes on this technique and threw their glance towards the First Earth.

From 2041 onwards, some ‘ancestors’ were found in the Old Earth and had been resurrected. The true history, the old civilization in the past, and the questioned matters were all answered.

This became a rising tide of prosperity for over half of a century without ceasing...

One day in 2455, a four-tiered carrier named Grendel came to the Old Earth. The science team on the ship found two frozen bodies in a lab in a Crystal Lake. They brought them to the ship. One of the frozen bodies was the female researcher named Rowan, and the other was Jason Voorhees, the immortal devil murderer.

They didn't know that besides the Grendel spaceship, there was another team who visited the underground laboratory in Crystal Lake on the same day. With unknown purposes, they followed the science team to this place, waited until the former team left, and then entered the underground laboratory.

...

"Didn’t expect that we would meet strong opponents," said Ultimate Assault.

"One of the Saber Sword Smile, Wild Trace Sword Shadow. A tough opponent..." continued Apocalypse Assault.

The two workers from Corpse Saber Studio had really short hair, pale face and numb complexion. They didn't speak with a loud voice, but their tones were steady. They all wore uniforms in blue and black hues, looking much alike with uniforms in Star Trek, but the colors were different. The badge of Corpse Saber was worn on the left chest of their uniform, which was a delicate bone cutlass. And, of course, it had the words ‘Corpse Saber’ in black

hue.

"Is the guy called Feng Bujue a hotshot of the Martial World? Why have I never heard of him..." said Apocalypse Assault, "confronting such odd combination, don’t you feel weird?"

"It’s weird, indeed... According to the rules of this game, the competences of the two parties shouldn't be much different." He paused for a while then continued, "Can’t deny the fact that although Wild Trace Sword Shadow is two levels lower than us, his competence isn’t less than to both of us. But that moron Feng Bujue’s level is only 16..."

"In other words... the system deems that their combined competence is not lower than us, two players at level 19?" said Apocalypse Assault.

"Harrumph... Something strange happened. Is that Feng Bujue a hotshot that’s as strong as Wild Trace Sword Shadow?" Ultimate Assault said, "If so, the only possibility is... he’s actually a star player, but he’s using another ID to play Thriller Paradise."

"Make sense," Apocalypse Assault continued, "should be a hotshot from another Studio doing job-hopping to the Martial World. He changed his ID and now works with Wild Trace Sword Shadow. Then it’s possible to explain why we are going to confront the other two players whose levels are lower than ours in a 2 versus 2 match."

"This is good, isn’t it?" Ultimate Assault said, "It’s rare to meet low levels opponents in Killing Game, we should have more chances to win."

"Yeah," Apocalypse Assault nodded, "anyway, even if we know we are going to win, we shouldn't be careless. See, our Survival Value is decreasing gradually; it means that this scenario has some sort of time restriction. If the opponents use attrition strategy and don’t confront us directly, this game will turn into a competition of wearing down Curing Specialty and the quantity of consumed

Survival Value Supplements. This game doesn’t quantify Health Point with specific numerical value but percentage. If the situation develops into a hide-and-seek game, we’ll have no advantage at all."

"I think so. We’d better battle fast and win fast," Ultimate Assault replied, "we’re at higher levels and with the support from that ‘drug’... if we lose... it’s unacceptable."

...

On the other side, Feng Bujue was leading the way while holding his flashlight. Wild Trace Sword Shadow followed him, moving fast but quietly along the corridor.

Feng Bujue chose to display his Casey Jone’s Mask. Although it wasn’t a gas mask, he felt that if he wore it, it would help him to filter the air a little bit.

"Attrition is a strategy that benefits us," Feng Bujue spoke up while talking. Because of the mask, his voice sounded croaky.

"Like how?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow said, "Are you going to use tactics like using ranged weapons or some traps to fight with them?"

"No, if we are not going to face them, it will be considered a type of attrition," answered Feng Bujue.

Wild Trace Sword Shadow had contemplated for a while before he got his idea. "Are you saying that we will make use of the decreasing blood effect here?"

"Correct," Feng Bujue answered. "Their levels are higher than ours. In papers, their Survival Values are more than ours." He dryly coughed again. "But the atmosphere here reduces Survival Value by percentage. We’ve already checked that."

Minutes ago, they had just exchanged the information on their Survival Values. Although they were one level different, their current Survival Value were both 95%, and the time their Survival

Values were reduced was almost the same, precisely to second. This meant that the blood’s reduction rate didn't depend on levels. As long as they breathed the air here, their blood percentage would be reduced after a fixed period of time.

"Oh..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow smiled, "Feng-Ge, can I ask how many bottles of Survival Value Supplement you have?"

"I have four (medium) bottles," answered Feng Bujue.

"Let alone how many bottles our opponents are bringing along," Wild Trace Sword Shadow said, "even I have more than you." He shook his head. "And, what if one of the other two is training himself in Curing Specialty or has a certain knowledge about it, would this ‘war of attrition’ of your become a disadvantage?"

"Well, I said using attrition to begin the war, I didn’t say we would use it to end this match..." Feng Bujue said, "I meant, in this game, we’d better not be involved in their rhythm of ‘fast battling-fast winning’."

"Do you think that if we have a face to face battle, we will lose?" asked Wild Trace Sword Shadow. In fact, from his tone, they could see that he didn’t think so.

"Not sure," Feng Bujue said. "But since you have come to me and made me your teammate, apparently, our combined strength and advantages are far better than doing close combat with them." He slightly turned his head and talked to Wild Trace Sword Shadow over his shoulder. "Using strategies is a part of competence." He paused for a while and looked forward. "If you want to play hard with the enemy, teaming up with me is worse than working with a player specialized in Fighting."

"Alright, then—"

ROAR ——

A strange roar interrupted his talk. Feng Bujue stopped at the same time.

They worked together in a tacit understanding as they kept their mouths shut. Consciously, the two faced the opposite directions and started to take guard. They held their breath and concentrated on waiting for this roar to sound again in order to identify its origin.

Chapter 130: The Earth's Wastelands (3)

Seconds later, the second roar came as scheduled. This time, as Feng Bujue and Wild Trace Sword Shadow were concentrating, they naturally got the direction of that monster. They exchanged looks then walked together towards that direction.

Their walk wasn't fast but very quiet. Feng Bujue switched his mask from being visible to invisible, then took out the [Eye of Hatred] from his bag and equipped it. In several scenarios he had recently played, it was usually him alone, or the situation went similar to Deadly Jeopardy where he didn't need to use this item.

Although there were lights in the corridor, it wasn't enough. Usually, after a certain distance, there would be a bright white light which lit up the area, followed by around 15 meters in dim light and then another bright-lit area... Due to this circumstance, Feng Bujue decided to use his flashlight, as he was afraid that they would miss some clues along the dingy sections of the corridor.

The two of them tiptoed on the corridor to a T-intersection. Right then, the monster roared again. The sound this time was louder than the previous times.

They stopped at the intersection and looked to the left. Blocking the corridor after another 20 meters was a thick metal gate, which had a wheel-like valve. The monster's roar came out from there.

Feng Bujue cocked his head, then muttered, "If the door is closed, it means this is an optional content of the plot. From this, we can guess that the power of this monster is not bad. The system lets us choose to kill it or not. If we don't want to kill it, we can leave by the other direction. But if we take the risks to go in there and kill it, we may get the corresponding benefits."

Wild Trace Sword Shadow also lowered his tone, "What if this is a BOSS-level monster that is even stronger than Jason?"

"Impossible. Jason is the strongest monster in this scenario. No doubt." Although Feng Bujue hadn't known Wild Trace Sword Shadow for long, he could still feel this guy was an upright and straightforward person. So, when he discussed with him, he didn't need to keep his guard up. He then frankly spoke, "The skill I'm granted from the title can help me see the data of the final BOSS in a scenario directly. When we just entered here, I've checked it. Jason's the big boss of this scenario."

"Really? Is there such a skill?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow got excited instantly; he asked, "Hey, in the Thunderbolt scenario where we fought each other, who was the boss that you saw?"

"Didn't see it," said Feng Bujue.

"Why?"

"When I heard the system's notification, you had already stormed towards me with your sword. Would I be dumbly idle there to check the menu?"

"Blame me?"

"Nonsense."

"Ha ha, how is Jason's data? Is he strong?" asked Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"What can I say... only considering his fighting power, perhaps he isn't as strong as heterotypes, predators or something.... well, aliens in short. But talking about his survival ability, killing him is more difficult than dealing with demons," answered Feng Bujue.

The monster's data Feng Bujue had seen was as follows:

[Name: Jason Voorhees]

[Race: ???]

[Level: 20]

[Height: 190 cm]

[Weight: 113 kg]

[Fighting technique: Close combat; familiar with using machetes; also knows how to use other weapons or bare hand fighting.]

[Weakness: Always listens to his mommy.]

[Skills: Resurrection (even if you have physically destroyed him entirely, he just needs an absurd cause to appear again).]

[Level of danger: Medium]

Feng Bujue personally thought that this resurrecting skill mentioned in this scenario was to mock the producers, who had made this franchise.

ROAR——

The monster behind the gate had roared again. This time, since they were near, they could even hear something else which sounded like metal pieces colliding. Low but heavy, also dense.

"First, we should put aside things that are not relevant. Anyway, Jason now is in the spaceship already. Under normal circumstances, it’s hardly a chance for us to see him before we leave the scenario," Feng Bujue said. "First, we need to talk about this monster. Should we kill it?"

"Eh?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow was dazed. "Aren’t you in charge of planning? Why ask me?"

"Ah... so..." Feng Bujue mumbled, "Well, it’s much easier if you kill what I tell you to kill." He put both the flashlight and the steel sword back into his bag, and came forward to grab the valve lock on the metal gate. "I will open the door. You barge in and slash anything you see. I got your back."

"Hey..." now Wild Trace Sword Shadow understood why Feng Bujue needed to ask for his opinions.

Well, too late to say anything else. Feng Bujue had already turned the wheel. The monster inside seemed to notice the situation over

there. Before Wild Trace Sword Shadow stormed in, it had already started to move.

Feng Bujue pushed the gate open then took several steps back, taking the steel sword out again. When Wild Trace Sword Shadow crouched his body, attempting to jump in, he once again heard the strange noise of metal pieces rubbing on each other coming over from inside the dark. Almost out of instinct, Wild Trace Sword Shadow retreated, using his sword to block in front of his chest while facing the thing storming to the gate from the dark.

When it came to Wild Trace Sword Shadow's sight in a whole, he directly erased his intent to use his sword and stop that monster. He also retreated quickly.

The monster appeared in the corridor. Under the light, its strange shape, which was utterly hard to describe, gradually revealed.

Let's just imagine it like this. You unfold a newspaper, put a lump of metal things with different shapes, such as hangers, screws, scissors, L-shaped water pipes, a large coil of wire, etc. on it. Wrap the newspaper around them. At the same time, use force to ball the sheet of paper. No doubt that the edge of those metal objects will pierce through the thin paper and jut out. And, the final work you got is an irregular-shaped lump of metal enveloped in a thin sheet of newspaper, which have so many holes.

The monster that came out from that door was something similar to the shape described above. Anyway, it wasn't a sheet of newspaper covering it, but a decomposing, rotten layer of skin, which was even thicker than a mattress. This layer of skin had so many holes where some metal objects were protruding. They could see a bicycle frame, a roll of barbed wire fence, car components, the wire grille from anti-theft doors, etc. All were rusted and dilapidated.

It was hard to tell the volume of that monster, but it seemed to be

as big as a car. When it was still in the room, it looked like a giant dumpling; but when it flounced out from the metal gate, it could change its shape to the shape of a Mexican chicken roll.

The monster used the metal objects sticking out from its skin to move. It looked like a slug crawling on the floor, but in fact, it had numerous ‘feet’. The rubbing sound Feng Bujue and his teammate heard came from its movement.

And the roar was coming from inside of that ‘body’. However, even Feng Bujue found it hard to imagine what was hidden inside those countless metal objects and a skin layer around 10 centimeters thick.

"Is that a machine or a creature..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow backed off as he cautiously watched the monster that was slowly moving towards him. In fact, he wasn’t really scared by this bizarre appearance as he was just confused from where he should start to attack this monster.

Feng Bujue stood several meters behind Wild Trace Sword Shadow. He said, "Well, it doesn’t look like a spirit." He finished then took out another weapon from his bag. Now, he was holding a steel sword in one hand and the wrench in the other as he looked straight ahead. "Thus, I have double insurance."

"How to start?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow slightly turned his head and threw a glance at Feng Bujue.

"Tear it," Feng Bujue answered with a calm tone.

"It’s easy to say. It has so many metal ‘tentacles’ probing out there. It’s very unfavorable to come closer—"

Before he could finish speaking, Feng Bujue had already strode forward, burst out and chopped the monster with the two weapons in his hands. The monster indeed countered him. However, out of any of their expectations, it was awfully lame. Those rusted metal pieces weren’t sharp weapons. Also, their speed wasn’t fast, and

their force wasn’t strong at all. In short, the attack power of that monster was like someone with average strength swinging a bicycle to attack you. In reality, that could really hurt people, but in this game, physical conditions of players were beyond that of ordinary people. Moreover, with the weapons in Feng Bujue’s hands, a little resistance wasn’t a big deal.

After madly chopping the monster for a while, Feng Bujue cut open ‘the skin’ of the monster. A huge lump of damp, moldy, and rusty metal objects was exposed in front of his eyes. He didn’t hesitate at all and slashed out his sword. Using the [Robots Must Die] to chop that chunk of broken iron was like using a plastic knife to cut a cake. The metal body of the monster was cut open into a huge, hideous mouth.

As Wild Trace Sword Shadow saw what the monster got to counter them, he felt that he had lost his face on staying idle like this. He then said no more words as he strode forward and shredded the body of the monster with his ‘Glorious Shadow Slash’ accompanied by the speed of a storm.

A liquid substance similar to machine oil leaked out from behind the monster’s thick ‘skin’. It splashed everywhere while the monster was being minced. Momentarily, the floor was covered with pulp of meat, black oil and pieces of rusted metal fragments.

The strange thing here was, before that, the monster was still roaring, but after Wild Trace Sword Shadow and Feng Bujue had started to attack it, it became quiet. Although the monster was constantly using the fragmented metal pieces in its body to resist and counter at the same time, it didn’t let out any roar.

In the next three minutes, the two players were like mice gnawing cheese, constantly attacking the monster. And, at the same time, the monster had fought back nonstop, even though its attack couldn't give the two players a significant threat.

The process of killing the monster was more tiresome than they

had thought. If there were a werewolf coming out from the door, it would have been better. Perhaps its power was five times stronger than this monster, but killing it wouldn't be as strenuous as this.

Eventually, when they had consumed around 300 points of their Physical Value, they had seen the core of this monster. Immediately, the peculiarity level of this monster advanced to another height...

Chapter 131: The Earth's Wastelands (4)

"I've seen many nauseating things in my life, but this..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow said, "I don't even want to use my sword to poke it."

"Sss... Is that a maggot..." Feng Bujue muttered. "What is the pattern on its body?"

What was in front of them was a larva as big as a newborn baby, which looked like a worm nibbling vegetable. It had a short and cylindrical body divided into sections.

This larva wasn't milky white or light yellow as usual. Instead, the surface of its body was filled with the patterns of different countries' currency, a variety of security threads, particular arrayed patterns or number—some were even human faces.

And, at the joint between the two sections of this maggot, there was a dense, tangled mess of something that looked like silk fibers. Those fibers were soaked in black mucus. It seemed that those silky fibers were the necessary element to help that giant maggot to connect with the massive rusted metal monster.

"When we haven't found it yet, it was hiding here, screaming, roaring, and showing off. Now as we have torn it open, it keeps its mouth shut," said Feng Bujue.

"Anyway, it wasn't easy to dig it up through those things," added Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"I'm saying that you should give it the last strike," Feng Bujue said while using his weapon to block an incoming metal object.

"I said that I don't want to poke it with my sword," answered Wild Trace Sword Shadow, then he casually chopped off a water pipe that struck towards him from tjheside.

"Judging from this level of succulence, well, just with one stab... it will burst out like meatball broth," Feng Bujue said. "My sword is

brand new!"

"Slash it then put the sword back to your bag and take it out again. It will work, won't it?" said Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"You slash it!" Feng Bujue said, "Isn’t your sword as fast as the wind? Quick! Kill it! I will mentally support you from a distance."

Wild Trace Sword Shadow sighed. "Alright, I didn’t want to waste time here, but..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow took out a grenade from his bag.

"Hey... why didn’t you use it earlier? If you used it, we just needed to throw it when I opened the door, and everything would have been done already!"

"I said I don’t want to waste it here... This sort of consumable goods, I have only two pieces," answered Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

Feng Bujue didn’t care about him anymore. After he had blocked another attack, he retreated to the intersection.

As Wild Trace Sword Shadow saw that his teammate had prepared himself already, he pulled the ring and threw it to the core of that fat maggot. As expected, the silky fibers on that maggot’s body stretched out and grabbed the grenade.

Under normal circumstances, Wild Trace Sword Shadow’s speed was obviously faster than Feng Bujue’s, and his moves were even much better. His feet just flexed, and he soon escaped from the monster’s entanglement, then instantly came shoulder to shoulder with Feng Bujue.

Seconds later, a loud explosion echoed behind them. The fat maggot had exploded till it was smashed into pieces. All the rusted metal components had scattered to the ground and the its cover skin started to melt into pus.

...

"Did you hear that?" asked Ultimate Assault.

"Of course I did," Apocalypse Assault answered. "Sounds like an explosion. Not as powerful as a dynamite. The distance seemed to be relatively far... Direction, hm, it's hard to tell."

"Is that Wild Trace Sword Shadow and his team?" Ultimate Assault said then shifted his look to the ground in front of him, "Or these people did that?"

A human body lay on the ground. There was a Caucasian male wearing an orange protective suit that looked like a space suit, which was a piece of garment from his neck to his ankles. However, his suit looked simpler and more comfortable than the space suit in the 21st century, which wasn't very bulky. He was wearing a simple helmet, accompanied with a transparent mask in the front that looked like it was made from glass but not exactly glass. Surely, it was a more advanced material. The helmet and his suit were connected at the collar. It could be guessed that this was a close suit, but it didn't come with equipment like the oxygen tanks. Thus, there was an 80% chance that there was some future scientific and technological achievements installed inside the suit to provide air.

At this moment, there was a big hole in the protective mask of this dead body and his face was a mess of blood and flesh. Apparently, these two workers from Corpse Saber had just killed him, but no one knew whether the reason of his death was due to the facial injury, or if he had breathed in the toxic air when his mask was broken. "This scenario is more annoying than we've thought. Besides players, there are monsters and those unidentified people..." Apocalypse Assault said. "We, Wild Trace Sword Shadow's team, monsters and those people are four forces already. Eventually, more living things will distract us, and it will cause us problems in order to find and kill the two that we need to kill."

Ultimate Assault checked his menu. "Currently, we know that

the two of them are still alive and their Survival Values..." he paused for a while, "... perhaps just like us. Put aside the part that we have lost in fighting, so it should have declined to 32%. Anyway, we have 15 Survival Value Supplements large bottles. Even if the effect will reduce after each time of consumption, we can still endure it for quite a long time. Now we don’t need to worry about that."

"Yeah, it’s true. If we can’t identify the cause of that loud explosion, we should stick to our plan. First, we will search the whole lab," Apocalypse Assault continued.

...

"Feng-Ge, come here and check this out," Wild Trace Sword Shadow crouched down in front of an iron chest while shining his flashlight on it and calling out for Feng Bujue.

Feng Bujue had checked the cage which imprisoned the monster, but he failed to find anything. Thus, he walked over and shone his flashlight in that direction. "Obviously, it’s a treasure chest given by the system..."

"I know that," Wild Trace Sword Shadow said. "This chest looks new, but it doesn’t look like a 455 years old chest. Moreover," he pointed at the lock, "check this riddle from the system. What’s this? Tic-tac-toe?"

Feng Bujue came closer to the chest, then a system menu had popped up in front of him. There were nine small squares connected to each other, forming a big square that looked like a plane of a rubik’s cube without any colors. The request read, [Please fill in the appropriate contents.]

"Isn’t it the Nine Palace Diagram?" cried Feng Bujue. "9 up and 1 down; 3 on the left and 7 on the right; 2 and 4 are the shoulders, and 6 and 8 are the legs... Eh? You hadn’t played this when you were a kid?"

"Well, I got it when you said that," Wild Trace Sword Shadow said. "The system should say ‘Fill in the appropriate numbers’ so as players will not be confused."

"Open," Feng Bujue was still talking when he had finished the puzzle to unlock the chest in the menu. Then the iron chest cracked open.

However, the treasure chest was empty, no Skill Cards nor any items—completely empty.

At the moment when Feng Bujue suddenly doubted his karma for opening an empty chest, lucky him, the system’s voice echoed and erased this thought of his.

[Side Quest has been triggered.]

[Catch it, kill it!]

The content of this quest was short, yet odd. Moreover, it was inexplicable... However, Feng Bujue got it immediately.

He loomed over the empty chest, thrust both of his arms into the chest and frantically swung it. Then, he looked like he had burst out crazy, dashing to the metal gate and closing it.

"What happened?" asked Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"There’s something inside the chest," answered Feng Bujue.

Just a moment ago, Wild Trace Sword Shadow had seen Feng Bujue open an empty iron chest... There was no light in this room, and the flashlights in their hands were the only source of light. In such ambiance, Feng Bujue looked like he suddenly got insane, saying something not different from pointing to a deer and saying ‘it’s a horse’. Wild Trace Sword Shadow couldn't help but feel goosebumps arising all over his body.

"It got out!" said Feng Bujue.

Wild Trace Sword Shadow got up and cautiously looked at Feng Bujue. He assumed that his teammate had some kind of mental

disorder all of a sudden or he was suffering from hallucinations. Then he probed, "Feng-Ge... what did you see?"

"I saw nothing," Feng Bujue answered, "that thing is invisible!"

Having heard this, Wild Trace Sword Shadow instantly deleted that thought from his mind, realizing the idea of this quest. "Where is it?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow started to point his flashlight here and there.

"You're asking me?" said Feng Bujue.

"Don't your goggles have the effect of enhancing user's vision?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow didn't know about the Eye of Hatred's properties. As he had seen Feng Bujue wearing it when they met the monsters, he vaguely guessed the effects of the item.

"This is to see the monster's aggro target," Feng Bujue answered. "But I need to 'see' the monster first. If I can't see it, this item can't perform its function well." After that, he put off the Eye of Hatred and placed it in his bag. "By the way, I couldn't see the resentment target of that 'iron dumpling maggot' out there. Seems like it would just attack anything that comes near to it."

Wild Trace Sword Shadow cautiously inched and checked his surroundings. "No sound at all... Are you sure that the maggot didn't get out of the room before you closed the door?"

"If it had used a faster speed than mine to come to the door, it should have caused some noise. If it wanted to keep silent, possibly, it shouldn't be faster than me," answered Feng Bujue.

"How did you know that? What if it is both fast and quiet?" asked Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"Nonsense... Then we don't have to catch it. Invisible and fast creature, well, perhaps it is dancing next to us now," Feng Bujue said. "Will the system let you catch something impossible to catch?"

"Then what should we do now?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow said.

"Is it still in the room and can understand what we are saying?" His visage became anxious. "If it ambushes us ——"

Feng Bujue interrupted him, "An invisible creature locked in an iron chest, its height and weight are just like that of a high school student maximum. If it dares to approach us—"

All of a sudden, a muffled noise arose behind Feng Bujue. One second later, he instantly felt something had jumped on his shoulders, and right after that, a pair of bony claws had strangled him. No doubt that the monster was trying its best to strangle him to death.

Well, Feng Bujue was a man who had lost his sense of fear as this sudden assault couldn't scare him to the point that he would be dumbfounded; quite the contrary, it tensed up every nerve of his body. Before his brain could come up with a counter-plan for this situation, his body had moved instinctively. Feng Bujue took advantage of the opportunity and grabbed the invisible monster by its shoulders. His 10 fingers dug deeply into the monster’s shoulder. As it got hurt, it couldn’t help but release the claws that gripped on Feng Bujue’s throat.

Freely breathing had given him time to regain his strength slowly. Then, an extremely tense but odd struggle had begun... In Wild Trace Sword Shadow’s eyes, Feng Bujue had just finished half of his talk and then started to perform arts, dancing something like Jiang Shi dance moves. The flashlight in his hand was flung out,then he used an overjoyed posture to throw himself to the ground and wriggled strangely.

The situation at this moment was indeed complicated, and Feng Bujue didn’t have extra strength to talk. He was cautiously fighting against a strong and swift pair of claws that could cut his throat at any minute. He had to struggle with the opponent at almost each second ticking by. That monster’s body was relatively slippery. Anyway, it wasn’t a nauseating wet feeling as it was just because of the naked body of the monster. The monster’s build was just like

what Feng Bujue had predicted as it was a miniature of a human being with an ordinary strength—almost no difference from Feng Bujue’s.

"Feng-Ge.... are you..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow walked over and shone his flashlight on Feng Bujue, who was rolling on the ground.

"I... got..." Feng Bujue’s face reddened, and words came out from his gritted teeth, "... it..."

During the one minute that Wild Trace Sword Shadow found it inexplicable, to Feng Bujue, it was a silent, deadly struggle that he had to put forth all what he had. Fortunately, he took the upper hand at the end.

Feng Bujue leaned his knees against the monster’s chest and grabbed the monster by its throat. The length of his arms together with the advantage of his build had helped him control this dude temporarily. He could clearly feel that there was something panting in the dark like him while its heart was frantically beating. This meant that the monster was already drained out its strength —also just like him!

"It’s..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow tried to touch the monster with his hands, "really invisible..."

"Don't talk too much. Seize the time and take action," said Feng Bujue. He could clearly feel that after several seconds of staying idle, the monster would start to struggle again. If it wasn’t because of the stranglehold and the force pressing on its chest that had reduced its strength, Feng Bujue was afraid that he couldn't control the monster.

"Don’t extend your hand. The monster has fangs. Use your sword and behead it," reminded Feng Bujue.

"Uh... Where’s its head?"

"My right hand is strangling it. The head is above."

"Got it," answered Wild Trace Sword Shadow. He then aimed for the position, raised his hand and slashed down.

Puff. Something was cleaved. Feng Bujue felt that the claws which gripped his arms suddenly tighten and immediately loosen. He understood that the monster was dead.

Jiang Shi: also known as a Chinese "hopping" vampire, ghost, or zombie, is a type of reanimated corpse in Chinese legends and folklore. "Jiangshi" is read goeng-si in Cantonese, cương thi in Vietnamese, gangshi in Korean, and kyonshī in Japanese. It is typically depicted as a stiff corpse dressed in official garments from the Qing Dynasty, and it moves around by hopping, with its arms outstretched. It kills living creatures to absorb their qi, or "life force", usually at night, while in the day, it rests in a coffin or hides in dark places such as caves. Jiangshi legends have inspired a genre of jiangshi films and literature in Hong Kong and East Asia.

Chapter 132: The Earth's Wastelands (5)

[Side Quest, accomplished.]

When the system's notification arose, Feng Bujue breathed a sigh of relief while sitting on the floor.

"So weird... It's still invisible even when it's dead?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow squatted down and tried to touch the dead body of the monster.

"This means," Feng Bujue said then cut off a piece of skin from the monster's body, putting it on his palm, "its invisible mechanism isn't a proactive skill, but a passive attribute." He threw the piece of skin away. "The way it went invisible isn't similar with a chameleon, which could produce optical camouflage to blend in with the surroundings... This thing is completely transparent." He picked up his flashlight with one hand, while the other was using the steel sword to cut the body on the floor, which produced some sounds from blood gushing out and knife cutting meat. "Not only skin, its muscles, internal organs, bones, and fluids... are all transparent. Hm..."

"Yeah... Feng-Ge," Wild Trace Sword Shadow said, "I got it. Can you stop playing with that monster's dead body?"

"I'm not playing; I just want to check if we can use something as a camouflage tool from the body of this monster." Feng Bujue curled his lips. "Well, it turns out that I can't..."

"If you can... will you use it as your skin to make it like a coat..."

"I'll consider," answered Feng Bujue.

"Yeah..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow mused. "It's such a waste using the grenade like that... I think if the benefit is good enough, even if I ask you to bite the maggot to death, you will surely do that."

"Of course, if using a mouth to kill that fat worm could give me

five million coins, well, let alone biting it to death, it’s okay if I had to eat it."

"Tough. Stop imagining that..." That imagination nauseated Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"Then, back to our business," Feng Bujue stood up. "Now we’ve done the Side Quest, no matter how this Killing Game will end, at least we will have a reward from the Side Quest later." He walked towards the heavy metal gate and pulled it with both of his hands. The light outside had crept into the small area near the door. "Next, we will take the other turn. In this scenario, since resting isn’t different from consuming anything, I suggest maintaining the state of taking actions."

Wild Trace Sword Shadow regarded and followed him out of the room. The two of them then walked on a path around five or six meters long, which was flooded with rusted metal material and pus left by that monster. After that, they took dozens of steps more to reach the T-intersection, taking the other turn.

The lighting condition in the corridor had stayed the same since a drab area was connected to an illuminated section, and it went like that to the other far-away end.

The four walls that surrounded them were made from iron, which were as cold as ice. Together with the terrible air quality, it created an annoying pressure... Describing it, it could be said that each second spent in this underground laboratory was like their lungs had to breathe with rusted air. This discomfort was like a shadow was following them and they didn’t have any way to escape as it regularly reduced their Survival Value... When Feng Bujue’s and Wild Trace Sword Shadow’s Survival Value had declined to under 50%, Feng Bujue took two Survival Value Supplements bottles (medium), giving his teammate one and drinking the other.

"Feng-Ge, you only have four bottles of this type of Survival

Value Supplements," Wild Trace Sword Shadow didn’t take the medicines, "at this moment, don't try to be generous. You should keep it for yourself. I have big bottles here."

Feng Bujue didn’t retrieve the bottle but answered, "I suggest you shouldn't bring large blood bottles. It’s a waste consuming Survival Value Supplement large bottles. The effect is that you can recover 100%, which should be drunk when your Survival Value is at the lowest point, well, 1%. But in fact, players will consume it when their Survival Value has decreased to 10%, since they will be easily killed within one strike in that state of shortage, leading to having no chance to refill their blood.

"In short, under normal circumstances, a large bottle of supplements, which can recover 100%, can only recover 80% to 90%. The remaining is the redundant data. But there’s a simple way to solve this problem."

Although Wild Trace Sword Shadow wasn’t done listening to Feng Bujue’s theory yet, he already took the bottle and drank it, since he had a strong feeling that... he would soon be persuaded.

"In consideration of the effect to be reduced after each time of use," Feng Bujue continued walking forward, "as long as we can prepare enough supplements in small or medium sized bottles, and I suggest that it should be five bottles for each type because five bottles will take up one slot, when encountering blood loss, you should drink the small bottles first, and later on, when it comes to the time you need to use the big bottles, it won't be a waste at that time since the big bottle can’t recover fully 100%." He paused for a while then continued, "In this scenario, let alone injuries in fighting, our method is more cost-saving, using less supplements and we won’t waste anything."

Wild Trace Sword Shadow was walking shoulder to shoulder with him. Having listened to this, he contemplated for seconds. Although he felt that this whole theory was reasonable, somehow he felt that there was something unsuitable..."Feng-Ge, can I

explain it this way. You gave me a medium blood bottle and then later on in this scenario, when we need it, we will use the large bottle that I’m bringing along until we don’t have anything more..."

"Yes. Anyway, my bag is limited. You should keep those large bottles with you. When you feel that you need to recover your Survival Value, just consciously give me one." When Feng Bujue was saying this, his tone was still confident and upright.

"Let me think about this," Wild Trace Sword Shadow said. "First, you force me to receive a medium blood bottle, which is 6,000 coins. Then I have to supply unlimitedly big blood bottles, which costs 12,000 coins each, for both of us."

"Yeah," answered Feng Bujue, "didn’t you just mean this? Why do you need to say it twice?"

"You brat really don’t see yourself as a stranger to me," said Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"According to what I’ve observed, this level of resource sharing in the party will not surpass your expectation or financial capacity," Feng Bujue said. "And, if within the next hours, we can find some way to prevent the Survival Value from being constantly reduced, perhaps we don’t need to use your big bottles with our amount of Survival Value at that time. Then, you just had one of my medium blood bottles for free." He unfolded one finger. "Moreover, you’ve just learned the whole theory of how to save money and utilize blood supplement bottles, which would be a big benefit in the future. Well, if we convert this to coins," he turned his head around, "why do you have that face?"

"Because I feel that you are accelerating from lying to extortion..."

"I’m just discussing with you. Two adults talking about knowledge of properties ownership, blah, blah, blah, it's normal though."

"Alright, Da-Ge, my bad. My blood bottles, you can take as many as you please."

They were chatting while walking forward. All of a sudden, there came a sound banging from where they were heading to... The noise had come from a turn dozens of meters away from them. Something was walking. From the frequency of the steps, perhaps it was a creature with two legs.

"Perhaps, it’s a human being... Heavy, disorderly steps. A little bit limp, and that person is running and leaning against the wall along the way..." Feng Bujue muttered, "this guy is running away from something..."

Wild Trace Sword Shadow also concentrated on listening to the noise. He continued, "Why is the thing chasing after him doesn't create sounds from its footsteps?"

"Moreover, the one who is running away doesn't pant or call for help. This is not quite right..." Feng Bujue cautiously took out his steel sword.

Soon, a figure had emerged from the turn which answered their questions.

That one was wearing an orange protection suit accompanied with a helmet connected to each other by the collar. At this moment, his head was wrapped by a creature that looked like an octopus, and only the lower edge of his mask could be seen. The tentacles of that ‘octopus’ had already pierced through the helmet, stabbing into the man’s brain.

This evil octopus had controlled the man instead of his brain, and, it seemed that the octopus didn’t understand how to use a human body. While he was running, both of his hands were dangling along with his body’s movement. This would affect his balance, leading to that staggering gait.

Wild Trace Sword Shadow looked at the man who was running

towards them and said, "Say, if we take off that thing on his head, will he survive?"

Feng Bujue shook his head, took several steps forward and positioned himself as if he was about to hit a baseball. He then swung the steel sword and beheaded that person.

"Oh, I miss my Shotgun." Feng Bujue walked towards the head on the floor. "Such scenarios based on European and American thriller science fiction movies could be as nauseating as desired."

That octopus was still alive. It just detached itself from the neck of the head. When it retreated its tentacles from the helmet, they could clearly see that the head inside the helmet was just a mess of bloody flesh. There were at least seven or eight holes on the head. Brain matter and blood were spewing out from there, pouring on the ground.

Feng Bujue felt lucky that he had bought this sword before he entered this scenario. Well, it had already saved him from using the wrench to pound this mollusk. Even the Zombies had a skull, smashing it with the wrench was just a matter of time, but if he wanted to pound this chewy mollusk to death, the time it took wouldn't be different from rolling out dough for noodles... The devil octopus didn’t resist too much. After the steel sword had cut it into some simple pieces, a subtle colored fluid gushed out from its body, puddling the ground. Then, it stopped moving.

"The way this thing attacks people is like the ‘Facehugger’ in ‘Alien’," Feng Bujue shook off the stains stuck on his sword then returned to the head and observed it. "Anyway, the parasitic method is different. Facehugger will not use so many holes to get inside the victim’s head. It will only poke its tentacles inside."

While Feng Bujue was mincing the octopus, Wild Trace Sword Shadow had come to that dead body and started to search. He then found something that looked like a weapon. Indeed, it was actually an item, which could be summoned from the menu.

[Name: Anti-gravity Launching Device]

[Type: Weapon]

[Quality: Excellent]

[Attack Power: Medium]

[Attributes: None]

[Special effects: Can levitate objects lighter than 10 kilograms and smaller than 1 cubic meter, and shoot it forward.]

[Equipment Conditions: Shooting Specialty D, Weapon Specialty E, level 15]

[Remarks: Please don’t try to suck your own eyeballs. I’m sure to tell you that the results will be very terrible.]

"Feng-Ge, check it out. See if you can use this weapon." Wild Trace Sword Shadow handed the item to Feng Bujue.

This Anti-gravity Launching Device looked like an iron, but it wasn’t that thick. There were two buttons on the handle, which clearly stated ‘Lift up’ and ‘Eject’. Feng Bujue read the item’s properties then casually aimed at a direction, ‘sucking’ the head on the ground, which was several meters away from them. The head, which still wore a helmet, hovered inches in front of the weapon; at the same time, the device was constantly buzzing.

Feng Bujue swung his arms, aimed at a place behind their back and pushed the ‘Eject’ button. Then, the head was shot out with the speed of about 70 yards per second, disappearing at the other end of the corridor just like a rocket.

"High technology," Feng Bujue appraised, "Too bad this guy couldn't use it to save his life."

Wild Trace Sword Shadow was dazed while looking at the flying head. "You’ve played with the body again..."

"Hey Wild-old-man," Feng Bujue put his hand on Wild Trace Sword Shadow’s shoulder. He was about to say something, but the

other had interrupted him, "You can call me Young Sword Master ..."

"As in lowly? Okay..." continued Feng Bujue.

"You do know the 'sword' I implied here is the Treasure Sword, right?"

"Got it~ of course, I got it~," Feng Bujue said, "I say, Young Sword Master, this item..."

"You can keep it if you want. My Shooting and Weapon Specialties are all at low grades." Wild Trace Sword Shadow assumed that Feng Bujue was about to talk about this matter. Since he couldn't equip it, he just gave it to Feng Bujue that easy.

"I will not be polite then," Feng Bujue stored the item and looked at the body on the ground. "This scenario isn't simple, indeed... There are humans in the lab though."

"The short introduction that mentioned the 'Archaeology team' has brought Jason and left... Is it... Besides them, is there any other human team that came here?" said Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"Currently, we can only have this sort of explanation," answered Feng Bujue while he started to take off the suit on the corpse.

"Hey, what are you doing? This is a man!" Wild Trace Sword Shadow pitched his voice. "Are you addicted on playing with corpses?"

Feng Bujue took off the protective suit of the headless body. Behind the suit, it wore a white shirt and shorts. Feng Bujue lifted one arm of the corpse, pointing to a tattoo on the outer edge of the arm. "Check this out."

Wild Trace Sword Shadow came closer to look. The tattoo depicted a ship and the word 'Scavengers'. He mused for a while and spoke up, "Hey, is this man a member of a tomb-rider gang in the future?"

"If the tattoo is the badge of some organization, it will be a reliable assumption." At this moment, Feng Bujue was checking the hand of the corpse. "Of course, this tattoo could have no meaning at all as this guy thought it just looked cool, so he had it tattooed on his arm just like a little tramp."

"Does this type of person exist?" asked Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"Hard to tell," Feng Bujue drew the hand of the corpse closer to him that it almost touched his nose. "When I was in primary school, I used to see in some online games where some kiddos had named their Guild ‘Nazi’ something. I don’t remember the full name. They thought it was so cool, so the members of the guild always wore that symbol on their heads wandering around the game." After he was done observing the hand, he moved to check the back of the hand and nails. "Thus, bury a stupid seed into the soulless soil, use the—beep—pretentious fertilizer on it, and water it with poisonous irrational exam-oriented education. Eventually, 80% is the chance that it will result into a few slags who always want to humiliate themselves."

"Dang! Feng-Ge, didn't you study the censored languages system in this game? You can say something like that with only one censored word, and it doesn’t affect the whole meaning though..."

"This guy had worn out his fingerprints." Feng Bujue didn’t answer Wild Trace Sword Shadow’s babble, he just switched right to the main business. "Perhaps he used glue or some other more violent ways... Well, in short, he doesn’t have fingerprints." He paused for a while. "This pair of hands doesn't seem to belong to a heavy labor worker. His body isn’t really muscular though."

"If he has a tool like this Anti-gravity Launching Device, there are many things that can be done without much effort," said Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"From his elbows, I can say that he didn’t regularly use

computers," Feng Bujue continued, "anyway, we can’t omit the possibility that humans won’t use mouse devices anymore in the future."

"Hey detective, are you going to peel off this corpse and analyze everything from his top to toe?" asked Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

Feng Bujue smiled. "I don’t have much time. And, if I want to do that, I wouldn't chop off his head." He answered, "I just want to see if his limbs were mutant, and..."—Feng Bujue lifted up the shirt on the dead, scrutinizing the body for a while—"is there any strange extra organs on his body or whether or not he had different skin from our well-known human beings."

"What do you mean?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow said, "This scenario is not based on the 10th movie of ‘Friday the 13th’ franchise but on X-men or something else?"

"I have another hypothesis," answered Feng Bujue. "What if this man was different from the others from the ship? What if they weren’t from space? Perhaps, there are still some human cities on this Old Earth, which that group of ‘immigrants’ knows nothing about. The small number of their descendants has survived and hid here, and their civilization is still thriving..."

Wild Trace Sword Shadow asked Feng Bujue to call him Young Sword Master (剑少 jian xiao). Then Feng Bujue answered asking him whether the 'xiao' he mentioned was from the word lowly (贱少jian xiao). Therefore, Wild Trace Sword Shadow threatened him by reminding him the word jian he had used here is from the word Treasured Sword (宝剑bao jian).

Chapter 133: The Earth’s Wastelands (6)

One hour later, Apocalypse Assault and Ultimate Assault had reached the intersection where Feng Bujue and Wild Trace Sword Shadow had encountered the giant monster.

"What are those?" asked Apocalypse Assault, looking at the rubbish pile of rusted metal trash, which emitted the rotten and displeasing smell on the ground. "A trap, perhaps?"

"I think it’s a corpse of some kind of monster," answered Ultimate Assault, "remember the explosion?"

"Ah... so it was burst into pieces," Apocalypse Assault said, "in other words, one hour ago, someone was here and had killed a..." He shrugged, couldn't imagine the appearance of this puddle of pus and metal pieces when it was still intact. "Well, it was a big monster, indeed."

"We’ve killed three or four guys in orange suit, but they didn't have anything that could explode," Ultimate Assault said, "they only have the Anti-gravity Launching Device. Thus, we can confirm that that explosion was caused by Wild Trace Sword Shadow and his teammate."

"This means that we are not going on a wrong way," continued Apocalypse Assault.

"Although this underground lab is large, it isn’t a maze, and the turns are not too deep. We’ve done searching the end of the other side; if we keep following this corridor, we will meet them soon." Ultimate Assault nodded.

"However, we failed to find any exit, this means that the other end where they are heading, would have an exit leading to the outside," said Apocalypse Assault.

"So what? The plot’s introduction mentioned that on this ‘Old Earth’, storm happens everywhere. Poisonous swamp and even the

ocean is polluted. Apparently, the situation out there is worse than here," said Ultimate Assault.

The two of them were talking while walking to a metal gate that stood at the end of the corridor. The gate was open. The room behind was pitch-black, and the air there was permeated with a strange smell.

"Watch out for ambush or traps..." When they reached the door, Apocalypse Assault lowered his voice and talked to his teammate.

Ultimate Assault didn't answer him; he just made a simple gesture to ask his teammate to follow him as he would be in charge of exploring one direction. It seemed like they had a fixed arrangement for entering dark places.

Ultimate Assault was the first one jumping into the door. Then, he immediately shone his flashlight forward, moving counterclockwise. Apocalypse Assault was close behind him, but his flashlight was moving clockwise.

It turned out that there was nothing valuable in the room apart from a broken cage and an empty iron chest.

"Seems that they had killed the monsters, opened the chest then left," said Apocalypse Assault.

"Yeah, perhaps—" Ultimate Assault was walking while talking to his teammate. He hadn't finished his sentence yet, and the other had heard an unexpected muffled banging sound.

"What happened?" Apocalypse Assault turned his head around.

Ultimate Assault had fallen on the ground just like a dog gnawing mud. He was still calm enough to pick himself up and get up on his feet again, wiping away the two trickles of blood on his bleeding nose....

"Something... tripped me."

The way they were talking to each other became weirder. Even if

something suddenly happened, their complexions and tones stayed the same, as cold and stiff as ice with a speed that wasn't fast nor slow.

Ultimate Assault rubbed his legs, which looked like nothing was there. "There's something invisible here... Oh...a corpse." The reason why he knew about the corpse immediately was because of a clear, pungent scent, moreover, because he had groped on the monster's organs, which Feng Bujue had cut before. At this moment, his hand was covered with nauseating, but invisible mucus.

Apocalypse Assault had come over, wanting to touch and confirm the other's assumption.

"Wait a—" Ultimate Assault hadn't said 'minute' yet, but his teammate's hand had already fallen on the corpse's chest.

"Argh... this..." Apocalypse Assault felt deeply regretful inside. Too bad, it was too late.

"Well, you also got it. It's easier to explain then," Ultimate Assault said, "did you see that this body had many fatal injuries..."

"Yeah... beheaded by something. The body..." Apocalypse Assault frowned. "Those two brats had autopsied or tortured the corpse..."

"Perhaps they had attacked it in different positions during the battle," said Ultimate Assault, "we can only think of it that way though."

After they had finished beholding the masterpiece by Feng Bujue and Wild Trace Sword Shadow, they started to move faster forward. They understood that even if there were monsters on this path, the other two must have solved them already. Thus, they didn't need to worry about it, just trying to shorten the distance between them.

After running for a while, they saw something standing ahead of them in the dim-lit corridor.

This time, Apocalypse Assault had come over to check it out first. He shone the flashlight on that object and muttered, "That’s a human head..."

Ultimate Assault walked to him, took a look and said, "But where’s the body?"

"The monster ate it?" said Apocalypse Assault.

"You see, the neck under the helmet... yeah, a perfect flat cut." When Ultimate Assault said those words, a cold sweat had rolled down on his pale face. "Apparently, it’s caused by a very sharp weapon in just one slash."

Apocalypse Assault turned aside to see his teammate. "Are you saying that Wild Trace Sword Shadow and his teammate had eaten the body?"

"How could it be..." Ultimate Assault crouched down and observed the head inside the helmet. "Whether they destroyed the body right on the spot or dragged it away, there should be a lot of blood here. But this place has almost nothing. Moreover, take a look here... The inside of the skull is dried up. Besides some blood stains on the face, there’s no brain that remained."

"And the conclusion is?" asked Apocalypse Assault.

"We haven’t seen any corpses or blood stains along the way here," Ultimate Assault answered, "this means that they had killed the person somewhere ahead of us, but then they turned back and put this dried skull here."

"Well... They wanted to scare us?" snorted Apocalypse Assault.

"I guess so," said Ultimate Assault. "See the holes on the helmet? They don’t look like they were caused by some sort of weapon... Thus, before this man got beheaded, he might have been killed by a monster, and that monster had drunk the blood and brains in his head." He got up, "They beheaded the corpse then flung it here to create pressure on us, didn’t they? Ha ha, seems that all Wild

Trace Sword Shadow has are just little tricks."

"This is simply lacking confidence..." Apocalypse Assault felt that his confidence had doubled after having listened to that. "What is the Saber Sword Smile? Aren't they still scared when they are at low levels? Ha..."

"Quick, go after them," Ultimate Assault crossed over the head and said, "If the opponents want to delay us, the best countermeasure is not letting them do so."

Chapter 134: The Earth’s Wastelands (7)

"I think we should look at the opponent’s strategy again..."

"Yeah, on what they are really up to..."

When Apocalypse Assault and Ultimate Assault saw the headless, disheveled body lying on the ground and a pulp of minced tentacle creature not far from there, they became disarrayed.

"If that head is meant to create a mental pressure on us... then what does this mean?" asked Apocalypse Assault.

Ultimate Assault continued, "Say, doesn't it sound like this..." A deep, meaningful expression flashed across his face. "After they had beheaded this guy, they split up. Wild Trace Sword Shadow brought the head back to that place, and that brat called..." he glared at his menu, "that brat called Bujue, he stayed here and did something with this corpse..."

"Is that guy a pervert?" Apocalypse Assault asked. "And, we all know that Thriller Paradise has a complete restriction to those perverted behaviors. How did he do that?"

"How could I know..." Ultimate Assault answered. "I was just guessing. Perhaps we misunderstood it... Maybe they just searched the corpse very carefully though."

"Hope so..." Apocalypse Assault gulped.

These two members from Corpse Saber now truly felt an inexplicable psychological pressure, which was much intense than the time they had seen that pathetic skull.

This was also because of ‘the drug’ they had been using... It was exactly like what Wild Trace Sword Shadow had said about the cheating of Corpse Saber Studio. They couldn't say that those people were the cancers in this industry as they just had their own way.

Just take the making of a movie for example. There's a screenwriter who isn't famous at all. He has spent years, even more than a decade, to prepare the screenplay and find the sponsors. He has put forth everything to make a movie with low-cost, and finally, he earns five times the investment from selling movie tickets.

While there's another screenwriter, who is a little bit more famous, has just spent several months to write a poor screenplay offhand. He then recruits celebrities to take up the leading roles. When they do the advertising for the movie, they try to brag and exaggerate it just like they publicly cheat the audience, making them enter the cinema theatres. Well, he can earn the same amount as the former screenwriter.

These two types of person can earn the same economic profits at the end. The difference is, the former can achieve fame, which is an invisible asset, and the latter will be covered with critics.

No matter what the results will be, people will find it easy to forget. The former will then stay secluded for several years to start his new screenplay while the latter will frequently produce a new bad movie every year. Same tricks, same profits... This example can be applied into numerous industrial fields. In this world, to achieve the target, there's not only one way to follow. One just needs to throw away their virtues or some other principles, and he can have an infinite number of ways to choose.

In the case of the Corpse Saber Studio that searched the dark area of online games, their contributions couldn't be ignored. Talking about the tricks like digging the loopholes and finding BUGs, they even went ahead of top Studios such as The Immortals. Anyway, even if this was the best feature of Corpse Saber, in comparison to 'Order', there was still some differences. Order was the dragon's head of this industry as they still had the profound power and heritage. Such Studios like Corpse Saber, which still had a big gap with the others, had no way to enter the team of 'top ranks'

studios at the end.

However, as they could come to the current situation, it was enough for them to enjoy for a while. Frankly speaking, the basic goal of everyone else is to make profits. Things like reputation could be bad or good. This world is a practical world; if you have money, people will come for you and wipe your ass.

Both the workers and professional gamers from Corpse Saber weren't required to sign a contract directly with the Studio. Using a third party to make the contract was much better. Even if someone blamed them for something, it would be fine as they just needed to dissolve that company and establish a new one. All it cost was just to change the name board of the company.

If they could drill the hole in laws like that in reality, they wouldn't need to be unscrupulous in the game. Corpse Saber Studio even had a professional team to research and develop Auto programs. In many games that they had participated, there were many players using Auto purchased from Corpse Saber.

In those games which were similar to 'consumable goods', although they got their IDs banned, players wouldn't care. The game would use the flag of 'everlasting' goods to disguise their charges. Also, the game producers just wanted to earn as much as possible before they closed the game. Thus, it was very open when players registered their accounts. As they didn't need to use their citizen IDs, one player could register for many accounts. It was okay if they got their IDs banned as they just needed to make another account and use Auto to level up. Their mindset could be explained. If they wanted to play and win, they had to compete with other players by spending money, and of course, that amount would flow into the pocket of the company, just like throwing money into a bottomless cave. It wasn't worth it as they would rather use Auto. At that time, the level of comfort was the same, and they could also win. The total budget would be more cost-saving than using items and equipment, which had time-limit. If

they didn't want to play more, just stop their payment for the Auto then.

Anyway, in the era of the fourth optical computer generation, it was very hard to use Auto. Even installing some illegal hardware in the game cabin, which the game producers had no way to detect, was difficult to do. If only the game masters and the game itself weren’t a chunk of garbage, they would soon detect it.

Thus, Corpse Saber had some other tricks. They had researched and created some illegal ‘Plug-in’ softwares to support players. These softwares would play the roles of Auto. However, the function of them was almost useless in the battle between top hotshots. Anyway, in some lower levels fights, using this tool could bring considerable bigger advantages.

Besides, Corpse Saber didn’t care about their bad image as they often did some malevolent deeds which aimed for the competitors in the same field. Of course, they didn’t dare to touch the big mounts like Order or The Immortals. They always knew that they shouldn't mess with dangerous opponents. By the way, they didn’t show any mercy to the competitors at the same level as they tried to spread out bad information or attack their servers... The effect was more or less apparent, but still, they could weaken the other Studios.

In short, those bastards were very professional. They only depended on their level to illegally earn money, opening a brighter way for their career.

There’s a saying which read ‘He that seeks troubles never misses’. Finally, in a random game, Corpse Saber had their nose rubbed in dust... Ah no, a bleeding nose to be exact—that game was Thriller Paradise.

The system of this game was simply impeccable. There was absolutely no way to cheat on their Data.

Thus, they discreetly held a network attack aiming for Dream

Inc.’ Server to test its flexibility.

The result was... well, consequences happened. Corpse Saber hadn’t successfully broken Dream Inc.’s firewall; instead, they got counterattacked. An unknown virus had crossed countless false IDs and puppets to spread out, infect and destroy the main system of Corpse Saber.

At that time, the screen of all computers in their headquarters had displayed a wretched animated round face of a despicable guy wearing glasses, constantly laughing evilly, "Heh, heh, heh." All data in their hard disks were destroyed. The damage was unimaginable, which couldn't be described as just a bone damage or a dislocated ankle. This was like someone had chopped off his own arm or leg.

And the most frightening event was, the laptop of the Corpse Saber’s Chairman exploded itself all of a sudden... He had just seen this in movies, in which a national-level hacker would remotely make the laptop’s battery become scorching, leading to a self-explosion. He had never thought that he could experience this once in his life.

Because of the nature of this event, Corpse Saber Studio had to keep their mouth shut, drinking their bitter juice. And, they had no intention to attack Dream Inc.’s Server again... Later on, the R&D team of Corpse Saber also met attacks. They had tried installing different illegal hardwares in the game cabin produced by Dream Inc., but they were all useless. However, they couldn't investigate the cause technically, even if they had destroyed the cabin.

Such situation had never happened before. Being equipped with many technical staff like that but couldn't do any trick in the game, where is justice? Is this Dream Inc. the Ministry of National Defense?

Thus, members from Corpse Saber had united to surmount the

challenge. After several meetings and studies, they had come to a solution... experiments on players.

'PU63' was the codename of a drug. No one knew what were the situations of PU01 to PU62. Anyhow, today, PU63 had become the only solution for Corpse Saber Studio to attack and occupy Thriller Paradise.

Here, for the time being, we will not mention the cooperation between Corpse Saber Studio and a bad pharmaceutical factory.

In short, after players had consumed this drug, they would sink into a psychological state, which was called 'Sober Anesthesia'. These two words looked to be in conflict, but the meaning is easy to explain. This is a kind of 'Forced to be cool-headed'.

All data from experiments showed that players using PU63 had their Fear Value surged not more than the peak of 50% in scenarios. Under the premise of not affecting their train of thought, the capacity for accepting pain would be increased. Moreover, in emergency cases (for example, in a fierce fight), their reflexes were much faster.

Well, in explicit words, this drug was close to 'Doping'.

Game cabin only monitored heartbeats, pulses, blood pressure and other stats of a player. It didn't have the function of testing stimulants. Thus, the use of this drug was unbridled.

Recently, only players from Corpse Saber had this drug. They didn't want to release it yet, while the sale plan has been already prepared. They believed that within the next two months, this item would appear in some third-party trading websites. Of course, this would happen later... Back to our story then... That's why these two players from Corpse Saber had been so confident. Although they would still feel fear, thanks to the drug, their level of fear would be reduced physiologically.

With this mental advantage from an external factor and the real

advantage of their level in the game, it was normal that they thought they would win.

"Hold on... What is that?" Ultimate Assault said then squatted down near the corpse again. Under his scrutinizing look, he found something under the corpse's shirt.

After hearing that, Apocalypse Assault also crouched down to take a look.

Ultimate Assault lifted up the corpse's shirt and saw the situation there. Not far from the stomach of the corpse, there was a line of words carved deeply into the skin, to the muscles underneath.

"Why so serious?" Apocalypse Assault read it out loud, looking up at his teammate, "What does it mean?"

"This is..." Ultimate Assault wore a puzzled look. Suddenly, he found a piece of wire protruded from the skin, right at the question mark. He stretched his arm, using two fingers to grab the wire, wanting to take it out... BOOM!

At the same time, in another area of the laboratory. After Feng Bujue had heard the loud explosion, he glared at his menu, muttering listlessly, "Cut it off... the explosion killed only one..."

Chapter 135: The Earth's Wasteland (8)

One hour ago...

Wild Trace Sword Shadow was standing around five meters away from that headless corpse to guard over Feng Bujue.

"Do you really have to do that?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow looked at Feng Bujue, who was crouching down and busying himself with the corpse, as his eyes were saying, 'You're really a pervert.'

"I am doing it right now, aren't I? What? You're willing to give up your grenade?" answered Feng Bujue.

"Ah... Honestly, let alone the fact that whether we are going to waste my grenade or not, I'd rather be more concerned about your mental status..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow glared at him.

"What's the matter with my mental status?" Feng Bujue answered. "I'm just using a corpse in a virtual game to set up a trap. Any player with normal psychological status, if they can think about this plan, they will do it without any hesitation."

"Haha, as you wish..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow didn't want to discuss with him anything. Now, he seemed to understand why this guy's ID was 'Unidentified Mental Disorder'.

Feng Bujue tied a wire through the pull ring of the grenade then rolled up his sleeve, brutally thrusting his hand holding the grenade down the corpse's throat to its stomach. And on the skin above the stomach, he just needed to make a small cut to pull out a part of the wire through the skin.

Next, he carved some words. At the place where the wire protruded from the skin, he decorated it with a question mark '?', waiting for the opponent to bite his bait.

"Why do you need to write something there and just cover half of it?" asked Wild Trace Sword Shadow while looking at Feng Bujue's

setup.

"If I don’t cover it, they can read if from far away," Feng Bujue said. "If I cover it entirely, they perhaps won’t find these words." After he was done, he used the corpse’s garment to wipe his hands, got up and said, "Half-covered... they will have to crouch down and lift up the cloth to see what it is. And then, if their vision is normal, they will find the wire awaiting there."

"What makes you so sure that they will touch the wire?" asked Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"Who said that I am sure that they would touch the wire?" replied Feng Bujue.

"Wut?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow seemed not to understand his idea.

Feng Bujue spoke up again, "Does this look like a trap?"

"Yeah... no."

"Why not?"

Wild Trace Sword Shadow really wanted to catch up with his train of thought. "A trap should be placed at a random place where the others have to travel through. For example, behind a door."

"It’s alright then." Feng Bujue nodded.

"Done?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow still didn't get it.

"I'll give you an example," Feng Bujue said, "remember the time we received the side quest from the iron chest?"

"Of course."

"If we opened the chest leading to an explosion, would we get trapped already?"

"The system wouldn't make such setup," Wild Trace Sword Shadow answered. "Because players would not be able to run away. If that chest was really an explosive object, there should be a clue

or a reminder before we had opened it."

"Ah," Feng Bujue said, "am I the system?"

"Yeah..."

"Do I look like a good guy who’s willing to remind the enemy?"

"It..."

"Besides, there’s another reason that made you think that the chest wouldn't trigger a Death Flag without any hesitation," continued Feng Bujue.

"Because... that room is an optional quest that we actually didn’t need to open the gate as we could take the other way around to leave the place. Although we had killed all the monsters, we could always choose not to open the chest," mumbled Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

Feng Bujue pointed at the corpse. "This corpse lies on the ground. They can ignore it, and they won’t check out the other half of the line I left. Even if they see it, they can choose not to touch the wire."

Wild Trace Sword Shadow scratched his head as he just understood a part of it. "This is something like... the psychology of suggestion?"

Feng Bujue had already walked forward, gestured his friend to catch up with him while saying, "If you want to make someone do something that doesn’t look harmful at all, but it’s actually dangerous, you have to let him feel that it’s okay if he has to do it or not, and he isn’t forced to do it. Then, this will look like it’s just a ’normal’ matter, and what’s so-called ‘normal’... shouldn't be too difficult. Because if it’s too difficult, it won’t work. And it should also be not too easy. If it is too easy, the enemy will be suspicious of it.

"For example, when you attempt to kill someone and the victim starts to resist, it’s ‘normal’. But if he resists too hard, you will give

up in the middle of the process. And, if your victim is too calm waiting for you to kill him, you will have suspicions.

"Another example, if you want to install a bomb in some structures, if that place is strictly guarded, you will eventually give up. And if the defense is too weak, you will feel it’s inconceivable..."

Feng Bujue licked his dry lips and dryly coughed. "Thus, I have to hide the grenade inside the corpse and set up the wire at a place they can choose to touch it or not. And, my message isn't placed on the surface or on its ass, so that they couldn't easily find it." He sighed, "Finally, we prepare an unpredictable surprise for them."

"What if they can’t find the wire or won’t check the corpse before they left?" asked Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"They are professional gamers, aren’t they?" asked Feng Bujue.

"Yeah..."

"If you were there, would you leave without checking anything?"

Before Wild Trace Sword Shadow could answer, Feng Bujue spoke up again, "Of course, in the worst case scenario, we simply lost a grenade."

"You didn’t lose anything though, right..."

"Yup," answered Feng Bujue shamelessly.

It was roughly 10 minutes after they had been walking and talking along the way. All of a sudden, a metal chunk as big as a basketball emerged from a turn ahead of them, screaming through its way, brushing Feng Bujue’s left cheek.

Feng Bujue’s initial reaction was to bend down, taking out the pistol and preparing to counterattack. As he was looking forward, he found a silhouette standing in a dusky corridor far away from them. Apparently, that one had launched this attack.

Wild Trace Sword Shadow had also noticed the attacker. His

action was extremely fast as he didn’t say a word; he just stormed forward with the sword in his hands.

No matter who or what the attacker was, to Wild Trace Sword Shadow, if it were in the effective range of [Glorious Shadow Slash], he was definitely confident that he wouldn't fall into a disadvantaged situation.

As that silhouette saw Wild Trace Sword Shadow had stormed towards it, it was petrified at the spot for an entire two seconds before turning around and running away.

At this moment, Feng Bujue was also running forward. Noticing the other’s reaction, he called out to Wild Trace Sword Shadow who was running ahead of him, "Catch him alive!"

Wild Trace Sword Shadow didn’t have time to answer, but he had heard that.

When Feng Bujue ran with all his strength, he was fast. In the scenario where the two of them had fought against each other, Wild Trace Sword Shadow could see that when Feng Bujue ran with all that he had, it was 80% or 90% of his speed. And, after he had activated his [Body-Spirit Congregation Technique], even if Wild Trace Sword Shadow had used all his strength, he couldn't catch up with Feng Bujue.

Right now, the two of them were using the same speed to chase after and soon approached the runner. That guy was wearing an orange protection suit. His speed wasn’t at the same level with the two players, and he was holding an [Anti-gravity Launching Device] in his hands. As Feng Bujue saw him, he could confirm that the one who had ambushed them was an NPC. Thus, he shouted ‘catch him alive’.

Not long after that, Wild Trace Sword Shadow had finally reached to the range he could activate his Glorious Shadow Slash. After he had used teleportation, he appeared right in front of the other. That NPC was frightened but couldn't stop his footsteps.

Wild Trace Sword Shadow's elbow swept over the man's collarbone, throwing him down on the ground.

Although the man had already suffered from the fall and was groaning on the ground, Wild Trace Sword Shadow didn't show any mercy as he pulled the NPC's arms and pushed him closer to the ground then snatched his weapon.

Feng Bujue arrived, but he didn't look like the other hotshot who could always maintain calm and stable breathing. Seeing the situation was under control, he then rested both hands on his knees and panted heavily.

"Say it, who are you?" said Wild Trace Sword Shadow to his captive.

That man had been running until he was out of breath and then got thrown down to the ground, so how could he speak up now.

"Get off him. It's alright," said Feng Bujue.

Wild Trace Sword Shadow loosened his grip, took two steps back while still holding his sword, gazing cautiously at the attacker on the ground.

That man flipped his body over, and faced up while his chest was heaving heavily. It took him a really long time to stabilize his breathing. From his transparent mask, they could see that he was a Caucasian man, looking very young, around 20 years old. His head was relatively small. He was around 160 centimeters tall with a small build and black hair that looked like instant noodles.

After he had recovered a little bit, the man sat up, his pair of arms supporting his body from behind while he retreated until he reached the wall. All this time, he looked at the other party standing in front of him with a frightened face.

"Let's talk," Feng Bujue crouched down, leveling his eyes and the other's eyes, "What's your name?"

"Outlanders! You evil! Pagans!" the man screamed while holding

his helmet with both hands. "Don’t you even think about hypnotizing me with your ‘devil language’! In your dreams!"

Wild Trace Sword Shadow looked at Feng Bujue. "I think... It’s getting complicated. Isn’t it a science-fiction scenario? Why is there a magical and religious setting?"

Feng Bujue hesitated for a while then beamed a cold smile. "No, I think this is a futuristic science-fiction setting." He finished then took out the steel sword from his bag.

Having seen that, the man started to scream out insanely with all of his strength.

"Shut up..." Feng Bujue used a normal voice to speak, but the other was screaming louder. Feng Bujue immediately put the steel sword on his neck and shouted, "Shut up!"

The guy was scared and immediately shut his mouth up.

"What, is, your, name?" asked Feng Bujue, spitting out one word after another.

"Han... Hank," answered Hank.

"Hank, whatever you think we are, it’s okay. I don't need your trust. I also don’t need to explain anything to you. However, you have to answer us honestly. If not, you will die... very painfully," said Feng Bujue.

"No... Don't..." said Hank, "Don’t, please, I still have a mother at home... My brothers are all dead... I can’t..."

"Don’t babble!" Feng Bujue interrupted, "I’ll ask, and you will answer."

Hank nodded. His emotion was a little bit calmer, just like a crying child who was scared and forced to stop crying.

"What are you doing? Why are you here?" asked Feng Bujue.

"I... I’m a member of the ‘Scavengers’ squad... under the order, I’m here to search," answered Hank.

"How many people are there in your squad?" asked Feng Bujue.

"Five..." answered Hank. "But several hours ago, I've lost connection with them." He strangely looked at Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"Don't look at me like that. I didn't kill your friends." Wild Trace Sword Shadow, of course, recognized that. He retrieved his sword and said, "We've seen a friend of yours, but when we saw him, a monster had killed him already." That was the man who got the octopus parasite.

"What... mons... monster? Ah, my god... damn it." Hank's body was shivering constantly, just like he was about to cry. "That's why they said they found something peculiar..."

"What kind of vehicle you've used to come here?" asked Feng Bujue.

"Vehicle?" Seemed Hank didn't understand this word.

"What did you ride to come here?" Feng Bujue changed the words of his question.

"It's the 'Shark Cabin'. Scavengers' members all use it," answered Hank.

"Is that something like a boat or a car?" asked Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"Car?" Hank was confused again.

Feng Bujue shook his head, sighed and continued his interrogation, "Originally, you were staying in the 'Shark Cabin' while your four other friends had entered this lab to search. And, because you've lost connection with them, you've entered here too, right?"

"Yes," nodded Hank.

"Why did you attack us?" asked Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"You... you are..." Hank looked at them with fear in his eyes.

"Because you guys are outlanders..."

"Can you explain what is ‘outlanders’?" said Feng Bujue.

"Devils! Men from outside the village!"

"How do you know we come from another place?" asked Feng Bujue.

"Your clothes..." said Hank. "I’ve never seen clothing like that. Moreover, you guys don’t need protection suit to survive here."

"What?" Feng Bujue frowned. "How? Would you die if you breathe in the air here?"

"Of course! It was only in the village that we can breathe fresh air! The air outside is fatal! It’s because the outlanders have diffused toxic gas!" Hank pitched up his tone.

Feng Bujue got up, walked to Wild Trace Sword Shadow and said, "Do you remember the opening of the 10th movie in ‘Friday the 13th’ franchise?"

"Just say what you want to say..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow said, "Whatever you say is true anyway..."

"That means you don't remember exactly," said Feng Bujue.

"Nonsense. Who can remember in details a movie released years ago?" said Wild Trace Sword Shadow. Anyway, after he had spoken up, he suddenly recognized something and immediately added, "Alright, not including you..."

"I remember clearly that in the opening scene of that movie, the member of the scientists team from the outer space can remove their helmet and breath when they enter this lab. Of course, the premise is that they have already checked the air quality and the bacteria around there," said Feng Bujue.

"Get to the main points," continued Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"The main point is... the man in front of us, just like I’ve assumed before..." Feng Bujue lowered his voice to talk while watching

Hank, who was crouching and leaning against the wall. "He should be the descendant of the survivors on the Old Earth, but I don't know why he isn’t evolved physiologically to adapt to the environment. Quite the contrary, he got the tendency of degeneration. Even those immigrants in space can breathe the air in this lab for a short while, but he can’t do that."

"Is it strange?" asked Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"Is Darwin a false God?" asked Feng Bujue.

"Eh..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow said, "Alright, I’m not good at biology. But, I think you are saying that this situation is not suitable with the theory of evolution?"

"The group of people living in the spaceship has similar lungs and heart functions with human beings of 400 years ago," Feng Bujue said, "but the ones who survive on the Old Earth, which has the extreme conditions for living creatures, will choke themselves to death breathing the air here." He paused for a while, "And, do you remember the guy with the octopus?"

"You meant the one you’d beheaded and harassed by putting the grenade through his throat and carved words on his tummy?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow pretended to concentrate then spoke up. "Ha... it’s easy to forget him..."

"His height and appearance aren’t much different from Hank’s. Unusually thin and weak," said Feng Bujue.

"So?"

"They are Caucasian... I should remind you a bit here. In our age, Western European men’s average height is around 180 centimeters, and the guys from Northern European countries approach 190 centimeters," said Feng Bujue.

"Don’t you think that in this planet, the malnutrition is more popular?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow said, "and, this is just a game, why do you need to pay attention to those details?"

Feng Bujue shook his head. "I don’t know how many human beings are left on this Old Earth, but I can confirm that Hank’s ‘village’ has some problems."

"Feng-Ge... do you remember that we are playing Killing Game 2 versus 2? We are not here to save some NPC’s village!"

Feng Bujue held up his hand, unfolded three fingers then seriously listed up three reasons. "Breathing air in their village will not reduce our Survival Value. Their science and technology level can produce [Anti-Gravity Launching Device]. Moreover, people there can’t bear one strike from us."

"Ah... You are not going to save the village, but to burn down houses and rob their properties, aren’t you?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow seemed to understand.

"Saving and also robbing, well, talk about it later... We need to think about how to get on Hank’s ‘Shark Cabin’ to leave this lab. Then we are invincible. Before the two patient badasses from Corpse Saber have drained their blood supplements, we have a variety of strategies to use and totally grip the initiative," said Feng Bujue.

Chapter 136: The Earth's Wastelands (9)

The Old Earth's land had been damaged so much by mass nuclear wars to the point that it could never be restored again. At the same time, the ocean was seriously polluted. After the crisis of the 'Apocalypse', irreversible changes had happened on this planet.

More than 50% area of the continent had been transformed into desert. The colors of the sea also changed dramatically into purple or even black. Different levels of pollution had different colors. The ocean was now unaccomodating for most living creatures. The ecological system had been cut off, leading to mutation of creatures dwelling deep in the ocean. Species that could adapt to the situation survived, while the others became extinct.

It happened as the scientists from the 21st century had once predicted. Ice on both poles melted. Ohio valley was flooded. The whole Australian Continent sank to the bottom of the sea. New York became a muddy puddle...

War brings death. Death ceases wars.

At the end, when some people were looking at their devastated homes, they found that the second 'Sun' had disappeared. Heat, hunger, pain, remorse, and despair... all stormed to their hearts at the same time, accompanying them until they fell to their deaths.

Fierce radiation polluted the rich soil near the equator, and light flickered in the ruins of cities during the nights. This situation had been lasting for hundreds of years. Some species were extinct, while others had mutated and evolved.

Time flew fast. Black clouds started to gather over some barren, desolate lands. Heavy rain poured down, cooling the poisonous sea water that blanketed the land, scattering the dirty air and healing open cuts that cracked on the Earth.

After the rain had washed over, a silent, dead land emerged.

There should be some survivors. Human beings were as weak as an ant or an insect; so, their lives would be as tough as one's.

Survivors mounted from ruins of civilization, stepping on their ways to survive. They soon realized that the temperature was hotter than before. Even in the non-deserted areas, the steam in the air was much denser than before. The sky above their heads was orange, while the sun was shining dazzling light.

Inside the ruins, strange plants started to sprout even though no one had watered them, and they bared themselves under the blazing sunlight. Those wild, odd-colored, and bizarre-shaped plants were thriving, covering majority of the land.

To the Earth, where the blue sea turned into mulberry fields (idiom, transformation of the world – TL), this wasn't the first time such a climate change happened... Ice age, tectonic shift, erupting volcano... all had left traces, but they didn't change the trajectory of the Earth. Currently, it was still working as it used to be three billion years ago, spinning itself and orbiting the sun.

Science and technology became outdated. After the calamity, survivors with their new lease of life now had returned to the primitive living conditions. They formed social structures like tribes and wandered on earth, searching for food and reliable shelters.

Besides the desert, there were also highly toxic swamp, deep canyons, muddy low-lying ground, and desolate mountain range. Anyway, besides those places, the earth was still a big place, and places that looked like wonderlands still existed.

Somewhere in a deep canyon in North America situated such a place. This was an underground cave, as big as a city. It looked like a pocket with a dense, thick 'cloud' of ploras, forming a roof to prevent a big part of dazzling sunlight from entering the deeper place. The temperature here was comfy; the soil was suitable for growing crops with an abundant amount of underground water...

The most important feature was that, this place had ‘half’ of an interstellar spacecraft wreckage.

No one knows why this spacecraft was here. Perhaps it used to be a secret research center of some country, or perhaps it was a ship shot down during a battle.

In short, eventually, a tribe had found this place. The conditions here gave them a base to survive, and the wreckage of the spaceship had helped them regain the fire of civilization. Life thrived again, and a new society of mankind was established.

After almost three centuries, this place had become one of the bases of the human survivors on Earth. People called this place —‘The Deity Guarded Village.’

…

Inside the underground laboratory in Crystal Lake.

Apocalypse Assault had seen the other end of the road. He had checked all the turns and followed the corridor to this place. At present, ahead of him was a staircase leading upward that looked like a zigzag staircase of an emergency exit in a normal residential building. It had an iron handrail and metal steps, which he could vaguely see things above from the gaps between the steps.

He took out his weapon and cautiously walked forward. The light here wasn’t adequate. Looking from underneath, it was hard to tell if there was an ambush awaiting.

"Members from the Martial World, don’t hide anymore. I saw you!" Apparently, Apocalypse Assault was just bluffing. He wasn't afraid of disclosing his whereabouts as he knew this was the last part of the laboratory. No doubt that the part above his head was now the exit. If Wild Trace Sword Shadow and Feng Bu Jue wanted to ambush him, they could only choose this place. And, to the ones who were waiting for him, obviously, they should have recognized him long ago.

"Well, your grenade trick is marvelous, isn’t it?" Apocalypse Assault said. "Wild Trace Sword Shadow, that's all you've got? Your Martial World is just a gang of turtles who are good at doing tricks." He was taking advantage of not getting his words censored to carry out the verbal war in order to provoke his opponents to show themselves. At this moment, he was exposed while the other side was still hiding in the dark. It wasn’t a favorable condition for him.

"What? Don’t dare to come out?" Apocalypse Assault snorted coldly. "You have two, and I’m on my own here, aren’t you still scared?"

What answered him was the echo of his own voice.

"Harruphm... You should make up your mind," Apocalypse Assault said. "Under the same condition of Survival Value reducing, the two of you will consume double than me. Well, in the case of taking the upper hand but you are afraid of fighting, it’s just a waste of Survival Value." He paused for a while and continued, "I’m not afraid of leaving here and staying away from you as far as possible. Well, we then play the war of attrition. Even if I lose, you guys have to consume double the amount of blood compared to me."

What Apocalypse Assault said seemed reasonable, but since he was here at this moment, it meant that he didn’t choose that strategy.

If Apocalypse Assault felt that he couldn't win a direct fight, he wouldn't approach the opponent. After Ultimate Assault was exploded, he should have run to the opposite direction then find a place and wait there until the opponents come for him. In case he could successfully stalk and kill one of them, perhaps he would have a chance to win.

Thus, the only reason why Apocalypse Assault came here was that he was confident he could battle against the other two. And,

the foundation of his confidence was some strong skills or equipment.

After he had been shouting for a while, there was still no response from the stair above. This confused Apocalypse Assault. He couldn't help but to think whether this staircase would lead to another level, which was as big as this underground lab?

Upon this thought, he cautiously groped to the staircase and mounted it. Now, he could only do that. First, if the opponent wouldn't show up at any cost, he had no choice though. Climb up there or leave here. Second, if there were actually one more level up there, even if he had been shouting here for one hour, no one could hear him.

He came back and forth, taking each step with full alert. However, he didn’t encounter any ambush or even the smallest mark of traps. Anyway, Apocalypse Assault wouldn't dare to be careless. The memory of the grenade event was still new in his mind as his teammate was screwed in a blink because he had been too close to the grenade and he himself almost got exploded to death. Such lesson, he would never forget for the rest of his time being professional gamers or even his life.

This staircase was as high as three or four floors. After four times of walking back and forth, he had spent a whole five minutes. When he got to the upper floor, Apocalypse Assault was dazed. Laying in front of him was a section of corridor, an empty corridor, which had the end standing 10 meters ahead. The wall there was a massive gate with two parts, left and right, meshed to each other by the sawtooth edges. The thickness of this gate wasn’t less than any bank’s vault, and the lock on the gate was broken...

"Where are they?" This was Apocalypse Assault’s first reaction.

He and Ultimate Assault had completely searched the other side of the laboratory, and this side was the exit. On the way here, he saw the traces that Wild Trace Sword Shadow and Feng Bujue had

left, hit their trap and also searched all the turns. This meant he was on the right track. But why... was nobody there?

"Did they get out of this place?" This thought had flashed in Apocalypse Assault's head, but he immediately crossed out this assumption. "Impossible... According to the plot's introduction, the outside environment harsher than in here... perhaps the Survival Value will be reduced faster... And, the lock here is broken, how could they get out?" He started to make assumptions. "Perhaps... They got out then closed the door. Before they closed the door, they had broken the lock to confine me inside?"

"Hmm, that's not true. Getting out there is not good..." Apocalypse Assault walked back and forth with a stiff face. After a long time, he had jumped to a supposition that he thought it was true. "Yep! Absolutely!" He suddenly recognized something, but his face and tone stayed the same. "They entered the end of the corridor, broke the lock and made a scene like they had walked out of the lab then turned back... They had definitely taken the main path while I was searching the other turns... I'm afraid that they are at the other end of the lab now."

...

At the same time, outside the laboratory.

Under the pale yellow sky was an undulating sea of sand extending continuously. The wind was howling in the air while dark sand storm was sweeping here and there. Without the protection equipment, in such circumstances, humans would find it hard to open their eyes. If they opened their mouths to talk, surely they would receive a mouthful of sand. Moreover, their voices couldn't come further than five meters.

A 'Shark Cabin' was floating above this sea of sand. This was around 20 meters long, six meters wide and four meters tall. It appeared as a giant armored shark. However, this Shark Cabin didn't have any fins. The top of the ship was streamlined and flat.

The ship’s color had been washed until it was khaki as the color of the desert. Without windshields or visual devices in front of it, they could only rely on the internal detection radar and the navigation devices to move.

The air inside the Shark Cabin was treated. Even if they didn't wear protection clothes, the Survival Value of the two players would stop decreasing.

At this moment, Feng Bujue was leisurely sitting on the pilot’s chair, with his hands placed behind his head. It didn’t take him too long to study how to control the Shark Cabin. The interface of those devices wasn't too complicated. At the same time, the coordinates of their destination were set up before, so now they just needed to choose auto-pilot mode.

When Feng Bujue got out of the laboratory, seeing the environment outside, he immediately understood that manual control on this planet was useless since there was no road. Let alone road, it didn’t even have something that looked like that. So, this Shark Cabin should be equipped with some navigation device to get to the desired destination.

And, here came another problem. How could the other team get to the Crystal Lake Laboratory?

Hank said that his team got ‘the order’ to search here, which meant their superior knew the particular coordinates of the laboratory in Crystal Lake.

Then, another problem arose. Had their superior searched this coordinates before or did they just find it the other day? What methods did they use to find this place? A micro-detection robot?

Feng Bujue guessed that... those people had arrived not too late or too early. Right when the ‘Interstellar Immigrants’ left, they arrived. This obviously meant something...

From Hank’s reaction when he first saw the ‘outlanders’, Feng

Bujue immediately advanced his reasoning to another step. Currently, even though they hadn’t reached that village yet, Feng Bujue could basically know the situation there.

"Why didn't you kill him?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow was sitting on the co-pilot’s seat next to Feng Bujue as he cocked his head. "Keeping him here, aren’t you afraid that something unfavorable would happen?" Of course, he had lowered his voice so that Hank, who was tied back there, couldn't overhear what they were discussing.

"No hatred, no resentment, why kill people," answered Feng Bu Jue.

Wild Trace Sword Shadow forced a smile. "No way, don’t you think it’s too late to pretend you are on the good guys' side?"

"It has nothing to do with me, whether it is for the sake of justice or not. Mainly, this NPC is still useful," Feng Bu Jue answered. "We need his help to mingle in the village."

"He will help us?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow slightly turned his head to glare at Hank, who was sitting a little far from them. "For what? Although he couldn't resist now, once we enter his village, he could find a chance to run away or shout out loud to ask for help, and the other guys would come and arrest us."

Feng Bujue curled his lips. "Everyone has a weakness. Once you can grab it, they will betray their own principles and follow you." He stood up from his seat and muttered, "To Hank, we just need to use force or some simple psychology pressure." He then walked to Hank...

Chapter 137: The Earth’s Wastelands (10)

Feng Bujue stopped in front of Hank. It seemed that he want to say something, but he didn’t open his mouth to utter anything; instead, he contemplated.

Hank’s face was filled with fear, anxiously looking at that ‘outlander’ without a clue of what the other wanted to do. That kind of short silence Feng Bujue was conducting apparently turned into an invisible pressure…

Approximately 30 seconds later, Feng Bujue took out the pistol from his bag and asked, "Do you know what is this?"

Hank shook his head.

"This is a sort of weapon, very popular in the 20th and 21st century," Feng Bujue said. "I think you know the meaning of the word ‘weapon’, don’t you?"

Hank nodded. "I know, but… Century… what is that?"

Feng Bujue thought, ‘Well, he doesn’t even know this concept… seems that they are enslaved thoroughly…’

Feng Bujue didn't bat an eye. "In other words, this is a weapon that people used 400 or 500 years ago."

"W-Why… are you telling me this?" Hank was scared.

Feng Bujue laughed coldly. "Just for you to have a concept about this." He then pointed at the muzzle. "I just need to move my finger, and there’s something called bullet that comes out from this place. Its flying speed is much faster than when the Anti-gravity Launching Device shoot objects. If used to attack a human," he started to scare Hank, "get hit on the head and your brain will explode. Get hit on your body and your limbs can’t move, causing you to bleed nonstop." He tried to make a spooky face of a madman who was trying to control his temper not to kill people.

Expression was an international language. Moreover, it can cross time. Even if the two of them were one thousand years apart, they could still understand the joy, anger, love or hatred from the other's face. Thus, Feng Bujue successfully scared the other.

When he came to this part, suddenly, he didn't talk about the pistol anymore but asked instead, "How many people are there in your village?"

"This... why do you ask about this?" Hank asked him back uneasily.

"What? You don't want to tell me?" Feng Bujue said. "Are you afraid that I'm going to use this gun and attack them?" He knew but tried to ask for it. First, he showed the other a weapon that he didn't know, then he gave a question about population, so anyone would think about that.

"We... our village has 100,000 people!" Hank seemed to regain his guts as he answered loudly.

"Oh yeah? Ha, ha..." Feng Bujue leisurely smiled as he swayed the pistol in front of Hank. "According to the automatic navigation, we will reach your village in 20 minutes. According to my observation, your village has a strong hostility towards outsiders," he paused then continued, "if they attack us when they see us... There are 1000 shots remaining in my gun. If my success rate is around 60% or 70%, you say how many people will die in your village?"

Having heard that from a distance, Wild Trace Sword Shadow almost slipped out of his seat. He thought, 'Kid, you really dare to fool people that way. A gun that has 1000 shots? Where to store those bullets? A mysterious-space-magazine? And, even if you actually have 1000 bullets and your arms are strong enough, it will take half an hour to shoot all of the bullets, would the villagers get in line and wait for you to shoot them?'

"No... please. Don't kill the villagers!" Hank begged, "We only have 5000 people..."

"What! He bought it!" Wild Trace Sword Shadow was stunned inside, but he still tried to look calm, backing the other two and continuing his sustained daze.

"I can promise you not to kill anyone," Feng Bujue said, "but you have to cooperate with us."

"Sure... sure... what do you want me to do?" Hank was trembling.

"Look, Hank," Feng Bujue's tone became sincere. This is what we call 'carrot and stick'. "No matter what kind of prejudice you have for the 'outlanders', you see, my friend and I are not the kind of people who like to kill. Even when you had used the Anti-gravity Launching Device to attack us first, we didn't kill you, right?"

Hank nodded.

Wild Trace Sword Shadow was shaking his head, muttering, "Although you said that you didn't kill him, your fatal threat is being upgraded nonstop..."

"We just want to visit your village. After that, we will leave," Feng Bujue continued. "Don't worry. This is not an inspection. There's no 'outlander army' that will come to attack you. We are just two travelers, who are curious about your village and want to visit you guys."

Hank was skeptical of his words. He did feel that the possibility of having an 'outlander army' wasn't big. But if he said that these two just wanted to visit his village, he wouldn't believe it.

"Anyway, your village is obviously hostile to foreigners, and you have a deep-rooted misunderstanding of the mankind outside your village," Feng Bujue was talking while observing Hank's visage. "Under a normal situation, I think anyone from your village will kill us without asking for a reason, and we will have no chance to communicate." He shook his head. "Once the conflict happens, I think you know the results." He rose one arm, pointing at Wild Trace Sword Shadow. "I'm sure that my friend can kill more than

1000 of you with only a cold weapon."

At this moment, Wild Trace Sword Shadow couldn't hold it anymore as he turned around and said, "Do you think you are playing Dynasty Warriors?"

Well, since Hank couldn't understand what he was saying, Feng Bujue just continued his flow. He spoke up with a somber face. "He meant, to him, killing 1000 people is as easy as harvesting the crops."

Hank had soon been drenched with cold sweat. Having heard this, the scene where Wild Trace Sword Shadow appeared in front of his eyes like a ghost before immediately played again in his mind, which made him trust the teachings of the village's consecrators more: outlanders are all demons. They are strong, cunning and good at seducing people. No matter how innocent, vulnerable or beautiful they appear, we have to kill them without hesitating and don't give them even a chance to talk.

Feng Bujue was still talking, "Believe me, both you and I don't want to see it happen." He patted Hank on his shoulder. "You just need to follow our plan to bring us into the village, and I promise I will not touch anyone of you. My friend and I will stay for several hours in your village max. Then we will leave, and you will be free. You can do anything at that time, or you can even send someone chasing after us." He paused for two seconds; looking at the change in Hank's countenance, he immediately added, "Perhaps you don't believe me now, but you have to consider what the result will be if you don't cooperate." He turned around with a smile hung on the corner of his mouth. "We don't have much time left. If you take too much time to consider, the Shark Cabin will arrive where we want, and... at that time, we can only see the situation and act, using force to access..."

The kind of game Wild Trace Sword Shadow mentioned can literally be translated as mowing grass game (The kind of game that focuses on players can perform mass killing with just one skill,

like how one mows their grass. The typical game within this category is Dynasty Warriors). Therefore, Feng Bujue was just playing around with the words.

Chapter 138: The Earth's Wastelands (11)

The Shark Cabin slowly entered a canyon. The terrain in front of them had tilted all the way to the south. There were unknown plants sprouting on both walls of the canyon, but they were sparse, looking slightly fragile and sick. In this overcast place, just at the first glance, they knew that no one took care of the plants here. Perhaps they were just some kind of weeds.

Down the slope was an entrance to a huge cave. That massive hole on the rock wall was enough to drive the whole Titanic through.

Apparently, this place had been extended and reinforced by humans, no longer a natural landscape. Thousands of metal railways looked like trestles covered the rock cliff. Some were embedded in the rock, and some connected to each other in midair. They looked pretty much a complicated metal spider web. There were some small constructions that looked like shacks, decorating the cliff together with so many workers in protection suits walking back and forth on the metal rails. If Feng Bujue and his teammate could see this from a distance, they would surely exclaim at this magnificent marvel.

When the Shark Cabin came near the entrance, they received the information from outside. A strange voice arose, "This is the gazebo. Please show your identity."

Hank, who was sitting on the pilot seat, threw a look to Feng Bujue. The other then spread his arms, gesturing 'please'.

"Scavengers squad number 24. I'm Hank, pilot." Hank tried to make himself sound calm as he said, "We left the village this morning. The password is 'Bow and Arrow'."

In Deity Guarded Village, every squad got their journey recorded. They would receive an instant updated password as they were leaving the village, which they had to report back in order to enter

the village. If they couldn’t provide the password or there was no record of their departure, this meant that those people had sneakily got out of the place, or they might even be outlanders trying to impersonate the villagers.

The one who was communicating with them kept silent for a while. Certainly, he was checking the given number and password. Not long after that, the man spoke up again, "Correct password. Welcome back, Squad number 24. Please enter your reserved berth corresponding with your number. The ground handling staffs are on their way."

The Shark Cabin smoothly entered the entrance through a meandering channel to reach a spacious place, which was like a 3D parking lot. The walls here looked like a honeycomb with numerous hexagonal compartments. Hank drove the ship with the aid of the navigation system and stopped at one of those compartments.

When the two players officially crossed the ‘entrance’ of the Deity Guarded Village, the system’s voice arose in their ears. [[Hidden Quest] has been triggered.]

[Find the ‘Son of God’ York Cobain in the Deity Guarded Village.]

"Feng-Ge, do you still insist that this scenario belongs to science fiction settings?" asked Wild Trace Sword Shadow after having checked his menu.

"Yep. Absolutely," answered Feng Bujue.

At this moment, they were wearing the protection suit as they walked out of the Shark Cabin together with Hank.

The Deity Guarded Village’s science system was odd. On many aspects, their level was incredibly low. They didn't even have the basic common knowledge such as the trio of biology, medicine, and astronomy. They just simply had the primitive tribal standard awareness. Anyway, their energy sources, architecture, and

agriculture were much advanced. Moreover, they had the technology to produce the anti-gravity tools and metallic smelting technique.

The reason why those guys' science and technology level was so odd would be explained later. Now, we should talk about Feng Bujue and his teammate's situation.

Their plan was simple. Wear the protection suit, impersonate the Scavengers, and blend in the residential area in the village.

And, in fact, the implementation of that plan wasn't too difficult since there was nothing like cameras in this village.

Some may ask, how about the electronic devices which can stream or record pictures, such as smartphones or something? Too bad, there's no such thing. The science and technology in the Deity Guarded Village was like the Nazis' in 'Iron Sky'. It's hard to tell whether they were advanced or degraded. We can only say that special circumstances have generated special civilizations.

Perhaps another one may ask if it would be hard for the villagers to check the men's identities? It's true. But it wasn't a problem. Before the inventions of camera and ID card, human civilization has soon begun. It has been years, and they got used to it.

Of course, Feng Bujue's and Wild Trace Sword Shadow's camouflage had some problems. The first one, although there were many skin colors in this village, the Caucasians still accounted for the vast majority. The two Asians were relatively eye-catching. Next, it was their height. Males in Deity Guarded Village wouldn't be taller than 1,7 meters. And the two players were both taller than 1.8 meters. Even if they were trying to hunch, they still looked pretty tall. The third one, according to Hank, didn't need to wear protection suit in the residential area; but if they took off the protection suit, it would cause a commotion when the villagers saw a weirdo in suit and a knight in plain cotton garments.

Anyway, Feng Bujue's idea was that it would be nice if they

wouldn't get busted for just a short time since their time for searching here was limited. It would be two more hours max when the guy called Apocalypse Assault finally gave it up after he had found the laboratory exit. At that time, even if his Survival Value could still support his endurance, he couldn't stand it mentally. Thus, what was imperative now was to blend in the residential area.

SQUEAK ——

Noises from mechanical movement arose from afar. A lift carrying a wheeled machine together with five guys in protection suit came in front the compartment of Feng Bujue and the others.

"Scavengers Squad... Number 24, right?" the leader asked while holding a metal plate with a stack of papers on it, one of which the man was looking at. Of course, there was no photo on the paper as it only had some basic information such as the time their squad had left the village and the password, the reason why they left, the target coordinates, the number of the team’s members and their names.

"That's right," answered Hank. Since they were all wearing protection suit, from a distance, the other couldn't see his facial features clearly. In fact, this man was so tense, and sweat covered his face.

"Why do you lack two people?" asked the leader while his eyes were shifting to Feng Bujue and Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"Dead... monsters killed them while they were exploring the ‘outlander’ relics." Feng Bujue took the initiative and answered the guy’s matter while trying to put a bit of grief into his tone.

The leader asked them again, "Did you bring their bodies back?"

Feng Bujue shook his head. "No, it was arduous for us to get rid of it. Those monsters were so strong and cruel. We couldn't bring out anything."

The other mused for seconds. "What’s your name?"

"Javie," answered Feng Bujue. "This is Hank," he pointed, "that’s Joy."

Feng Bujue had asked Hank for the names of all five members of this Scavengers squad before. Moreover, he got it clear that no matter what skin colors they had, villagers in the Deity Guarded Village all had English names. And, the documents in the hands of those ‘Ground Handling’ staff in front of them had only the names without other particular details like skin color or appearance.

"Okay. I understood," the man sighed, ticked some marks on his paper. "Hm... another two died—it’s a bad day today."

"Yeah..." Feng Bujue regarded him. He now understood that to these people, losing one or two among the ones who returned from outside was somehow common.

The man paused for several seconds then spoke up again, "So... the number of retrieved goods is zero, right?"

Chapter 139: The Earth’s Wastelands (12)

"Yes," answered Feng Bujue.

The other nodded. "Alright, it’s okay. Go through the passage to do the filter." Then, he told the other four who were with him to refill the fuel and do the maintenance for the spaceship with their gears.

Hank led Feng Bujue and Wild Trace Sword Shadow out of this platform. They didn’t take the lift but instead descended a staircase nearby. The lift was only for the ground handling team.

Once they reached stairs, Wild Trace Sword Shadow couldn’t help but ask, "Don’t you think it’s weird?" He looked at Feng Bujue. "You just said that we hadn't retrieved anything and he believed you right away." He turned to Hank. "You didn’t need to be checked or something? To see if you stashed the items for yourself?"

Hank was astounded. "Stash? What are you talking about... Who will do that? Once you got busted, you will receive a death sentence!" He paused for a while and continued, "And, what’s good on stashing away items?"

Wild Trace Sword Shadow was dumbstruck seeing the other’s reaction.

"We shouldn't discuss the ownership of private properties with the slaves. To them, even money has no meaning. The only valuable thing that is enough to be stashed away is food. But under the circumstance that they aren’t starving, taking risks just for a little more food is not worth it." Feng Bujue smiled.

"Slaves..." Hank muttered, "What do you mean? And... What is ownership of private properties?"

"There’s something you shouldn't know as it’s better for you, Hank." Feng Bujue shrugged.

The three of them went all the way down to the bottom, where there was a passage. This passage didn’t look very solid since the walls weren’t metal, but rather a mix of rocks. The illuminating devices above their heads were also simple. This channel looked like a mine with a pretty low safety factor. It wasn’t a surprise if it would collapse at any time.

After having walked for around 300 meters, they arrived to a place that looked like a security booth. It was a hexagonal metal checkpoint with a window just like a toll fee on the highway, but the shape was different.

They stopped by the window. The officer inside was using a formulaic tone to speak to them, "Numbers, names, time when you left the village."

"Scavengers Squad number 24. Hank, Javie, Joy," answered Hank. "We left the village this morning."

The other read the document in his hands and scrutinized the three of them. "Lost two men?"

"Yes," answered Feng Bujue.

"So sorry," the man said, "you didn’t lose the locker room’s key, did you?"

"Nope," answered Hank. Usually, Scavengers Squads put the locker room’s keys inside the Shark Cabins, so no one would bring it along.

The man lifted his head to check the time (People in the Deity Guarded Village divided a day into 10 periods of time, and they had a special clock for it), then jotted something on his documents. "Get in. Please keep the locker room clean. When receiving ‘filter’, you should stand still to prevent damage to your own bodies." The man was a bit absent-minded when saying so. The words he spoke seemed to be the prescribed terms that he had repeated too many times that he almost spat them out as quick as possible.

The three of them continued walking forward. Standing in front of them was another channel, which was made from metal wholly. This section wasn't long, only around 100 meters. Moreover, the space there was gradually expanded where the door at the other end was taller than five meters. The area behind the door looked pretty much like a fan-shaped station, around one mu (unit of area, equal to one-fifteenth of a hectare – TL). The ceiling was at least seven or eight meters of height. There were many metal pillars standing in the area with numbers written on them.

Under Hank's lead, Feng Bujue and Wild Trace Sword Shadow crossed through this area. They now faced a fan-shaped lobby, which was the curve part of the fan, where the numerous metal doors stood together like a dense forest. Each of them was around 1.9 meters tall and 1 meter wide. Those doors were close at the moment, and inside, of course, was the locker room.

Hank used the key to unlock a single door, then he entered one of the rooms. The space inside was narrow, more than what they had thought. Standing in front of them were five stalls like five telephone booths. Those stalls were the 'filter' of the Scavengers.

"Get in there and sit for a while," explained Hank.

Feng Bujue nodded, throwing a tacit glance to his teammate. Wild Trace Sword Shadow now had a reaction of a dead pig who wasn't scared of boiling water, as he felt that the Killing Game he was playing had turned into a Multiplayer Survival Game. His hands were tied. Anyway, what Feng-Ge said, he would follow... In some aspects, now Apocalypse Assault was no different from a dead person, thus, Wild Trace Sword Shadow's feeling was indifferent.

By the way, he used to think that Feng Bujue's words, "We have to be serious and kill the other two, so as they can see what real competences are", meant that they would have an earth-shaking battle, which both Gods and Demons had to fear, to compete between fighting competences with the opponents and the true

hotshots would win at the end. He had never thought that…'Serious', 'Competences' and 'Kill' that came out from Feng-Ge's mouth had totally different concepts.

There's a saying that 'no war but still can subdue the soldiers'. However, the way Feng Bujue was conducting now was 'no war but still delivering death to the enemies'. Eventually, Wild Trace Sword Shadow understood that Feng Bujue was worth the man who 'Smile and see a thousand arms destroyed in the vast sea—planning to decide the fate of heaven and earth, releasing karma to the world'. To a player who wasn't specialized in fighting class, fighting was the worst strategy and the worst choice. Under the circumstances that one could achieve his goal without taking risks, that was when he revealed his true competence.

Without Feng Bujue, Wild Trace Sword Shadow would never think that he could win a match in a Killing Game this way. He felt both lucky and wary recalling the time he had singled out with Feng Bujue. If he and Feng Bujue hadn't met each other alone, but in a multiplayer Killing Game of 2 versus two or 3 versus 3, he was afraid that his consequences wouldn't be too different from that of the two guys of Saber Corpse, which was useless even if he was still resisting.

During the time when the scenario was developing, Wild Trace Sword Shadow gradually felt Feng Bujue's prodigious value more and more. In some other games, the basic assessment on a superstar player was all about his fighting capacity. But in Thriller Paradise, players like Feng Bujue could possibly bring benefits more than the top 10 players in the combat competence ranking list.

Regrettably, it was impossible to invite Feng Bujue to join the Martial World. Although Wild Trace Sword Shadow wasn't good at seeking talents like his leader [Smile and Ask the Firmament] (last time the author named this guy Smile and Greet the Common – TL), his instinct was precise. He understood that in this world of

online games, players like Feng Bujue would never submit to other people. Even if he had to be someone’s henchman, it wouldn't be for long.

This sort of players sought for freedom, liberty, and joy. What they hated the most was to be assigned by others. Of course, they didn’t like to begrudgingly work for others. Wild Trace Sword Shadow himself was also this sort of people. [Smile and Ask the Firmament] and [No Sword Warrior] were his buddies in real life. Moreover, the three of them were the ones who had established the Martial World Studio; that’s why he still stayed. If some other studios wanted him to work for them with better benefits, he would rather work alone. This was also why the Order’s plan of head-hunting the three Saber Sword Smile failed.

To players like Feng Bujue, Wild Trace Sword Shadow quite appreciated them with a little interest. Although it was hopeless to invite them, cooperating could be considered. Young Master Sword had remembered the badge of [Hell’s Front Line]. No matter how big this union was, as it had someone like Feng-Ge, it shouldn't be a gang of stupid people and slags with a fighting capacity of 5. Even if they couldn't cooperate, at least, they should try their best to avoid conflicts with them.

In short, he had formed a concept that under the favored situations, the best case was not to mess with people like Feng Bujue...

...

The three of them separately entered the stalls. There was only one seat inside of it. After they had taken the seat, what happened next was extremely nasty.

The chair where Feng Bujue was sitting began to sink. After it had reached the elevation of the ground, it started to slowly move forward.

He had a feeling that he was a car on a conveying belt which was

being washed in the carwash. Although the surroundings were pitch black, his body still felt the water and air washing him all over.

It was said to be the disinfection process; in fact, it was like considering people a hanger so as they could wash the protection suit thoroughly.

Fortunately, this process wasn't relatively long or painful. The ‘filter’ was done after not more than one minute. A metal plate in front of them automatically rose up, and light flooded the path ahead of them. What stood in front of them was literally the true ‘Locker Room’.

Feng Bujue stood up and got out of the stall. The metal plate behind him closed again. The room he was standing now was around 20 square meters, which had a row of lockers leaning against a wall and a long bench fixed in the middle of the room. The four walls were made of metal, and the light shining from the ceiling could be said to be adequate.

Hank and Wild Trace Sword Shadow almost came here at the same time. "There are clothes for changing in the lockers. You can put your protection suit in there," said Hank. He didn’t know that the other two players couldn’t change their clothes in the scenario. They could put on the protection suits because this item was deemed as an item related to the plot; moreover, it covered the players’ real costumes. When they put the protection suits on, their own costumes didn’t change. But among the clothes in the closets, there was nothing they could wear.

Feng Bujue didn’t say anything as he stepped forward and opened a locker. As he had assumed, those lockers weren’t locked. Moreover, he immediately figured out that all the garments were the in the same styles.

Wild Trace Sword Shadow also opened a locker, took out the piece of clothing and said, "This is the first time I’ve found

‘clothes’ in a scenario." He smiled. "If we were still in Closed Beta now, wearing those suits outside, people would consider us Gods."

"Yeah... too bad it’s not the Closed Beta anymore," said Feng Bujue. "This ugly costume, even if we can bring it out of the scenario, I guess it won’t have a good price."

He was right. Standard clothing and accessories of villagers in the Deity Guarded Village were of the simplest design: long-sleeved collarless shirt accompanied with trousers. The garments were brown-grey and had no patterns while the style and position of the pockets were pretty regular.

"What should we do now? We can’t adjust the clothing in the scenario," asked Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"Continue to wear the protection suit," said Feng Bujue with his natural tone.

Having heard that, Hank said, "But inside the residential area, we all wear..."

Feng Bujue swung his sleeve and interrupted Hank, "I have plans. It’s okay if only you change your clothing."

Chapter 140: The Earth's Wastelands (13)

When they got out of the 'Locker Room', it wasn't the residential area yet, but instead another spacious place that looked like the platform of a train station. Pillars in this section looked almost the same with the previous section they had crossed. It was assumed that these two sections were being constructed on two different levels, but with an identical structure just like images in mirror.

In this place, the air surrounding could help ordinary people like Hank breathe normally.

They crossed through another meandering tunnel to reach a spacious yard: all of a sudden, the three of them had finally entered the Deity Guarded Village.

To the two players, the sight in front of their eyes was really marvelous. The warm orange light shone down from the sky. When they looked up, they could see layers upon layers of vegetation just like clusters of cloud forming the sky there. From this height, they could estimate that the clearance here was the distance between the bottom and the upper edge of the canyon. The sunlight looked like it didn't pierce through the gaps between the vegetation layers, but it was actually filtered by the floras here before penetrating the place. These layers of plants were like the ozone layer that only the Deity Guarded Village had. Of course, what they were watching at this moment wasn't just a work of nature. Through hundreds of years, the vegetation layers here had been improved many times. As this protection layer was the vessel of the whole village, it must be absolutely safe and stable.

Moving forward, they then saw clean and neat roads together with unceasing short, small, and stereotyped buildings. There weren't many pedestrians on the street, and their clothes were all the same. Males wore the same type of costumes with Hank's, and the female clothes weren't much different, but they came with brighter colors.

At present, Feng Bujue and Wild Trace Sword Shadow had put off their helmets and left them in the locker room. They tried to tie the collar of the protection suit and shove them inwards to ensure that the costumes they were wearing wouldn't be exposed. Even so, they were still eye-catching.

A typical example: two grade-5 students come to a grade-1 classroom, they don’t wear the same uniform with grade-1 students, and they look much taller... Anyway, they were still wearing uniforms, not looking like Conan when he comes to school. So, the villagers just glared at them with weird looks, didn’t shriek in panic or try to attack them with their hoes.

"The guy who designed this city doesn’t have a good taste. Even robots don’t want to live in a place like this," commented Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"Ha, ha... What type do you believe it is?" asked Feng Bujue.

"When he mentioned ‘village’, I thought it would be some place like the ‘Shire’, said Wild Trace Sword Shadow. "I didn't expect to see this... This really looks like a slum that got formatted." He beamed a faint smile. "The true slum looks even better than this. At least, the architecture and the people have..."Momentarily, he didn't know which words to use.

"Individuality," Feng Bujue added.

"Yeah, individuality," Wild Trace Sword Shadow said. "Look at those guys. Same houses, same clothing, same tools... Honestly, aren’t you afraid of getting lost?" he turned around and asked Hank.

"The streets are all numbered, easy to locate," answered Hank.

Wild Trace Sword Shadow shook his head and sighed. "Alright."

"At least, they are free to choose their own hairstyle as their leader doesn't make them shave their heads and only let the officers have hair, etc.," said Feng Bujue.

"The Housen Academy sent a congratulatory telegram..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow got it, giving him a joke back.

The three of them then walked for a while before bumping into two street patrols. These two were wearing the same colored uniform with badges accompanied with boots. The weapons they were holding were an Anti-Gravity Launching Device and a metal shield.

"Stop," one of the two called out for them.

Feng Bujue's team stopped, waiting for the others to come and investigate. Wild Trace Sword Shadow didn't look scared at all; he was looking at the others with neither servile nor overbearing countenance. He stood there in silence while Hank felt nervous and tense, not daring to speak up.

"Why are you still wearing protection suit and entering the village?" asked the patrol.

"Oh, sir, our clothes are broken."

"Broken?" the other glared at Feng Bujue suspiciously. "Your clothes should have been put in the locker, how could they be broken?"

"Sir, we were careless and got caught at the metal gate of the filter," answered Feng Bujue.

"Ah..." the other was skeptical. Seconds later, he spoke up again, "Then you should hurry to ask for a new set at the supply room."

"Understood, thanks for your concern, sir!" answered Feng Bujue.

The two patrols exchanged looks, shrugged then left.

"Your attitude... I've seen a lot of time in the local TV play. Feels like when the underground messenger meet a soldier from the national protection army..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow laughed.

"It's okay if it works," Feng Bujue answered.

Hank's face was suspicious. "It's weird... Why did they believe

that the clothes would be clamped by the metal gate in the tunnel? We got filtered before changing. It should be the protection suit that got stuck in this case to be correct."

"True. But how could they know that?" said Feng Bujue."They aren’t Scavengers though."

"Ah, right! The patrol members haven’t left the village ever since," Hank spoke when he suddenly realized the fact.

"You’ve thought about this kind of stuff too?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow intervened.

"In a class that is clear and indescribable, all those officers can’t participate in the social system. Besides the higher-level personnel, the group that survives at the lowest echelon can’t know in details the tasks of the other groups," said Feng Bujue. "It’s impossible for Scavengers to know what kind of food in the pantry room of the patrol or the supplying members. The patrols also don't know the process of using the locker room of the Scavengers. So, I’ve just made up an excuse, will they be able to take out a phone and google the detailed procedure when the Scavengers return to the village?"

"Yeah... due to the censor function, please allow me to use the word ‘cunning’ to praise you," said Wild Trace Sword Shadow, but in fact, the word his heart wanted to use was ‘despicable’.

"Good then. See, Hank? Nothing to be worried about. We can handle it," Feng Bujue talked to Hank. "Now, before you report back to your superior, give us a tour around the village."

"In accordance with the provisions... after Scavengers Squad return to the village, we have to—" Naturally, Feng Bujue would interrupt Hank.

"You’ve brought two outlanders to the village, what kind of provisions do you care about?" Feng Bujue said, "If you are going to report back now, we can’t follow you because your manager will know that we are not the Scavengers. We also don’t have time to

wait for you to come back from reporting and then take action again. What if you sell us down the river or you make a mistake? Then the situation that no one wants will occur... A battle.

"In addition, you've brought 'outlanders' to the village; it's no doubt the death penalty. I think your manager will not consider whether you are threatened or not and maybe he won't listen to your explanation... So, if you plan to run away from us and report to the patrols sneakily, it will lead to the death of your fellows. And you, you will not escape your death at the end."

After seeing Hank's complexion change, Feng Bujue knew he successfully bought the man again. "Your best choice is to act as what I've said. First, you are not going to meet your manager, but instead bring us to see the village. After we're done with the sightseeing, we will leave the village in silence and then you can go and report. At that time, at most, you are just a little bit late, no serious consequences. No one gets hurt, and no one knows we used to be here."

"It doesn't sound like that at the beginning... You didn't say that..." answered Hank confusedly. He seemed a little bit helpless.

"So, how do you think things would develop?" Feng Bujue smiled. "Plans should always catch up with the changes."

As things had escalated to this point, Hank was considered boarding himself on the pirate ship. Just like what Feng Bujue said, everyone has a weakness. Once his weakness was grabbed, he would betray his own principles.

At the beginning, Hank just didn't want to get killed, and then, he didn't want to see his fellows in the village get killed. But now, both of the threats were put on his shoulders. To him, the only solution now was to cooperate with the two 'outlanders' in the hope that they would leave in peace and no one would find out about that.

Of course, his thought was so simple and naïve. If he had dug it

further, he would have understood that even if Feng Bujue and Wild Trace Sword Shadow would leave sneakily at the end just like the time they slyly came, or even if they just left while swinging their sleeves and taking no life, this would still be exposed... When they had entered the village, they had already reported their names. Javie and Joy were now considered alive and returned the village. How could two living people disappear into thin air like that? Thus, after several days, Hank would still be busted. At that time, if he couldn't explain clearly, it would be judged as a felony. If he explained clearly, he would be dead for sure.

...

The deepest area inside the Deity Guarded Village was situated a place called the ‘Shrine’.

Although it was called shrine, it didn’t have a bit of relationship with a temple. It was built on the relics of half an interstellar spaceship.

In the village, there was only the Cobains who had the right to enter the shrine, and the place was no different from their own palace.

For years, the Cobains had considered themselves the spokesman of God who could transmit the ‘God’s orders’. Of course, this ‘God’ wasn’t related a bit to Christianity as it was just a term in vocabulary which represented the will of the Cobains that helped them fabricate anything.

If they wanted to kill someone, they would say that God wanted to kill that one. If they wanted to kill a group of people, they would say that the others were a group of heathens. If they wanted everyone to submit to them, they would speak by the name of God. When they wanted others’ properties or wives and daughters, they could always make up the same reason.

In short, the Cobains was equivalent to God’s order. The one who went against them was defying God, without any regards of lives of

other fellows in the village.

Of course, building lies on religions, they couldn't rule for that long. What the Cobains had in their hands was ‘Knowledge’, the information that was left in the interstellar spaceship, which they had exclusively possessed. They just shared a little of the knowledge to the ones who would benefit them (the consecrators in the village). Thus, when they wanted to show off, they could always reveal a little ‘miracle’ to scare and convince the ignorant villagers.

This was also the reason why fellows at the bottom echelon of the Deity Guarded Village knew nothing about biology, medicine, and astronomy.

Biology makes people skeptical about the Creator; medicine helps people recognize death; and astronomy will break numerous lies from religions, shattering people’s imagination.

Knowledge changes fate. Science changes life.

But the Cobains didn't want to witness the change of fate. Any dictator or interest group wouldn't want to see their favorable conditions change. Thus, they had to know ‘Control’.

The so-called hardship on ruling fellows came from their wisdom. The obscurantist policy carried out in the Deity Guarded Village was quite brilliant. The Cobains didn’t strictly restrict the villagers from approaching knowledge as they let them learn a small part of it, for instance, farming, melting metal, architect, etc. At the same time, they used religion to brainwash the villagers, making them believe in the existence of God which kept them from crossing the line.

Consequently, they had a unique yet odd civilization.

York Cobain was the current ‘Son of God’ in the Deity Guarded Village. It could be said that he was the head, the chief, the mayor, the president or even the king... of the village.

His ancestors were greedy, sinister and yet far-sighted. After they had seized the power, taking the spaceship, they had created this governance method, creating the presently perfect situation for him today.

After Feng Bujue had a brief convo with Hank, he understood the social system of the Deity Guarded Village; thus, he was certain that what this plot had was the science fiction setting. What's the 'Son of God' 1000 years ago? Many people had played this cheap trick. Until the 20th century, even the dictators didn't feel like pulling themselves together with deities. At most, they were just self-proclaimed generals without fighting any battles, or doctors without writing any thesis. Well, self-proclaiming to be the adoptee, biological child or the second child of God, anyone who was well-educated and had a certain IQ wouldn't do that.

When Hank was bringing along the two uninvited visitors deeper into the village, it was the time Cobain had his afternoon tea.

Cobain's time was passing by regularly. Three full meals and two banquets per day, plus the afternoon tea and some snacks. He went to bed at nine. Basically, every night he got a different lady to keep him company.

Some may feel it's weird that there were thousands of people in this village, how could he get things done to that point? Is it true that all the women in the village had slept with him?

In fact, they could say so. He had laid his eyes on any beautiful women in this village, why is that? This had to turn back to the e8th century when the European aristocracies conducted something called 'the Virgins' rights', also called 'the first night's right', in which the night before the wedding, the tenant's daughter had to come to the local nobility so as they could 'taste' her first. In the Deity Guarded Village, this corrupt practice resurrected like a flame burning again from the ashes. However, it wasn't very explicit like that. First of all, they brought the girl to the Shrine to receive the 'baptism' by the Son of God. The time she

stayed there would be long or short. To some he didn’t feel satisfied, they would be brought out soon, but he would keep some others for several days.

The Cobains had practiced this for years, leading to another problem, in which their children and grandchildren had filled the whole village. Usually, the house master would choose the one he favored the most to be his wife. As a result, there was only one Son of God, and his siblings would become the members of the family. And, the second generation would be degraded to be the consecrators.

However, in fact, it wasn’t clear that in this village, how many people were related to Cobains.

During hundreds of years, the close related relationship was inevitable. Although there were some special cases, statistically speaking, the phenomenon where the genes of their offspring getting worse became more common. Athletic ability, physical build, mental retardation, congenital diseases, etc., were all the situations they couldn't reverse. In addition, the medicine in the village was really poor, and there were few doctors staying in the shrine. The ultimate consequence was that the villagers all had small and short build, also silly and naive. At the same time, the population of the village couldn't grow since the mortality rate from sickness was relatively high.

The Deity Guarded Village’s decline and extermination would come sooner or later; it was just a matter of time.

However, this matter could take a turn for the better since a guy called Feng Bujue had entered the village today...

Case Closed, also known as Detective Conan (名探偵コナン Meitantei Konan), is an ongoing Japanese detective manga series written and illustrated by Gosho Aoyama.

The Shire is a region of J. R. R. Tolkien's fictional Middle-earth, described in The Lord of the Rings and other works. The Shire

refers to an area settled exclusively by Hobbits and largely removed from the goings-on in the rest of Middle-earth.

The Housen Academy, originated from the famous Japanese manga and series 'Crows Zero'. The school which is under control by the Housen Killer Corps, whose rules stated: Aside from the leaders, everyone shaves their heads.

Chapter 141: The Earth’s Wastelands (14)

The three of them had strode deeper into the village. On their way, Feng Bujue asked Hank about the situation of the Deity Guarded Village while Wild Trace Sword Shadow kept silent and listened to them.

Hank wasn’t a tour guide so he couldn't introduce the village’s customs. However, the way Feng Bujue delivered his questions was skillful. He subtly guided Hank to tell him in details some useful information.

The residential area in the Deity Guarded Village had been divided into four sections. The outermost section, which was nearest to the entrance, was the slum. Hank dwelled there. The only family member he had now was his mother, a woman in her 50s, working in a laundry room. Everyday, she worked for 10 hours, and she got only one day off each week with the pathetically low wage.

Hank could earn a little bit more working for the Scavengers. Nonetheless, every time he went out, he could possibly never return. His father and some of his brothers were all Scavengers, whose ends were all violent death.

The Scavengers squads worked on finding useful materials in the sinister environment of the Old Earth. Exploring the ancient ruins wasn’t a regular mission as their daily task was to collect the naturally grown resources outside the Deity Guarded Village and bring them back. They were mainly ores, vegetation, and the polluted water, which they could treat to use.

With the inventions like the [Anti-gravity Launching Device], this work didn't demand many of personnel. The Scavengers just needed to pack the object, ‘lift’ it up, move it to the storage inside the Shark Cabin and drop it there.

This work didn't look too difficult, but in fact, the danger factor

was pretty high. On the Old Earth today, despite the constant black sand storm, some species of ferocious animals still survived. And, inside the tropical forest, swamp and coastal area, it was where the mutated animals claimed their territory. To mankind, both the environment and the creatures were considered as fatal threats.

In the outskirts, half of the families there had the same situation with Hank's. The time the villagers had received their education there was just three years. In the first two years, they would learn how to read and do basic math. In the third year, they would study some knowledge related to their working fields. From the age of 10, they had to survive on their own labor. Then, their whole life would start to stick with heavy labor work or dangerous jobs. However, as long as they followed the rules and fulfilled their tasks, it wasn't a big problem to fill their stomachs.

Crossing the first section, they came to Section 2, which was the biggest area here with average population, the farming area.

The style of housing and streets here was a little bit different from the peripheral section. They grew some kind of plant that looked like corn, however, the corrugated leaves of these plants weren't green, but a gold, shining hue.

There were some tuberous plants growing from the muddy soil whose leaves had a warm coffee color and they could smell its aroma from a very far distance. Feng Bujue asked Hank what those plants were. The other answered him 'Cough Rice and Sweet Fruits'. They were the main meal of the villagers. These two agricultural plants must have been created and named by the former villagers of the Deity Guarded Village. Anyway, there was nothing like that on Earth before.

Life of the people in the farming area was better than the first section. Their living standard was more comfortable, and the colors of their costumes weren't the same. Each family was in charge of a farming lot. The harvest they collected was strictly controlled. All must be handed over to the village as they couldn't

even keep one grain of rice. The family's income would be based on the amount they had submitted to the village.

Generally speaking, their lives didn't have many risks. The ratio between working and resting wasn't too harsh. Moreover, people in the farming section had an opportunity to receive further education. In case one family had two sons, they could choose the one who was good at studying to continue his schooling with a 'Higher Education'. If they could graduate, they would have a chance to enter Section 3.

Section 3 was the place of the technical staff. The population there was small as the number had been maintained to roughly 300. The most outstanding among them were the ones who 'publicly' improved science and technology in the Deity Guarded Village. The ones who were a little bit less talented could become the engineers or managers. When they retired or suddenly lose their ability to work, they would be in charge of teaching.

Residents in this section were mainly were brain-workers with positive incomes and a stable life. The living space for one of them was enough for a whole family who lived in the outskirts to take shelter. The color of their costume was white, indicating their relatively high social status.

Section 4 belonged to the 'Consecrators', or where the nobility lived. Their houses looked luxurious to the villagers, however, in the Deity Guarded Village, even the families of the consecrators had to wear uniforms. This wasn't up for negotiation. In the whole village, the ones who could wear anything they want were the members of the Cobains. Everyone knew how the Cobains looked like as they could see their pictures everywhere. Since childhood, villagers had to learn about the heroic history of the Cobains' members; moreover, they had to learn some flattering songs about them.

Basically, consecrators didn't need to work as their lives had been favored already. The ingredients of the dishes on their dining table

were what the Scavengers had exchanged their lives for, which a normal villager could never have a chance to taste during their whole life. The water they used was the kind that could be drunk directly while the water the villagers had was the polluted water taken from outside and was ‘filtered’ before use.

The Consecrators’ mission was to protect the ‘Son of God’, and the ruling regime of the Cobains. Whether their children were talented or not, they had a duty of receiving the best education with more knowledge. Some among them, who were smart enough, would receive some shares of the secrets only the Cobains knew.

The managers and the management board of all the sections in the Deity Guarded Village consisted of the consecrators or their relatives for generations. In some fields, even if they knew sh*t about the expertise, they could always take the top positions. Well, anyway, they just needed to find some guys from Section 3 to be of their assistance. Moreover, being the assistants, they had to ask for opinions from the stupid manager on every simple thing. If they conducted it on their own, they would have to bear a serious charge.

Crossing through the four sections, laying in the deepest place of the village was the Shrine.

There were patrol teams walking on the streets of the first three sections. Although there weren’t many people in Section 3, the patrolling there was even stricter. Normal people couldn't enter Section 4, except for the ones wearing the consecrator costume and holding a pass. The procedure for others to enter the area was complicated.

The patrol members weren’t in charge of Section 4 and the Shrine as they had special guards for those areas. All guards had to pass through strict screening and selection. Guys like Hank, who came from the peripheral area, would never have a chance to enroll to the force. At least, they had to be the guys that came from

Section 2 or Section 3, who were eligible to join the guard force... Such holy mission of protecting the consecrators and the Son of God, how could they be so careless?

"Ahead of us is Section 3," said Hank when they came to the junction area between the second and the third sections. "We should stop here. Section 3 has more patrols, what if we got..."

"Go on," Feng Bujue said resolutely and decisively. Along the way, they were asked by several patrols, but Feng Bujue had used the same excuse to pass them all. Hank was nervous every time.

"Hey! Hank, is that you?" a female voice called out for Hank all of a sudden.

Chapter 142: The Earth’s Wastelands (15)

"Oh... Miss Molly... Hi... Hello." Hank turned around, recognized the girl, and stammered a greeting.

"I’ve told you many times, Hank. Just call me Molly."

The girl looked around Hank’s age and a little bit shorter than him. She was wearing a white costume, indicating that she was a resident in Section 3.

"Are they your friends? Oh, why are they wearing protection suits?" asked Molly suspiciously.

"Miss Molly." Hank’s countenance became tense as sweat rolled down on his face. He gathered his guts and spoke up before Feng Bujue could open his mouth. "My friends and I have some errand to run. Excuse me, when we’re done with the stuff I will explain to you..." He said then attempted to walk forward.

"Stuff?" Molly looked at Hank skeptically. "To Section 3?" Her look shifted to Feng Bujue and Wild Trace Sword Shadow. "Why didn’t you guys take off the protection suits?" She looked up to check their unusual height, which made her more suspicious. "Are you two Scavengers too? What are you up to?"

Hank’s eyes opened widely. "This is the superior’s command," he emphasized, "please don’t mind this, Miss Molly."

"Hank, what’s wrong with you?" Molly said, "I’ve never seen you talking like that."

"Hey," Feng Bujue spoke up at this moment. "He wants to help you indeed." He paused for a while before continuing, "Too bad, I’ve decided now, you can’t leave."

"We’re on the street, if you kill people, you’ll get arrested immediately," Hank lowered his voice as he talked to Feng Bujue.

"Miss Molly." Feng Bujue ignored Hank and turned to Molly. "I'm

sorry, but you are invited to go with us."

Molly instinctively took two steps back. "Who are you?" She looked at Hank. "Hank, what happened?"

"We've kidnapped Hank. If you scream, run or do something that draws the patrols' attention, Hank will get killed." Feng Bujue chose to scare her first in case the other would act recklessly. "I know you may not trust my words at this moment, but please, with all the information you know about Hank, just calm down and think about the current situation and then give your assumption whether what I'm about to say is true or not."

"In our hands are the weapons that can kill people instantly. And, our abilities are exceptionally beyond your imagination. No matter whether it is speed, jumping ability or survival skills, it's over your knowledge about human beings," continued Feng Bujue.

"If we got busted, Hank would die immediately.

"Then we will kill any villagers who come near us or stop us. Your village will lose at least more than 1000 people, let alone the infrastructure.

"But if you cooperate with us and take us to see the next section, we will leave in silence after that.

"Now, you can choose. Cooperate with us. Or, scream out loud."

...

Five minutes later, in Section 3.

"Unbelievable! You brought outlanders into the village," Molly whispered with the tone of complaint to Hank.

Hank was walking beside her and also muttered his response, "I'm seized to be a hostage... just like our current situation."

"What our... from now on, I want to draw a line between us," Molly answered glumly. "I should have listened to my parents, not to hang out with people from Section 1."

"Oh..." Hank opened his mouth, wanting to say something but eventually didn’t say anything. Sometimes, even if there were thousands of things he wanted to say from the bottom of his heart, they could only be conveyed through a sigh.

At this moment, Feng Bujue and Wild Trace Sword Shadow were walking behind them. Since they got Molly leading the way, the patrol didn’t ask them anything else. It seemed taking someone from Section 3 to lead the way worked.

"Don’t worry, Molly. You just need to go with us until we reach the junction between Section 3 and Section 4," Feng Bujue said. "Then you can leave."

Having heard that, Molly was bewildered for a while. "You want to enter Section 4?" she quickly added, "how about Hank? Will you let him go too?"

"Well, I’m afraid not, and it will not happen," answered Feng Bujue.

"Ah... thank you then..." Hank answered with a wry smile.

His answered startled Molly. But then, Hank spoke up with a self-abandoned tone, which explained everything. "I think... since the time I let them enter the village, I can’t stay here anymore."

"Oh? Finally, you’ve realized it," said Feng Bujue.

"I should have known that when you didn't let me go back to report. It turned out that I still got fooled," answered Hank. "I’m so stupid. I’ve just got it recently."

"Then I can tell you clearly that, no matter what it would be in the end, if you fall into the claws of the Cobains, no doubt you must die. But if we succeed, you can have a way to survive," said Feng Bujue.

"But I don't even know what you need to do," replied Hank.

Wild Trace Sword Shadow was wearing a face of a stiff dead fish,

looking at Feng Bujue while saying, "Yeah... I'm not sure either, can you please tell us about it?"

"First of all, what we need to do is certainly not to kill people here. If we wanted to do that, the first thing we should have done when we had entered the village was to slaughter as many as we pleased," said Feng Bujue. "Second, we are not only going sight-seeing to experience the customs here. Such reasons, I think you guys don't actually buy it." He smiled. "My major purpose is to collect the science and technology knowledge in the Shrine. And the minor purpose is to change the social system here a little bit."

"What is science and technology? There's nothing like that in the Shrine. That place only has the masterpieces of God, and only some consecrators are eligible to learn it," intervened Molly.

"Those b*llshits are all the lies you guys have learned since you weren't old enough to know what's right or wrong," Feng Bujue said. "The Cobains exclusively have some knowledge of natural science that you don't know. They prevent you from approaching knowledge in order to use religion to enslave you." He sighed, full of compassion. "Foolishness and fear are always the hungry and thirsty beasts inside people's hearts. Only civilization can defeat them while they are guarding the evolution staircase of mankind, constantly swallowing the pioneers.

"Just like life in your era. Thousands of years ago, people burned women alive as they had deemed them to be witches just to ease their mind or in the hope of having a good harvest next year. For 500 years, we split up the words to filter Darwin's theory, screaming 'we are not apes'. Schools were prohibited from teaching the theory of evolution, ha, ha... Personally, I think they were no different from apes.

"Until 200 years ago... the Cobains have held the fire of knowledge in their hands, leaving you guys, the ones who used to dwell in darkness and coldness, in fear and ignorance. This helps them enslave you guys and rule for long."

"I won’t believe in your lies. The consecrators had told us earlier that the words which come out from the outlanders’ mouths are just lies from demons. Don't you ever think that you could use your insulting words to distort my faith," answered Molly.

"Ah~ They just want to ensure that... when you guys meet someone who knows the truth, you won’t be affected." Feng Bujue coldly smiled. "They also make you kill the outlanders unconditionally, don’t they?"

"You guys should give up. If we meet the guards, you will die for sure. The equipment they have aren’t the ones that the patrols have. They will kill anyone attempting to intrude Section 4, whether you have a hostage or not..." Molly still didn’t follow Feng Bujue. "As long as you agree to let Hank and I go, I will think of a way to bring you out of the village."

"Yeah... You do know how to negotiate, better than Hank," said Feng Bujue. "But unfortunately, our goal will not change." A smile bloomed on his face as he said, "Moreover, Hank can’t be on Cobain’s side anymore. Right, man?"

Molly was stunned, turning around to see Hank. The latter expressed a calm trace that he had never had before. "I’m so sorry, Miss Molly. I only have one way now, which is to go with them. I can’t turn back anymore."

"Hank..." whispered Molly, "aren’t you under the witchcraft of these two outlanders?"

"No, I’m sober, and never been as serious as now," answered Hank. "Although these two outsiders have threatened me many times, at least, they didn’t use some b*llshit reasons like the god’s command or something to control my thought." He continued without a trace of being shaken, "If what the Son of God said are true, I’m the one who helped the outlanders, I'm the sinner who wanted to strike against the God. I don’t know how the end would be; at most, it will be death awaiting me. What if I kill these two

outlanders with my own hands right now? Would the consecrators spare my life? I would still receive a death penalty. Compare to that sort of death, I'd rather risk my life."

Wild Trace Sword Shadow unknowingly smiled. "Good speech. Hank, go on!"

"What if these two outlanders are right? What if what the Son of God and the consecrators have told us are all lies?" continued Hank.

"Do you know what you are talking about? Hank, how could it be..." Molly interrupted him.

Hank snapped back. "Why it is impossible?" He turned to look at Molly. "Since I was born, I'm told that I'm a fellow of God, and all the things I do, I have to follow the Cobains and the consecrators. If I go against them, I'll be against God's will. They will punish me. My father and my brothers had to risk their own lives to work, and we could barely make ends meet while the consecrators have a luxurious life without moving their hands an inch.

"I can only learn what they assign me to learn. I can only say what they allow me to say, do what they ask me to do, and they even ask me to sing all those flattering songs.

"If this is God's will, such God is not worth my worshiping. Because, it clearly will not respond to us, its followers, as it just considers us a horse or donkey to do the heavy, dirty jobs, and only the consecrators and the Cobains are deemed as human."

Molly was dumbstruck as he looked at Hank. "You're crazy..."

"Maybe," said Hank. "But I feel very good. Never been as well as now. This is the first time I can feel my fate is in my hands. Even if I have to pay with my life, I will not regret it."

"This feeling's called 'Freedom'," said Feng Bujue. "When the restraint in thoughts that they had put on you is broken, whether you are imprisoned or about to die, at least, at this moment, you

are free. As long as you have a breath left in you, no one can snatch your freedom."

Feng Bujue spoke up with an encouraging tone, "If you help us overthrow the Cobains, the consecrators and their monopolizing knowledge... exposing their lies... Hank, not only will you survive, but you will also become a hero. All of your fellows, including Miss Molly here, can enjoy the taste of freedom."

Chapter 143: The Earth's Wastelands (16)

More than ten minutes later, the four of them reached the junction between Section 3 and Section 4. This place was significantly different from the other sections as a towering metal wall was used to separate the two sections. There were guards standing at each entry. Those guards had the same weapons with the patrol, the Anti-gravity Launching Devices, but they had a different type of shield. The patrols only had normal metal shields while the guards here had anti-gravity ones.

[Name: Anti-gravity Shield]

[Type: Defensive]

[Quality: Perfect]

[Defending Ability: Medium]

[Attributes: reduce the power of the impact]

[Special Effects: None]

[Equipment Conditions: Fighting Specialty F, level 10]

[Remarks: This shield can control a volume of less than 1 cubic meter; can stop flying objects which is lighter than 25 kilograms, i.e., an incoming baseball or falling luggage. But if someone throws you a fridge or in close combat, this shield will function as a normal metal shield.]

"All right, Miss Molly, you can go now."

The moment they were around one street away from the wall, Feng Bujue suddenly stopped and spoke up, "For your safety, from now on, you should stay away from us."

Although Molly stopped, she didn't give up; she continued her attempt to persuade Hank to come back. "Hank, you should think about what he said... Darwin, the theory of evolution, freedom... those are the craziest things we've ever heard in our life. They are

just the theories of the heathens. They've fooled you..."

"Thanks, Miss Molly," answered Hank. "If I leave and never come back, please tell my mom I'm sorry."

Molly was dumbstruck as she stood still on the spot, her eyes staring at Hank who then turned around and left. The other three didn't say anything further to her as they walked towards the checkpoint in front of an entry. Feng Bujue and Wild Trace Sword Shadow tore off their protection suits while walking forward.

Wild Trace Sword Shadow took out the Anti-gravity Launching Device taken from Hank and gave it back to him. "We'll try our best to back you up. But you better keep a weapon; it is much safer."

"Don't worry, Hank," Feng Bujue said, "such guards who don't do anything else but guarding the year round, if compare to a collector who has to fight against mutant monsters daily, their fighting skills are not the same level with yours. If only you aren't afraid, nothing to be worried about then." He paused then continued, "Later when we cross the wall, we'll go straight to the Shrine, stay close."

"I will do my best." Hank nodded.

While they were still talking, they approached the checkpoint.

The guards on duty there were surprised. They all saw Feng Bujue and Wild Trace Sword Shadow but no one took action. They were still thinking... Perhaps these two are the legendary 'outlanders'. However, since they had never met one before, and what they knew was just the brainwashing knowledge from propagandas, they felt reluctant seeing the real deal.

And, the boy coming together with the two uninvited visitors, according to his costume, was a guy from Section 1, the same village. But he was holding a weapon, and he looked like he wanted to risk his life this time with them... Do they want to forcefully

enter the consecrators' area with arms?

All guards were shocked. However, their captain looked relatively calm. He didn't mind that and instead raised his Anti-gravity Shield to stop the trio. Using the most-threatening voice he could make, he shouted, "Stop! What are you up to?" He glared at Feng Bujue and Wild Trace Sword Shadow. "You two, why are you wearing such strange clothes? Who are you?" Then he shifted to Hank. "And you, why are you holding a weapon?"

The other three kept silent.

Seconds later, Hank smiled. "Until yesterday, even if I didn't do anything wrong, when a patrol stopped me and asked something, I was shaking in fear." He shook his head. "But now, facing a captain of the guards, I feel nothing dangerous. Ha ha... I got it... Turns out this is what the Cobains have given us."

"You dare to call the name of the Son of God?" The captain was stupefied as he gazed at Hank.

"If I think he's the Son of God, of course, I won't dare to call his name," said Hank. "But if I deem him a turd, I can call him whatever I want."

"What did you say! You talked of blasphemy!" The captain hissed. "Take him!"

Seven or eight guards stormed forward together.

Then, Wild Trace Sword Shadow took action.

It was just roughly ten seconds, together with the sound of punching, screaming and screeching, and all the guards fell. They weren't hit until they went unconscious as they were just rolling and whining on the ground, unable to get on their feet.

Wild Trace Sword Shadow didn't even use his sword. He didn't want to kill people without a purpose. Among the two of them, with his capacity, it wasn't much to clean up those people.

"Wow... You’re so cool. Not using any skill but you can still do this..." said Feng Bujue.

"They’re just too weak," answered Wild Trace Sword Shadow. "Their reflexes are even slower than ordinary people. From the game point of view, they’re even 30% weaker than a player at level 1. And I, I’m a professional gamer at level 17. It’s not much for a compliment." Since Hank and the captain couldn't understand their conversation, they didn’t worry about anything while speaking to each other.

At this moment, the captain was petrified as he was filled with shock and helplessness, like they just got an alien attack.

In fact, usually, those guards didn’t have many jobs to do. In such a small place like the Deity Guarded Village, together with a strict legal system, there were not many people who committed crimes, and the ones who had the guts to break the rules of the superior echelon were rare throughout hundreds of years.

Moreover, basically, the patrols took care of social security while the guards only protected the consecrators’ and the Cobains’ houses. It could be said that the practical fighting ability of the guards was close to nonexistent. As long as they guarded at the foot of this wall, they had never met even one careless wanderer. Today, all of a sudden, there were three intruders who just needed ten seconds to beat them up into pulp. It should be normal if the captain had such a reaction.

"Throw the Anti-gravity Launching Weapon too." Feng Bujue came in front of the captain.

The captain then gulped as he wisely chose to follow his command. He threw the weapon on his hands aside.

Feng Bujue looked at the ashened face of the captain, smiled and patted him on the shoulder. "Why so serious? Smile for me."

The guard captain looked at the ‘friendly’ man in front of him,

then squeezed a smile on his face.

The three of them then calmly walked forward, passed the captain to enter the door, then headed to Section 4 behind the wall.

The captain was dumbfounded. Dozens of seconds later, he collapsed, panting like he got asthma bursting out. Villagers started to gather on the streets of Section 3, boisterously discussing. Even if some of them had witnessed the current event, perhaps they wouldn’t understand the situation.

Two minutes later, the captain was like he just woke up from a dream. He shot up and screamed with a terrified face, "Outlanders! Outlanders are intruding!"

Chapter 144: The Earth’s Wastelands (17)

The difficulty level of entering Section 4 was much lower than what Hank had imagined as they almost didn’t encounter any resistance. Even Feng Bujue and Wild Trace Sword Shadow hadn’t thought that it would be that easy.

Originally, the population of Section 4 in the Deity Guarded Village wasn’t enormous, roughly hundreds of people. And, those were people who loved to cherish their lives much. When the siren rang, all closed their doors and hid in their houses. The number of guards was several hundreds, and 60% of them were to guard the checkpoints and gazebos, leaving a small part to do the patrolling job. Even if the communication between them wasn’t intercepted, they didn’t have the capacity to form an effective barrier. Those were all the men they had, and they didn't have agile reflexes like well-trained soldiers. Facing intruders like Feng Bujue’s team, who were fast with monstrous combat powers, blocking the way was useless.

In the Shrine, Cobain was the first one who received the report on those intruders. He was also the one who ordered to turn on the siren. If Feng Bujue’s team weren’t only three people but 300, perhaps Cobain would have declared his surrender already. But at this moment, he didn't look worried at all. After all, he still held the ‘God power’ in his hands, and it was just three trespassers. If they dared to encroach the Shrine, they must have no life to come back.

Around 10 minutes later, the three of them were less than 1000 meters away from the shrine. It was the wreckage of half of a spaceship, but now, it had been re-constructed and turned into a massive palace. Anyway, it still had the original outline of a spacecraft. From this distance, Feng Bujue seemed to understand the matter.

"Well, I thought that the shrine that you’ve mentioned was

something else... it turns out that it’s a spaceship." Feng Bujue smiled. "So, our questions have finally been answered."

"Spaceship..." asked Hank skeptically, "What is that?"

"Well... alright, you don’t have a concept of it," Feng Bujue said. "In simple words, it’s a big Shark Cabin that can fly into the universe."

"So that’s the reason... Cobain told us that God had created the Shrine for the Son of God to live. Whoever intrudes the Shrine without prior permission will be cursed to death," said Hank.

Feng Bujue seemed to understand everything thoroughly. He explained, "This kind of complete nonsense like God or cursing, you don’t need to perform an in-depth investigation. As far as I’ve assumed, this spaceship belonged to people in the ancient time. It was also built by someone you call ‘outlanders’. I don’t know what had happened to your planet. Anyway, it’s simply some sort of bad situations or perhaps wars... that had prevented people from entering the outer space. And, your ancestors were those who couldn't leave." He licked his lips. "Perhaps, this is their ship. For some reasons, it fell here. Or, maybe they found the ship wreckage here and decided to stay. After the Cobains has taken over, I don't know what kind of history version that they have given you guys. Anyway, legends and religious stories are always the same, just shamelessly babbling and then claiming everything is a miracle."

"Feng-Ge... if you talk like that outside this game, you will offend a lot of people," said Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"Those who got offended can always find some corner and bow down to pray to the God they worship to use lightning and strike me to death," said Feng Bujue.

While they were talking, the three of them had arrived in front of the shrine. There were around 40 guards lining up in front of the entrance, preparing to confront them. They held the Anti-gravity Shield, forming a human wall with the Anti-gravity Launching

Device in their left hands. Floating in front of them were metal round shots, ready to hit the target.

"This situation's rare. I have a consumable skill, which can attack on a large scale, but I haven't had a chance to use it. Now, we can finally give it a go," said Wild Trace Sword Shadow smilingly.

"The Sacred Storm Sword?" asked Feng Bujue.

"Ah, no," said Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"Okay, it's up to you," Feng Bujue's face showed that he wasn't interested in this skill anymore.

[Name: One Blade Style – Disaster Harbor Bird]

[Skill Card Attributes: Proactive skill, disappear after one use.]

[Category: Fighting]

[Effects: Use one hand to slash the targets from a far distance, creating two swords to attack in a wide range with medium speed (can only be activated by weapons in sword class.]

[Consumption: 300 points of Physical Value]

[Equipment Conditions: Fighting Specialty Grade D, level 15 and above]

[Remarks: This strike was created by a Swordsman who belonged to the Three Blades Style clan. Years later, when reviewing on this skill, turns out this is just a nice name given for a far-ranged slashing skill.]

Those guards didn't talk with the trespassers. When the three of them had entered their shooting range of around 50 meters, one captain among them had signaled and they all shot their weapons.

Dozens of metal round shots quickly flew towards them. At this moment, however, Wild Trace Sword Shadow also activated his skill.

They merely saw him swing his hand in an inclining angle and

slash out. A visible blow of air in the sword shape arose, sweeping over. The salvo they had made was pushed back just like they had banged into an air wall in midair. However, the momentum of the sword air blow wasn't reduced at all as it struck towards the guards in just a blink of an eye.

Clatter echoed as the sound of the metal shield getting blown away took turns to arise together with the guards' screams and screeches. Except for those who stayed at two sides, the group of guards who was standing in the middle scattered like the bowling pins getting struck down.

"Wow, no chance to perform," Feng Bujue said while walking into the shrine.

The interior of the shrine wasn't different from that of a luxurious mansion. Besides a few males of the Cobains, there were rooms for the girls who came for the 'baptism'. In addition, there were many servants living inside the shrine. Those servants were old maids, who had been here since they were still young but didn't have any children. Years later, when Cobain had no interest in them anymore, they could only stay here this way to serve the 'Son of God'.

This spacecraft was relatively spacious and complex. If Cobain wanted to hide, it would be hard to find him. Lucky them, Hank knew where to find that 'Son of God'. Under the current circumstance, certainly, York Cobain would run to the 'God's Purpose Room', which was the restricted place to unauthorized people.

The Deity Guarded Village didn't have regular meetings on large-scale. Each time, it would take place at a different specific time depending on the cases. During the meetings, the Cobains would perform some rituals (such as healing sick people or predicting the eclipse, lunar eclipse, and some phenomena like that) to show people the miracle of God, and also to transmit the newest messages from God. This was also one of their ruling methods.

Usually, after a period of time, Cobain had to remind those slaves not to offend or doubt the power of the family of the ‘Son of God’.

Such rituals, of course, needed audience. But, the square in front of the Shrine couldn't hold all the villagers. Thus, only the ‘selected’ ones could come to the place to behold this. The mechanism to select audiences was simple. Most of the lucky ones who were selected to observe the ceremony came randomly from Section 1 and Section 2. Let those people witness the power of God and then when they came back to their area, they would tell and praise the event while adding some oil and vinegar, which helped the Cobains promote and achieve the effective propaganda.

Hank had come here once and seen the ‘miracle’, but he had never entered the Shrine. However, he knew the general direction of the ‘God’s Purpose Room’. That room could be seen from outside of the Shrine, which was a room under the command tower. Every time, the Son of God would come out from that place, stand on a high platform and perform the miracles to declare God’s will.

The three of them were finding the way while moving forward. They didn’t meet any resistance down the way since there was no guards in the Shrine. Even if they were there, they could never stop them. Not long after that, the great door of the ‘God’s Purpose Room’ appeared in front of them. A man stood in the corridor leading to the room.

"That’s Havitz Cobain, York Cobain’s brother," said Hank.

Havitz was at least half a head shorter than Hank, had a stout physique with an oily face. He looked at the three of them without any fear and said, "Lowly peasants, do you know what you are doing?" He stared at Hank and grinned. "Do you know how serious the guilt you have committed is?"

Hank wasn’t bothered with that; he just raised the weapon and shot out the round shot. The metal chunk, as big as a basketball,

shot to Havitz at a fast pace. However, the other didn't dodge, just raised his left hand to catch it.

BANG. The sound emitted was like the metal chunk had barged onto an iron wall. In fact, the bullet stopped at Havitz's hand.

"Harrumph, do you want to provoke the power of God?" Havitz smiled coldly.

"No wonder why you dare to stop us here," Feng Bujue beamed out the same cold smile. "Your body has been transformed into a machine, right?"

He casually exposed what Havitz called 'God power'. The other's complexion became grim.

"Yeah... got the mechanical engineering knowledge, but without the assistance of science and technology and biology of this era, you can't improve that much," Feng Bujue mused. "This means you not only have the knowledge of science and technology from this ship, but also obtained the civilization of the outside world. Seems... the consecrators who helped you improve your body got killed so as to keep the secret?"

"Such kind of people, I can have as many as I please. Anyway, the knowledge's in our hands. We decide who are eligible to learn and how much they can learn," Havitz snorted then continued, "outlanders, even if you know something those peasants don't know, don't be so overconfident. You can't leave here alive, and, there's no villager who will believe in your ghost stories."

"Sigh..." Feng Bujue breathed out, "You're so stupid you make me want to cry..."

Shiiing— Cold light flashed and the steel sword was already in his hand.

Feng Bujue was holding the sword in his right hand while his left hand was clutching on the gun. He was constantly shooting while walking forward. However, when he raised his gun, Havitz had

already covered his head with his hands, then he leaned forward, roared and dashed straight ahead. The bullets that hit him had banged like they were hitting a wall.

The close combat between the two of them could be described as tragic. Basically, Havitz didn't know how to fight, as his fighting skills were even poorer than Feng Bujue’s. Informally speaking, he belonged to the type who have never eaten pork or ever seen the pig running on the street. When he was battling, it looked like he was swimming, swinging his arms disorderly... Feng Bujue just took two steps back, then swung his sword twice to cut off Havitz’s arms. Moreover, he didn't even use force—all the strength had come from Havitz’s.

"How could it be?" Havitz was shocked seeing his cut limbs. On the contrary, he didn't feel hurt, just a little bit surprised on how his iron arms could be cut off like that.

"I can’t stand it anymore," Wild Trace Sword Shadow shook his head. "Look at your moves, didn’t you fight with anyone when you were a kid?"

Suddenly, it seemed Feng Bujue had recalled something as he looked at Wild Trace Sword Shadow with a 45 degrees angle. He laughed and said, "Ha ha...‘even my dad hasn’t whipped me’... that setting?"

Wild Trace Sword Shadow also laughed. "The lines are ruined because it is coming out from a bastard like you at a wrong timing."

Feng Bujue retrieved his pistol, held the steel sword, and deliberately took his time as approached Havitz step by step.

"Alright, let’s see what kind of mechanism operates your God power."

Since Havitz had lost his arms, not to mention he had a fat body, just taking some steps back had made him lose his balance and stumble on the ground. "You... what do you want?"

Feng Bujue ignored him and said, "When I was using the gun, you used your arms to defend. This means you know this kind of weapon. You had covered your head, which means that part isn't machine..." He then stabbed the sword at the other's thigh. The effect of the [Robots Must Die] also applied on the creatures whose bodies were improved with machines. It wasn't difficult to poke through that layer of defense.

"Seems your limbs are completely transformed. You don't feel the pain, right?" Feng Bujue retrieved the sword then thrust it into the other's chest.

Havitz inhaled a cold breath, but when the sword had pierced into his chest, he didn't die as it had just affected his breathing and he couldn't speak up.

"Indeed, both your heart and lungs function have been improved too," said Feng Bujue. "Seems the members of the Cobains have soon prepared. Even if there occurs a serious problem that breaks the air filter system in the village, you don't have to worry about it because you don't need the protection suit to survive this atmosphere." He immediately stomped on Havitz's round tummy. The other apparently wore a painful expression.

"Hmm... You didn't transform your digestive system, right. No wonder. If you have it improved, it should be an eight-pack abs there." Feng Bujue smiled. "I think you didn't change your reproductive system since it's related to enjoying the pleasure. You didn't want to give it up..." He moved the tip of his sword to the other's abdomen.

Although loud sounds couldn't come out from Havitz's throat, he desperately wanted to scream. Moreover, he was shaking his head in panic, as he seemed to beg Feng Bujue not to kill him.

"Don't worry, it's just a joke," Feng Bujue said then retrieved his sword. "If there are just few machines inside, I can't earn Skill Value piercing you, but I'll surely get your turd and fat stuck on my

sword. It’s nauseating."

Havitz didn’t understand what the other said but he seemed to have given him a way out.

Too bad, one second later, Feng Bujue took out the wrench from his bag, then he showed a look of a serial killer as he stared at Havitz’s forehead.

Ittoryu – Yakkodori: lit. One Blade Style – Disaster Harbor Bird is one of the fighting styles that form the greater part of Roronoa Zoro’s Santoryu fighting abilities. Zoro is a character in the famous manga One Piece by mangaka Eiichiro Oda

Chapter 145: The Earth's Wastelands (18)

The God's Purpose Room's door was opened. There was a man which looked somewhat similar to Havitz that stood in the room. He was York Cobain. Standing next to him was a boy, around 12 or 13 years old, which should be his kid. It was easy to tell the member of his family. Same facial contours, hair color and eye color. They all looked fat, but it seemed not to be related to genes, mostly because of their living habits.

Feng Bujue was the first one to enter the room. Wild Trace Sword Shadow and Hank walked close behind him. When Feng Bujue saw the interior of the room, he immediately understood why the Cobains didn't allow other people to access this room. There was nothing religious in this 'God's Purpose Room'. Laying in the room were numerous control panels and monitors. Apparently, this was the central control room of this spaceship.

[[Hidden Quest] accomplished.]

The system's notification arose in their ears as they saw York Cobain. This quest was completed.

"Your expression's very interesting," Feng Bujue said. "Seeing us at the door but you are still totally tranquil... You don't care about Havitz's life, do you?"

"If you kill him, I should thank you," answered York calmly.

"Oh, is that so..." Feng Bujue said, "seems your brotherhood's too bad, ha, ha... Did he take the girl you laid your eyes on or covet your throne of the Son of God?"

"You're smart," said York. "Moreover, you're so mean..."

"Mean?" Feng Bujue took out the pistol then pulled the trigger, bursting off the head of York's son. The other three were completely dumbstruck at this moment.

Blood and brain spewed out on the floor. The teenager's body fell

dead next to his father’s feet.

Hank opened his eyes wider as he was petrified. Wild Trace Sword Shadow was also shocked. Although it was just a game, ordinary people could never be like Feng Bujue, conducting such a harsh behavior without changing his face.

In the next 10 seconds, the room fell into a complete silence. People could even hear each other’s breathing. "Yeah, your reaction’s interesting..." said Feng Bujue while gazing at York’s face.

"You’re crazy..." York’s visage started to change.

"Is this your son?" Feng Bujue pointed his muzzle to the body on the ground.

"Yes," said York.

"I killed him in front of you like that, but you didn't even frown," Feng Bujue said. "But when you knew that I killed him just to see your reaction, you then showed that you’re nervous." He retrieved the pistol. "Excuse my frankness, Mister Cobain, talking about being mean, you’re so cruel that the word 'mean' can’t be enough to describe."

"A man who didn't hesitate on shooting a child, do you have the right to criticize me?" York snapped back.

Wild Trace Sword Shadow added, "Yeah, I couldn't disagree with this."

Feng Bujue shrugged as he looked at York. "To me, it’s just killing a stranger. But to you, the dead is your dearest one. Well, from your later reaction, it should be an open question to say who’s crueler."

"I don't want to have unnecessary debates with you," answered York. "If..."

"As it comes to this point, we should talk about conditions...

Right?" Feng Bujue continued the other’s unfinished talk.

"How do you..." said York.

"Should I wait for you to spit out this sort of stuff?" said Feng Bujue. "You ignored your brother’s death, and you didn’t mind your son getting killed." He smiled coldly. "You only care about yourself because of the formally called ‘leaving the greenhill, not to worry about not having woods...’ Anyway, from our current situation, you understand that resistance with force will be useless. Thus, when we appeared at this door, you’ve been ready to negotiate with us.

"However, my recent behavior... may give you a feeling that I’m a maniac. Then you felt frightened because you know only the ones who have a normal mind can negotiate with you. A madman can’t do that."

York was frightened. He didn't think that the other could find out many of his psychological movements just by observing his facial expression changes and some sentences. "Who are you?"

"Yeah, Feng-Ge, I really want to ask, which God are you?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow joked again.

"What do you want to coax following him?" Feng Bujue retorted to Wild Trace Sword Shadow then immediately shifted his eyes to York. "Mister Cobain, I’ve noticed that the control panel behind you is broken. If my guess is correct, that’s the only communication device the Deity Guarded Village has to contact with the outer world?"

"So what?" answered York. Since Feng Bujue’s team had entered the room, York had used his transformed arm to wreck the monitor on the control panel.

"Interesting. Before we came here, you had done that," Feng Bujue said. "Apparently, you understood it well that Havitz couldn't stop us. This, when we opened the door, I could see it on

your face."

"Hey, bro, how many things that you can think about in just a blink of an eye at any event..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow said. He had lost his interest in seeing how this scenario would end, but instead, his biggest interest now was to see what Feng Bujue would do next.

"Mister Cobain, I think you are a smart guy too. At least, you look relatively reliable," Feng Bujue said as he passed York to approach the wrecked control panel. He then stooped down to check the degree of damage. "You were watching us when we were at the main gate of the Shrine, weren't you?"

York kept silent as sweat rolled down from his temples.

"There's nothing like cameras in your village, not to mention the recording devices. But I'm sure that this ship has everything." Feng Bujue spoke up with a neither fast nor slow tone. "This sort of monitoring devices is just common equipment in the development level of science and technology outside. But, in this Deity Guarded Village, I'm afraid that you are the only one who knows the top secrets here. If I were you, I would also keep this absolutely on the down low. I wouldn't share the information even with the consecrators. At most, family members could know.

"Monitoring is one kind of extraordinarily effective means. The villagers would feel every move of them has been monitored, just like for some unknown reasons, God's looking at them at anytime. Isn't it just perfect?"

While Feng Bujue was talking, he was sitting on a folding stool (the one he had brought along). While doing something with the control panel, he continued talking, "Of course, it's impossible for you to spend the whole day sitting here and looking at the monitor screens as the cameras installed in the village aren't many. However, today you'd received the information that there were three intruders entering Section 4. You then felt pretty tense,

coming straight to this place and focusing on our whereabouts."

He paused for a while then continued. "In Section 4, we just encountered some scattered resistance. Anyway, what's been shown off in those short confrontations is enough for you to get the information. You soon recognized that our competences are super strong. Under the premise that you knew resistance was futile, you then came up with a set of countermeasures.

"Then, you called for two members of your family, letting your son be in the 'God's Purpose Room' with you, and Havitz guarding outside. I don't know what you have talked to Havitz to ask him to guard the door. With his intelligence, I think you could lie him easily anyway.

"According to Havitz's expression, you certainly didn't tell him our true competences. Thus, before he got killed, he was still very confident, didn't know that he had soon fallen into a trap.

In fact, you have borrowed someone's hands to kill the man. As you've told us, Havitz getting killed is the event you were expecting from us."

Upon his words, Feng Bujue turned around from the control panel, facing York. "You kept your son here to ensure that you would get what you want. And, at the critical time, you could use this child as your shield. When a normal guy enters the room, seeing a man with a child and he doesn't have any signs of resistance, it's impossible that the former guy will kill the man in the room without saying anything."

"Is this another way around to admit that you yourself are abnormal?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow beamed a dry smile.

"Don't interrupt me," said Feng Bujue. "Mister Cobain, what you want to do, I know them all. If Havitz didn't die or even successfully killed us all, you would also take the chance and get him killed, then blame his death on us, which would be the best end.

"Anyway, you got it clear that the situation wouldn't develop smoothly to that point. The situation most likely to happen is that the three of us will kill Havitz and come for you. If it develops that way, you can’t help but consider how to get rid of us.

"No matter what, you absolutely can’t let us contact the humans living outside. Once the others know about the Deity Guarded Village’s existence, the dictatorship your Cobains has established for so many years will come to an end. Even if you have to die, you don’t want such a thing to happen.

"So, you prioritized destroying the communication devices, leaving no flaw. Then, you just need to calm us down and talk us into the conditions."

"Ha, ha... Ha, ha, ha..." York smiled, "I really want to give you a big applause..." He suddenly revealed a leisure look. "Good talk, but I think you aren’t lofty at all, are you? You didn't kill me, but instead explained everything simply to increase your advantage in this negotiation." He snorted coldly. "Alright, you win. You two visitors, and you..." he looked at Hank, "you can have whatever you want in this village. Properties, women, anything, you can use them as you please."

York kicked away the body of his own son. "I can fabricate a reason saying that you are the messengers of God and let you live in this Shrine." He raised his index finger. Perhaps he himself also felt awkward using the word ‘Shrine’. "Those stupid villagers will buy it anyway. Just show them some small tricks they’ve never seen before, and they will deem it as miracles. Ha, ha... So? Consider it. I know how outlanders like you would think. My ancestors also met some of the outlanders. It might be their initial thoughts were to help the people in this village access the outside civilization, but in the end, they still compromised."

Feng Bujue interrupted him, "About those equipment and devices in this God’s Purpose Room, many of them were replaced or updated by outlanders, is it true?"

"Ha, ha... Yeah," York didn’t deny it. "It’s true that they had made these devices to connect with the outer world. Of course, these devices haven’t been used once. Unless we have a nuclear war or any kind of fatal disaster, I and my future generations won’t touch them."

"Can you use these devices to catch the signal from the human spaceships out there?" asked Feng Bujue.

"You even know this?" answered York with a darkened face.

"When I was taking the Shark Cabin to get here, I’ve thought about it," said Feng Bujue. "At that time, I was still thinking about how the Scavengers could find the Crystal Lake Lab. Where does the navigation system come from? Soon, I came up with a possibility... in this village, there are some other guys, who are possibly the rulers... the ones who also have the ability to track down the signal of the ships outside the village.

"Since humans in outer space will occasionally visit the Old Earth to explore or do some archaeological activities, you just need to discreetly observe the signal from those teams and record their routes together with the time they spent to estimate the coordinates of the ruins they’ve found. Then, wait until the archaeological teams leave, you will give the coordinates to other relevant sections to assign them to the tasks. When the order comes, the ones who carry it out will be the Scavengers."

Having listened to him, Hank finally got it. "This is the origin of the coordinates we got!" He used to be suspicious about the given coordinates of the ruins by his superior, where they came from, and now, he got the answer.

"You bastard! The Cobains always have the ability to connect with the outer world, but you’ve been lying to us to enslave us for generations! You restrained our thoughts, not letting us know the truth!" Hank was getting angrier thinking about himself, his family, and his ancestors as their lives were pathetic to the

extreme. From the time they were born to the minute they died, they had been controlled by others.

"Harrumph... The truth?" York sneered. "Without such a thing, the villagers still live well here, don't they?" He raised his voice, using a confident and bold tone to speak up. "It’s us, the Cobains, who gave you the goal and faith in your life. From the time you were born until the day you die, as long as you’re content with your lots, do what you need to do, you will have a roof over your head, you will have food and clothes, you can get married and even start a new family. When you die, you won’t have any regrets then. What’s not good about living like that?" He faced Hank and coldly smiled. "Do you understand the outside world? Do you really think that it would be better than this place? I’ve read the history of the Old Earth. I know it clearly that until now, mankind hasn’t learned their lessons. They’re still the same. As long as that place has human beings, desires and competitions have never ceased, no matter whether the stage is on earth or in the universe.

"Only the Deity Guarded Village is the true paradise! It’s us, the Cobains, who has given you guys this Utopia!"

Chapter 146: The Earth’s Wastelands (19)

"Well... Utopia?" Feng Bujue smiled. "Perhaps that's what it is for you." He cracked his neck twice, lifted his head up and said, "Their faith come from liars. They are content with their own lot by ignorance. They don’t have dissatisfaction because they have fear."

"You’ve been raising them like herds of domestic animals. You assign them where to live, what to wear and what they need to work on. The most terrible thing is that you control their thoughts and snatch away their freedom..." He looked at York Cobain with eyes as cold as ice. "Don’t speak like your family’s activities are only for their sake. No matter what your conduct and deeds are, in the end, all of this is to protect your ruling through generations and ensure the endless benefits of your own."

York’s face was vehemently shaking. "Even if what you said are true, if you were me, what would you do? Would you let all the things in front of your eyes slip away?" He turned his distorted face and looked at Hank. "My conditions are still valid. No matter what you say... will you deny it? Can you deny it?" He laughed just like he was consoling himself. "Don’t pretend to be noble and virtuous. You only need a nod to join my league. You don't need to work, just enjoy. Think about it. It’s the absolute power! You can even enjoy 18 years old girls when you are already 80! They will show themselves at your door. To those lowly peasants, their lives just cost one of my words. In this village, you can do anything you want. Moreover, you and the next generations will inherit the same life..."

"I need to ask a bit here," Wild Trace Sword Shadow smiled coldly. "Your ancestors’ friends, who came from outside, had surely agreed with these conditions, didn’t they?"

"Ha, ha... Of course, who can deny it?" answered York.

"So where are their offspring now?" asked Wild Trace Sword

Shadow.

"How long had your ancestors let them live in the Shrine before taking action? One month? Half a year? Or even a whole year?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow mocked.

York gritted his teeth but couldn't retort.

"Usually, having such imperial powers, you won't want to share it with others. Even if you are from the same blood, the competition will still be pretty bloody, let alone the ones from other families," Wild Trace Sword Shadow continued.

"Moreover, look at your attitude towards your brother and your own son, if we buy it, we're stupid enough."

"Then what do you want?" York looked like he was too embarrassed. "What are you up to? At present, the only device that could contact to the outer world has been destroyed. It can't be fixed within a short time. Even if you can kill me, the villagers will not let you go."

"I want to correct two things for you." Feng Bujue raised his right hand and extended his index finger. "The first thing, I can totally contact the outer world right from this room. You don't need to worry about that." He unfolded his middle finger. "And about the second thing, ha ha..." From his smile, people could sense the faint taste of death.

Feng Bujue stood up, revealing the control panel behind him—after all, he was sitting there not to study the communication device that York had broken. It just needed the [Perfunctory Maintenance] to be fixed temporarily. Feng Bujue's real purpose was to cover his operation at the adjacent section. The signal light on the control board had been blinking since minutes ago.

"When I entered the room and looked for the radio, I really needed to say thank to the one who designed this. The control board of the cameras is easy to understand." Feng Bujue continued

with a humorous tone, "Our current conversation has been streaming live to the whole village. So, the one that the villagers won't let go... is you."

York Cobain's eyes opened wildly like they were about to fall off from the sockets. Fear had clearly appeared on his face. When he saw that the light of the general channel had flickered and was broadcasting to the whole village, his blood suddenly looked like it was frozen inside his vessels.

"Our conversation is not a secret anymore. And, this village will be no longer a secret." Feng Bujue came to the control panel, looked at it and said, "Villagers in the Deity Guarded Village, did you hear that? The things called the 'Son of God' and his family have distorted the history for so many years, monopolized knowledge and hid the truth. They let fear and ignorance envelop you guys, which made you spend your lives like a dog or a pig, and you have to be thankful to the ones who rule you.

"About the outlanders, they are just humans who have moved to other planets hundreds of years ago. The Cobains have talked about them like heathens or demons just to not let you know the truth from them. Even if you don't believe me, I think you've heard enough from York Cobain. Think about it on your own."

Feng Bujue paused for several seconds then continued, "I will contact mankind out there and tell them the coordinates of the Deity Guarded Village. Later on, I hope that you would use your rationality to communicate with outlanders. Your future is in your hands, people of the Deity Guarded Village. There isn't any existence that can enslave you by the name of religion. About York Cobain," he turned and glared at the Son of God, "I'll leave him for you guys. He's still in the God's Purpose Room, you can also come here to take a tour."

After having said so, Feng Bujue turned off the radio channel, turned around, spread his arms and smiled at York. "Hey... look at your face now, I indeed feel incomparably refreshed."

"You... You... Why? Why did you do that?!" York Cobain almost collapsed. He hissed. "You're crazy! Wealth and rank are presented in front of your eyes, but you don't need it! You and your friends even had a chance to replace me, didn't you? Just why?"

"Sword Young Master, you explain this." Feng Bujue smiled.

As he had just finished, fading shadows of sword appeared when Wild Trace Sword Shadow emerged next to York Cobain all of a sudden. It had happened within an instant, and Cobain's limbs, which had undergone through complicated transformation, were cut off. His plump body fell straight to the floor. Blood, machine oil and nutrient solution puddled the ground. Cobain's face was filled with shock.

"There's a saying that goes like...'Uneven road will be shoveled by unconcerned people—injustice will draw attention from the able persons," said Wild Trace Sword Shadow while retrieving his sword beautifully.

These strikes of him could be considered much stronger than Feng Bujue's when dealing with Havitz since his weapon didn't have the effect of restraining machinery. Being able to solve York fast and neat like that, half of it was due to his own ability.

"If it was in the real world, facing such choices, perhaps I would compromise..." said Wild Trace Sword Shadow. "Anyway, first, we are not going to stay here for long. Second, people like you... humph... damn it."

York was completely desperate at this moment as he fell on the ground. He used to hope that he could be lucky enough to escape the village, but now, this fantasy was completely shattered.

Half of the adult males in the Cobains had been transformed with machinery. There was a reason for this besides the case of getting murdered, showing off the God powers or to lengthen their longevity—it was the reluctant case that they had to survive on the Old Earth. After being improved, their hearts and lungs could

endure the polluted air, and their cyborg bodies could help them hunt down mutant animals for food.

The ancestors of this family had planned very well, indeed. They had set up many rules, such as transforming the bodies, controlling the history, which part of knowledge should be strictly confidential... It could be said that they had soon planned the countermeasure to cope with any kind of possible changes, just for their future generations. The reason why the Cobains could successfully rule the village for many years was thanks to the heir of each generation who had strictly followed those rules of steel.

If there weren't any players that came here today, the Deity Guarded Village would gradually decline, and, there would be no chance that outsiders could find this place.

"Ah, yeah, although the chance is small, in case you can still lie to people and overturn the situation with the credit that your family had been built for years..." Feng Bujue took out his steel sword and crouched next to York. He smiled and put the tip on the other's jaw. "To ensure that... smile for me..."

"Ah... Ahh!" York screeched in pain, seeing his jaw being cut off and his tongue being pressed under the point of the sword. Without knowing why, his throat also produced a paralyzing feeling.

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10 minutes later, Hank walked out of the entrance of the Shrine. There were many villagers gathering outside. They were people from Section 1 to Section 3. All the consecrators were confined; though some of them were innocent, but the villagers here had all gone through so much hardship, so no one believed them.

Among the crowd in front of the Shrine, there were guards who used to fight with the 'intruders'. They screamed as they saw Hank. "It's him! He was with the two outlanders."

Hank came to them. Everyone was watching him. Everyone was

waiting for this young man to say something just like they were in the dark waiting for the first beam of dawn to show them the way.

Hank looked at the people in front of him. He saw Miss Molly, his mother and his friends. The attention he got now was something he had never experienced before.

After a while of staying silent, Hank finally spoke.

"The two outlanders... No, they are two travelers from the outside. They're gone. They said that they would never come back and they didn't want us to remember or talk about them either." Hank tried to make his voice steadier. "Mister Feng... He had fixed the communication device that Cobain had broken. He has contacted to a place called 'The Solar System Research Station' and told them the coordinates and the frequency signal to contact the Deity Guarded Village. Our village is no longer an isolated place. The outside world have known about our existence.

"Soon, they will come to see us. They can take us out of here. Everyone can go to a place called the Second Earth, where mankind currently dwells. They have fresh air and water, blue sea, rivers, mountains, jungles and real cities.

"Sickness can be cured and we don't need to kneel down begging anyone. Weather can be forecasted, and it doesn't depend on God's moods. Every child has the right and responsibility to study. No one can force you to worship anything or force you to do tasks or wear any type of clothing. Women won't be brought to the others' mansion before getting married. Men won't need to risk their lives on doing the jobs of a Scavenger."

His voice suddenly got brighter and louder. Perhaps because everyone else became more tranquil.

"I can understand your feeling right now. I'm like you, feeling confused, terrified and having hopes for the future. But there's one thing I can assure you..." Gratification and emotions filled Hank's eyes. "We are... we are free!"

Chapter 147: Intermission (33)

[Scenario completed. Calculating for rewards...]

[EXP received: 8,000.

Game Coins received: 80,000]

[Items received: Anti-gravity Launching Device, 2455-A-1 Hard Drive]

[Completed/Received Quests: 1/1]

[Special, [Hidden Quest] completed: 2]

[Decoded Worldview: 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: 320]

[EXP increased by Skill Value: 3,200.

Game Coins increased by Skill Value: 32,000]

[Rewards for completing the scenario: 30% of current EXP required to level up. Skill Card x 1 pcs]

[Rewards for Side Quest: Randomly draw a Jigsaw Puzzle Piece Card]

[Rewards for Hidden Quest: Extra EXP: 20,000 points]

[Calculation completed. Please continue.]

Apocalypse Assault wasn't defeated because he ran out of Supplements and his Survival Value had declined to zero. In fact, he had searched the Crystal Lake laboratory twice; eventually, he couldn't help but conclude that his enemy team had already left

the place earlier. As he felt that his chance to seize the victory didn't exist anymore, he ultimately left the scenario.

The time he left was earlier than what Feng Bujue had expected. Thus, when Feng Bujue and Wild Trace Sword Shadow heard the notification said that they would be teleported after 180 seconds, they became hurried. Fortunately, they had already finished connecting to the Solar System Research Station, so Feng Bujue seized the time of the last three minutes to talk to Hank and take the hard drive.

At that moment, Feng Bujue's bag was full. He originally planned to place the [2455-A-1 Hard Drive] into his pocket or just hold it in his hand and return to the login space, however, he discovered that his Weapon Specialty had been upgraded to D, thus, he put on the [Echo Amor] and made room in his bag.

While Feng Bujue was still reading the calculation on the screen, the system prompted in his ears. [You've reached level 18. Your Physical Value limit has been increased. Current value: 1800/1800.]

Actually, he had leveled up two levels continuously; moreover, his EXP had already reached more than one-third. Although he couldn't level up directly to level 19 by receiving the extra rewards from his fear rating, if he chose to receive EXP this time, when he completed the next scenario, he would reach level 20 right away.

Then, Wild Trace Sword Shadow sent him a call request. "Feng-Ge, did you receive the rewards from the Hidden Quest?"

"Of course, yes. What's up?" answered Feng Bujue.

"Don't you think that the EXP this time is a little bit exaggerated?" asked Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"Perhaps it's because the level we have exploited the scenario and expanded the map is beyond the system's estimation." Feng Bujue seemed to think about something else. "Actually, if we had time, I really wanted to visit the Second Earth.

"When we were fighting with the NPCs whose power level was just 5, Jason was in a spaceship out there slaughtering people. I remember the last scene of this movie. A black officer uses the legendary Rozan Kou Ryuu Ha to deal with Jason in an attempt to kill both of them. They then fall onto the Second Earth. When they zoom through the atmosphere, of course, they're burnt into ashes. But, Jason's true body (the mask) still remained, which then fell into a pond."

"The screenwriter got his head squeezed by the door..." said Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"The rule of this sort of movie is like this: a scientist who knows everything, a beautiful female butcher and a black man who's ready to be the sacrifice at anytime," said Feng Bujue. "Certainly, this shouldn't be missing. No matter how rotten the movie is, after all, the ending should make way for a sequel." He gave a hollow laughter. "What a pity, this game is a Killing Game, not the Multiplayer Survival Mode. With that given time, it's hard to reach the Second Earth... If not, we did have a chance to play with Jason."

"What do you mean by 'play'? Why on earth you are choking on that..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow had goosebumps all over his body after hearing that.

Feng Bujue let it aside, moving to another topic. "Alright, the scenario's done. We should talk about the current stuff." He took out the [2455-A-1 Hard Drive] from his bag, held it in his hands to take a closer look, then spoke up, "We should discuss a bit. How to distribute the hard drive we got from the 'God's Purpose Room'."

[Name: 2455-A-1 Hard Drive (20/20)]

[Type: Other]

[Quality: Excellent]

[Special Effects: Can be used together with the hologram

conference table in the Conference Room. When used, a random tool's blueprint will be projected. This item will disappear after 20 uses. Cooldown time is 24 hours (real time).]

[Remarks: Not all hard drives are used to store video files.]

"How about... you just keep it. You can mail it to me when there are seven or eight uses left," said Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"Have you read the description of the Weapon Specialty?" Feng Bujue suddenly prompted.

"Eh... Haven't checked it thoroughly..." Wild Trace Sword Shadow said with a bit of hesitation. "Why?"

"First of all, only players who have Weapon Specialty Grade B and above can materialize drawings into items. Next, when fabricating items, besides the required material, the fabricating success rate corresponds with the skill launching success rate. At Grade B, it's 90%; at Grade A, it's 100%. I think most of the players, before they got Grade A, won't take risk fabricating something when he can lose both the drawing and material, especially me," said Feng Bujue. "Anyway, my Weapon Specialty's just D now. Well, I just got my Specialty upgraded reluctantly when using the skill and taking the hard drive at the God's Purpose Room."

"In short, if it goes like what you said, it should be 10 days from now when you would expect my mail under the primary conditions that our small Hell's Front Line Union has someone with Weapon Specialty Grade A, who is online regularly," said Feng Bujue.

"It's okay. You can keep this item. Anyway, it's all thanks to you that we can take it," said Wild Trace Sword Shadow. "And, the rewards from this scenario is beyond my expectation. If I didn't team up with you, with the same time, no matter what modes I play, I could have never received so much EXP like that."

If someone else heard Wild Trace Sword Shadow say that, he

would be happy taking the item and say thanks. But Feng Bujue used a mocking tone to ask him, "You – beep – don’t feel shame saying that you’re managing a Studio?"

Wild Trace Sword Shadow was dumbfounded as he thought, "This dude just wanted to say ‘you illegitimate bastard’ right?"

"Umm... Feng-Ge," as Wild Trace Sword Shadow was about to ask him what he meant, Feng Bujue interrupted, "Find someone to practice with you!"

"The ones who are specialized in Weapon Specialty in our Martial World Union just have grade D," answered Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"If they are the players who are specialized in only one specialty, their Weapon Specialty should be trained faster than amateurs like us?" said Feng Bujue. "And, things like materials, we can’t buy all of them from the Mall. Big Unions like yours can collect the resources and gather them at once. We can’t do that."

"Eh... So?" Wild Trace Sword Shadow had a vague premonition that he was about to fall into his trap again.

"We’ve left the scenario in a hurry, so I haven’t seen the item’s properties carefully. If I did, I should have given it to you directly." When Feng Bujue finished, he had already touched the screen. "I’m sending this hard drive to you now. Keep it in the Martial World, well, I assume... it just needs six or seven weeks to fabricate all the items in it. Among those items, I want three and the rest will belong to you guys."

"Got it... We are the contractor, and you’ll just sit there and enjoy, right..." said Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"Don’t say like you’re gonna lose big to mock me," Feng Bujue continued with meaningful and heartfelt words. "Seems like I should teach you how to calculate... According to your first option, you should wait around two or three months to receive the hard

drive, which will have eight uses left at that time. Well, then, for the items from the remaining eight drawings, you Martial World will still be the contractor, but you have to wait for eight more CD (cooldown time)... eventually, you have to spend three months for eight items." He paused for two seconds to leave time for the other to consider. "And, your second option is just you're afraid of hardship and completely skip the right to use this item. Just like you want to do somebody a favor with a little cost. This clearly lacks consideration."

"Now you should think about it carefully. It's not just one item. There are 20 items in there. With the powers of science fiction of four centuries ahead of us in that scenario, and the Weapon Specialty Grade B and above to manufacture 20 'tools', even with a conservative guess, pricing each at 200,000 coins and then throwing them into the Auction House, at least, you will earn four million coins."

Feng Bujue took a deep breath to assist his voice. "Recently, if we follow my option, it will take half a month max, and you can have the full set of 20 items. Moreover, you have the right to distribute them. You can choose three useless items to give me, and you still have 17 items for your Union to use or sell as you please. It simply needs material and personnel to fabricate. The cost of material will absolutely not exceed 10% of the price of the items, and you have the available manpower for this already.

"Such a good deal, why do you still show dissatisfaction?"

Having heard that, Wild Trace Sword Shadow mused for a few seconds. "Feng-Ge, ah no... Jue-Ge, which city are you living in reality? Are you interesting in changing your job?"

"For what? Do you want me to work for your Studio?" said Feng Bujue. "Not interested. No need to ask me." He immediately continued, "Alright, I've sent the item to you. I'm waiting for your good news."

"What if I take them all and won’t give you a piece?" asked Wild Trace Sword Shadow.

"Personally, I think this situation is rarely to happen," Feng Bujue said, "Yyu still have some face, but compared to my level, there’s a certain gap."

"You are hinting that you are thick-skinned, but still consider it a glory but not a shame..."

"Just think about it carefully..." Feng Bujue said, "It isn’t contradictory."

"Yeah..."

"You can continue queuing for your favorite Killing Game, I’m gonna play a Multiplayer Survival game," said Feng Bujue. "I believe that after the previous scenario, you can see it clear that playing the Killing Game with me is such a waste of your martial arts skills."

"Alright, we should keep in—" Before the word ‘touch’ came out from Wild Trace Sword Shadow’s mouth, Feng Bujue had already hung up and left the team. He pushed the Storage button and left the elevator, then excitedly went to receive the bonuses for the scenario he had played this time.

Rozan Kou Ryuu Ha: lit. Rising Dragon Punch, a skill of Dragon Shiryu – a character from manga Saint Seiya

Chapter 148: Intermission (34)

This time, Feng Bujue had resolutely decided to choose EXP for the fear rating's reward. The first card that he randomly drew was [Jigsaw Puzzle Piece: Dog]. When he got the card in his hand, Feng Bujue immediately thought about a series. He took out the other Jigsaw Puzzle Cards and held them together, then he opened the menu and selected the 'Combine' button. The system's suggestion prompted right away. [Found a possible combination sequence.]

A new window popped up in his menu. The displayed combination there was similar with Feng Bujue's imagination.

[Set of Cards' Name: [Taz-Mania] (A classic cartoon character by Warner Brothers).

Consumption: [Jigsaw Puzzle Piece: Dog] and [Jigsaw Puzzle Piece: Spinner] can constitute this combination.]

Feng Bujue was a bit hesitant. He already had the [Jigsaw Puzzle Piece: Monkey], and now he got the dog. He felt that he could make more combinations. For example, the 'Three Great Generals', 'Momotaro' or 'the Chinese Zodiac', etc.

These two cards could be parts of them. Moreover, a combination that required more cards would come up with a better quality item.

After pondering for a while, he still decided to make this combination to see what kind of item he could exchange with it.

[You've selected to combine the set of cards: Taz-Mania. Please confirm.]

Feng Bujue confirmed. The two cards then turned into white halos and disappeared. A new card had emerged on his palm, which seemed to be at the same size with a normal Jigsaw puzzle card—the size of a tarot card—with images on both sides. However, the surface of the card was a bit different. It was

certainly a picture on a plane, but it gave people a feeling of watching a relief sculpture. Also, the weight of the card had slightly increased.

[Your combination is generated. Do you want to convert it into an item?] The system's voice arose.

If it were the first set of cards that he had combined, he would have no reason to sell it. Anyway, the items converted from the sets of cards were ranked at least Perfect, so Feng Bujue wasn't afraid that he would be swindled. He selected 'Agree' and the [Taz-Mania] on his hand disappeared into a white halo.

On one side of the Storage, a white halo appeared, turning into a new glass column. Feng Bujue came to the column when the item inside had been materialized. It looked quite big. He took it out and checked its properties.

[Name: Persephone's Vacuum Cleaner]

[Type: Weapon]

[Quality: Perfect]

[Attack Power: None]

[Attribute: None]

[Special Effects: Absorb monsters' Survival Value to recover User's Survival Value with the same ratio (Volume of absorption per second: 0.5%. Inoperative to dead, incorporeal, machinery and monsters at BOSS level. The vacuum cleaner can't store Survival Value. The absorption is effective right at the time of operation. If user's Survival Value is full, the recovery effect will not work.]

[Equipment Conditions: Level 20, Common Specialty D, Weapon Specialty D]

[Remarks: Persephone is a demonic maid who served the Earl in Castlevania. Besides using her Taekwondo at the black-belt level to shoo away the intruders, her daily job of a chamberlain is to clean

the castle. Persephone's vacuum cleaner can remove bloodstains on the ground or the walls effectively. This is inextricably linked to the habit of throwing glasses of the Earl. Whenever he meets a guest from the Belmonts, he always likes to throw the goblet full of blood to the ground; then he will approach the other to talk. It has been going like that for hundreds of years, and no one knows the meaning of his act.]

"Yeah... it is... He does throw the goblet in 'Symphony of the Night'... also in 'Aria of Sorrow'..." Feng Bujue recalled, "Yeah, it's meaningless anyway." Due to the equipment condition regarding his level, he had to put this item in the storage for the time being.

This item had a high tactical value since its special effects could be used until the later stage of the game. Moreover, this vacuum cleaner didn't have many restrictions, as long as players met the equipment conditions. In theory, if all members of a group of six could use this item... in some scenarios where they had to face miscellaneous mobs, they could take turns to use it and recover the survival consumed. In case that they had no player who could cure injuries, this item was more reliable than medicines since it didn't have the reducing effect for long-term use.

After he was done sorting things, Feng Bujue returned to the login space and checked his stats.

Title: [The Plot Seeker]; EXP 13436/18000; Skill Value: 2400; Game coins: 326800.

Specialties: Common D, Weapon D, Investigating E, Fighting D (enhanced by the mask), Shooting D, Curing F, Spiritual Technique F, Summon N/A.

Bag (9/10): [Mario's Pipe Wrench], [the Eye of Hatred], [M1911A1 Pistol], [Survival Value Supplements] (medium) x 2 bottles, [Flashlight], [Broken Stool], [SPC-500] (20/20), [Robots Must Die], [Anti-Gravity Launching Device].

Equipment: [Dance of the Knight], [Casey Jones' Mask], [Death

Poker] (spiritual weapon), [Echo Amor].

Login Space storage (3/10): Jigsaw Puzzle Piece – Monkey, Jigsaw Puzzle Piece: Sunglasses, Persephone's Vacuum Cleaner.

Skills: [Perfunctory Maintenance], [Lower Side Kick of a Brat], [Body-Spirit Congregation Technique], [Planned Victory From A Thousand Miles Away].

He touched the screen at the social channel. There were two glowing IDs in his friends list. One was, of course, Wild Trace Sword Shadow. This man's status was still 'Idle'; perhaps he was arranging the [2455-A-1 Hard Drive] stuff. The other one was Longao Min, but his status was 'Playing'. Perhaps when he was online, as he saw Feng Bujue was playing, he had found a team himself.

Previously, Feng Bujue had wanted to play the Killing Game alone, but it turned out that when he was playing it with Wild Trace Sword Shadow, the game was already over before they had met the opponents. Without knowing, it had been turned into a game in Multiplayer Survival Mode. It seemed that the title given to him by the system was indeed reliable. [The Plot Seeker]—fame follows merit.

Feng Bujue had finally made up his mind. Playing the game until this point, the Multiplayer Survival Mode was what he had understood the most, also what he was best at. Moreover, talking about the horror elements of the scenarios, the survival modes were still better. It would be difficult to depend on the enemy scaring him in the Killing Game.

He touched the screen and queued alone to a team playing Multiplayer Survival Mode.

[Feng Bujue, level 18]

[Please select the game mode you want to join.]

[You've selected Multiplayer Survival Mode (Normal). Please

confirm.]

[Confirmed. Random number of players is generated: 6 players.]

[You are entering a party. Searching for available teams or individuals...]

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

[Loading... Please wait...]

The Three Great Generals is a term originated from the anime/manga One Piece. They are the trio at the highest rank in the Marines organization. They have been through two generations already. And the one Feng Bujue mention here is the first one, where the members are Borsalino (lit. Yellow Monkey), Kuzan (Blue Pheasant), and Sakazuki (Red Dog).

Momotarō (桃太郎, "Peach Boy") is a popular hero of Japanese folklore originating from Okayama Prefecture. His name translates as Peach Tarō a common Japanese masculine name and is often translated as Peach Boy. On the way to kill an ogre, Momotarō met and befriended a talking dog, monkey, and pheasant, who agreed to help him in his quest. Feng Bujue has a dog and a monkey now, that’s why he’s thinking about this character.

Persephone is a demonic maid who serves Dracula within the castle in the game Castlevania. She's very polite and will usually bow to enemies before attacking. Persephone uses hand-to-hand combat to battle intruders. Sometimes she'll use her vacuum to suck-in her victim's clothes. She's also very vulnerable to vacuum type attacks like Soma's Devil Tornado and Magic Vacuum (which is Persephone's own soul), or Charlotte's Dark Gate and Tempest spells, as those attacks attempt to suck her skirt up and embarrass her, as she tries to hold it in place.

Chapter 149: Attack of the Protagonist (1)

"Welcome to Thriller Paradise."

[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: A random Skill Card that player is able to learn.]

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

Feng Bujue had entered the state where he was watching the opening CG from the first-person point of view one more time. What appeared in front of his eyes was a panoramic view of an ordinary man's small hometown, which leaned against the mountains and faced the river. The suburb had paddy fields and forest. Also, modern facilities and infrastructures like schools, shops, houses, office buildings, etc. were adequate. This small town had reminded Feng Bujue of Hirata's hometown, and a bad premonition started to grow in his heart.

[Sakura Town is a small town that stays away from the noisy, bustling cities.]

[In this quiet town, a strange story is flying around.]

[30 years ago, on the early days of November, the police department of the town continuously received numerous missing cases. Some young men and women had gone missing. No one knows where they went to, but the very last time that they saw them was on the same day—October 31st.]

[No one has ever seen those missing people again or even seen their dead bodies. At first, people assumed that those young men and women had gone away from their houses, leaving the town.

However, years went by, and there’s still nothing about their whereabouts. Moreover, every year after that, at the same time, similar cases would happen...]

[There were many signs showing that the missing persons didn’t leave the small town... Thus, police started to conduct a thorough investigation of the cases.]

[Although police had met a lot of residents of the town, and the records were piled up like a mountain, they didn't have any particular progress, and the only thing that they called ‘clue’ was the superstition from some elders...]

[The legend of ‘the Curse of the Aggrieved Well’ started to spread out because of this investigation.]

[They said that... in the abandoned shrine on the mountain, there’s a cursed well. Every year, on the last night of October, a song from the country of the dead would be played in the well. At that night, whoever heard that song would come to the shrine and jump into the well...]

"They can’t come back because they’ve entered ‘Another World’," said firmly by the elders.

[The investigation eventually came into an impasse. The police encountered a deadlock. Then, they just hoped to try their luck for once. They visited the the mountain and searched for the abandoned shrine. No one expected that they would find some belongings of the missing persons.]

[On the night of October 31st, same year, a team of police watched over the well in order to find out the truth about the ‘Spirited Away' event. It happened all the same as they never came back...]

[The investigation was then held indefinitely. The local government prohibited people from entering the mountain at night. At the same time, they used cement to seal the well in the shrine.]

[However, every year, on the last day of October, the missing cases still happen...]

Along with the narration, the screen zoomed in from the panoramic view. Facing the big mountain was a worn out path, leading all the way to deep inside the mountain.

[Time flies. Many years have passed by. The Sakura Town's area expanded as its population tripled. Those missing cases were gradually neglected, and the legend was also forgotten.]

[One night in autumn, six young people from the town visited the mountain, as they wanted to visit the shrine deep inside the mountain for a dare game. And, coincidentally—today is October 31st.]

"This is a dare game, eh..." Feng Bujue joked while listening to the plot's short introduction. "It's clearly finding the way to death!"

He used to think that the brief introduction would end here, unexpectedly, a scenario settings that were the same with what he had experienced in the 'Campus Seven Inconceivable Things' scenario showed up again.

[From the beginning of the scenario, the system will randomly choose one of the players in your party to receive the 'Protagonist's Halo'.]

[Player with the 'Protagonist's Halo', unless his/her Fear Value surges up too high and he/she has to disconnect, or proactively disconnect and leave the scenario, he/she will not be judged as dead. In addition, no matter what caused his/her death, for example, monster's attack or falling from a high place, Survival Value declining to zero, etc. they all 'luckily' terminate at the moment before the occurrence. Even though the termination can approach zero and be against logic, it can possibly happen.]

[The Protagonist's Halo will be shifted among players in

accordance with some special Death FLAGs. Players are advised to figure them out in order to make good use of it.]

[When the number of the party is less than two, the Protagonist's Halo will disappear.]

[Currently, the player who received the Protagonist's Halo is—Invincible Hero]

When the narration was over, it was when the scenario had officially started.

There were five people standing together with Feng Bujue, one of which Feng Bujue had met. It was the old bro Invincible Hero, whom he had fooled once. Invincible Hero was a player from Order Studio in charge of studying and collecting information about 'Fist' in Fighting Specialty during Closed Beta. Currently, his tasks remained, but his level was now 23, and his title had changed from [Imprudent Pugilist Master] to [Thinking Pugilist Master].

Among the other four, there were also two players from Order; one was called [Zen In Scary Dream], also level 23, whose title was [Stern-faced Killer]. The moment he appeared, this man took out a cigarette box from his pocket, put one in his mouth, and lit it up while stroking his hair, which looked like a straightened steamed twisted bread roll, then blew out smoke rings.

The third player who came from the Order was a female player. Needless to say, she appeared as a beauty with red lips and white teeth on a dedicate face outlined by long black hair. She was wearing a white vest—the standard uniform of Order—over a blue suit. Her ID was [Ye Zhi], a little bit confusing. Feng Bujue guessed that her ID had the same pronunciation with her real name. Ye Zhi's level was 20; from her title [Emergency Doctor], she should be a player specialized in Curing.

The other two players were both male at level 18. One was called [Copernicus], and the other was named [Galileo]. And, their titles were even more amazing. The first one's title was [The

Discoverer], and the other one's was [The Investigator]. It was obvious that they came from the same team. However, they had no Union badge on their body, and their appearance was nothing special with only a T-shirt and a pair of cheap trousers, whose colors and style were slightly different from the newbie costumes.

In others' eyes, these two were just normal amateur players, and their titles seemed to be related to Investigating Specialty. Their capacity in playing the game surely wouldn't be good. If they didn't join any Union, they would either be too weak that no one would want them, or too deprived that they couldn't establish their own Union. Anyway, looking at their clothing, it was poor but adequate. Weak or strong, it had to be observed later to make sure.

However, according to Feng Bujue's assumption, these two's capacities would fall into two possibilities, and both were kind of extreme.

The first extreme possibility, he doubted that these two fellas were GMs...

From his experience playing the scenario, which had a Derivative, at least, Feng Bujue knew one thing. The Derivative would only appear in Multiplayer Survival Mode's scenarios for six people. According to Pan Feng and Hua Xiong, the possibility to meet them was rare, and the possibility where a player met them twice was itsy-bitsy. Anyway, Feng Bujue was so confident with his harsh karma.

If this scenario had a Derivative... it could be said that from top to toe, nothing on these two fellas' bodies wasn't appropriate to GM's standards. Medium level, common IDs, low-key clothing. They paired up to work without wearing Union badges, and their titles somehow had a sense of hidden meaning. Perhaps they had deliberately adjusted it that way...

As they appeared not to be so strong, it hardly left deep impressions to others. Such players would be neglected after

clearing the scenario. Even though someone would send them friend request as an act of politeness , if they denied them, the others wouldn't think too much.

And the second extreme possibility Feng Bujue had assumed was highly possible. These two weren’t GMs, and it was just him who was thinking too much. And thus... the competences of these two fellas were possibly awfully dreggy.

Quite the contrary, the combination of the three from Order did not look bad at all. Feng Bujue couldn't confirm whether they were the superstar players or not, but according to their levels and titles, they obviously had a clear division of labor and their fighting capacity was extraordinary for sure. And, as their Union had topped both of the ranking lists, the two buffs they received from Union ranking should be tough though. This was also accounted to players’ competences.

When the system was generating scenarios, the difficulty level had a certain relevant degree with the rewards they would receive if they could complete the scenario. If a party of six super strong players gathered in a scenario, they would surely play a scenario whose difficulty level was extremely high. Well, this, they had sought for themselves. Anyway, the current party they had consisted of three-two-one compositions of players, and the possibility of creating a party with relatively strong and weak different combinations was also high since there couldn't be all hotshots gathering in one game. By the way, amateur players always took a big majority part in the game; moreover, it was the absolutely big majority.

The scenario where Feng Bujue had first met Long-Ge was the best example: a high-competency player brought along two low-level players with certain competences, plus two medium-level bunglers.

So, Feng Bujue’s second assumption was that... this party had two extremely godawful dudes mingled with them. They were

really too weak that no Union wanted them. Also, it was already tough for them to buy cheap costumes and they couldn’t even found their own Union.

Of course, no matter what possibility the truth would follow, ‘easy’ wasn’t the suitable word to describe this scenario. From the bottom of his heart, Feng Bujue hoped that these two weren’t GMs. Weak was okay as long as they stayed close to the team and listened to the captain, then it wouldn't be a problem to pass this game. But in case they were GMs... the difficulty level of this scenario would be dreadful...

"Ah! It’s you, kiddo!" Invincible Hero recognized Feng Bujue and came over to him.

"Invincible-Ge, I believe you have been well since we last met..." said Feng Bujue.

"Go away... Don’t try to befriend." Invincible Hero wasn’t an idiot. He might be suspicious that the scenario of the Usher’s House was completed by Like Rain, Dispirited and Longao Min, but now, as he saw Feng Bujue’s title [the Plot Seeker], he understood it right away. "Banging the door? Breaking the knob? You are good at pretending to be a rookie. You completed the scenario after I died, didn't you?"

"Well, your death wasn’t in my plan, indeed," Feng Bujue smiled, "anyway, it followed my plan when we had divided to search at the beginning. Later, the fact was that..."

"Cut if off... No need to explain. I don't know what happened after that," intervened Invincible Hero. "I’ve underestimated you last time. I will call you Da-Ge now, please don't pretend to be a fool but help us to complete the scenario."

"You’re flattering me that much; I’m so embarrassed." Although Feng Bujue said polite words, his face was filled with pride.

"Invincible, is he your friend?" Zen In Scary Dream walked over.

No one knew since when he had taken out a beer from his bag, which he was drinking now.

"Ah... Not very close. I've met him once in a scenario," answered Invincible Hero. He then promptly turned around and spoke to Feng Bujue. "Oh wow, look at your title! Are you a player purely specialized in solving puzzles?" This appeared to be obvious to him. Even in Order, there weren't many players who could train all of the Specialties averagely, like doing both fighting and reasoning like Feng Bujue.

"I incline on solving puzzles,"said Feng Bujue. "Of course, my fighting is not too weak though."

"Eh? From your tone, aren't you a master of pen and sword now?" Zen In Scary Dream said, but then he ruefully continued without waiting for Feng Bujue to answer. "Ah... youth is good... don't just look at me now... I used to be handsome, cool and wild once..."

"You... Zen-Ge, I thought you are just 20-something, and you do drink, smoke and had curly hair..." The corner of Feng Bujue's mouth convulsed.

Even Invincible Hero felt embarrassed. "This is what he often says, don't mind it..."

The six of them talked for a while to understand each member's specialties. During this time, Feng Bujue had used [Plan Victory From Thousand Mile Away], and the BOSS' data he'd seen were as follows:

[Name: Aggrieved Well]

[Race: ???]

[Level: 30]

[Depth: ???]

[Well's Diameter: 122 cm]

[Fighting Technique: Illusion]

[Weakness: After the energy source is stopped, it will become a normal dried well.]

[Skills: Devouring souls]

[Danger Level: High]

These information and the short plot description were coincidentally similar. Anyway, the ‘weakness’ information was worth contemplating. After ‘stopping the energy supply’, this ‘Aggrieved Well’ would lose its effects, but where did the power of this well came from?

If that energy supply had existed in ‘Another World’... should they let the well swallow them to come to that world and stop that source? Let alone whether they would die being swallowed, even if they were alive coming to the other side and successfully broke the power supply, surely players couldn't return since the well then had already become a normal dried well, and the connection between the two worlds was naturally cut off.

Another assumption, which seemed to be more reliable, was that the energy supplied to the Aggrieved Well came from this world, hiding inside the small town or somewhere in the mountain. Players just needed to find the truth and then they could clear the scenario.

Around five minutes after the scenario’s short introduction was over, when they were about to depart, the quest reminder from the system arose.

[Main Quest has been triggered.]

[Enter the mountain, seek for the abandoned shrine.]

Chapter 150: Attack of the Protagonist (2)

"Should we check out the small town?" Ye Zhi said after she had checked the quest. "Currently, there’s no detail about the plot that restricts players. We don't have restrictions on time either. In theory, we should find some place away from this mountain and wait until dawn, then we will find some heavy machines or explosives to physically destroy the well. It isn’t impossible."

The Order Studio had assigned Ye Zhi to train on her Curing Specialty, but it wasn’t successful because of the prejudice for a female player. Originally, she was like Feng Bujue, a player who followed the solving puzzle path.

In this group of three from the Order, Ye Zhi was in charge of planning and supporting in fighting; Invincible Hero took care of fighting, while Zen In Scary Dream, who was one of the top players in the studio, was the captain of this team. At the critical moments, they had to follow his decision.

It could be said that with this team of three, even if they had dreggy teammates, with their competences, it was enough to finish a scenario of four or five. The so-called ‘hotshots’ and ‘top-ranked Union’ were the ones who had true capacities and confidence.

"Since this scenario isn’t in the sleep mode, if we apply this strategy of waiting until dawn... perhaps the system will judge us as ‘Passive Playing’," Feng Bujue heard that, contemplated then corrected her. "Anyway, I think it should be useful checking out the small town. One, we can gather more information; two, we can find items."

Ye Zhi glared at him and thought, "Passive playing... I haven’t paid attention to this factor." She immediately spoke up, "In short, we should scout the town. Do you have any opposition to that?"

"I agree," said Feng Bujue.

Invincible Hero nodded. Zen In Scary Dream was drinking and smoking aside, so people could guessed that he didn’t have any other opinion.

Copernicus and Galileo exchanged looks for a while before speaking up. "Good then. At first, we can go and check out the small town, but I think we shouldn’t spend much time there. After all, it’s an act against the main quest." He meant, if all of you have agreed, we two don’t need to oppose, but we should go to the mountain soon as it’s the main quest.

Feng Bujue remained wordless and silent, observing every word and deed of Copernicus and Galileo as if he wanted to find something. Before he could confirm whether these two were GMs or not, Feng Bujue would keep doing that inside. What irritated him the most was a puzzle being presented in front of his eyes, but he had no way to confirm it. And, he couldn't just come and ask, ‘Hey bros, are you the Game Masters? Is there a Derivative in this scenario?’ Even if the others were actually GMs, having him questioned them like that, they wouldn’t admit it, and, in case they weren’t, it would lead into numerous unnecessary troubles.

After the six of them had discussed the plan, they changed their direction and walked on the wide road leading to the small town. However, after less than 10 minutes, they found a problem... The distance between this mountain and the small town was much further than they had imagined.

The edge of the small town was a vast paddy field with scattered residents. Currently, the night had fallen, and there was a moon hanging in the sky, which was shining a dim light. The six players were walking on the wide road that had electrical and streetlight poles on two sides. Although they weren’t many, there would be some well-lit sections down the road while the field on two sides of the road was a completely pitch black area. There were some bus stations on the road, but the board showed that buses would only run twice a day.

Far away at the end of the road was the urban light, where it should be Sakura Town.

In the panoramic view of the opening CG, the mountain seemed to be right next to Sakura Town; in fact, after walking for a while, as the players gradually adapted to the night vision towards the distance, they soon recognized that this road would be around ten kilometers or even further. If they wanted to visit Sakura Town, even if they were moving at a fast pace, it would take at least one hour. Unless they ran there within one breath, they could shorten the time.

"Yeah... Seems we made a wrong move," Feng Bujue said then stopped. The others didn't know what he was implying, but they all stopped. "I'm afraid if we keep walking like this, even before we could approach the small town, the system will still judge us as staying away from the Main Quest, Passive Playing. Ah... then, we will have to turn around to get back to the mountain to lift up the Passive Playing status. If we're going to walk back and forth like that, we're just wasting Physical Value."

"Ah... Small tricks can't be used at the beginning of the scenario, indeed." Zen In Scary Dream always used a rueful tone to talk while blowing out smoke rings.

"I'm sorry, my bad," Ye Zhi determinedly admitted her mistake. "Let you guys go on an errand for nothing... We haven't walked too far; we should come back now."

"No, it isn't an errand for nothing," Feng Bujue denied. "If taking this road was futile, the system would give us the 'Passive Playing' warning," he paused, and his tone got bolder. "There's only one road at the start point of this scenario, which leaves us two choices. First, going straight to the mountain, and second, taking the wide road and going to the small town. According to the distance, the system won't let us reach Sakura Town, but there should be something related to the plot along this road, that's why we haven't received the Passive Playing status yet."

At this moment, Galileo was eyeing Feng Bujue with a strange look. He didn't make any significant move or turn his head as he just threw a glance to him. Feng Bujue was still keeping an eye on him and his friend. Thus, Galileo’s move was recorded in Feng Bujue’s eyes.

Feng Bujue was now absolutely calm and careful. He wouldn't make eye contact with the others but just glance at those two suspected GMs. When he was speaking, his eyes didn't have a focus, just like his mind was wondering about something.

At this moment, among the six players, there was a hidden war regarding the content of the plot. To Feng Bujue, the most direct way to check if this scenario had Derivatives or not was to probe and see whether these two teammates were the GMs or not. When he could confirm 100% that the others were GMs, then he could speak many things conveniently.

Seconds later, Galileo whispered something into Copernicus’s ear. Then, Copernicus suddenly opened his mouth and talked, "Little Feng-Ge’s correct. I can see it." He raised one arm, pointing at the road ahead of them. "There’s a big building not farther than one kilometer ahead of us."

Invincible Hero said, "What? Why I can't see it?" He squinted to observe as if he could really see further doing that.

"I’m good at Investigating Specialty. Under the circumstance that there’s no obstacle and a little of light, I can see farther than ordinary people," explained Copernicus.

Feng Bujue clapped his hands and made some sounds. "Good, the place you saw perhaps would create some FLAG." He said excitedly, "It’s like some cunning plots, which design the doors always on the right and hide the rewards behind a door on the left side."

"I hope so..." replied Copernicus. Anyway, it was unknown why his voice sounded dispirited.

Chapter 151: Attack of the Protagonist (3)

The actual situation was similar with the information that Copernicus had provided. Not farther than one kilometer ahead of them, there was actually a building. Moreover, it looked quite big.

That was a huge and solemn house. Standing behind the gate was a garden, and the distance between the gate leading to the garden and the wide road was around two meters. This house was the same with the sight along the way there. Even if they were standing 10 meters away from it, all they could see was still a pitch black area, just like the streetlight and the moonlight had been blocked by some hazy barrier that they couldn't lit up this territory.

When they approached the house, Feng Bujue took out his flashlight and turned it on. The others also took out their lighting devices. Most of them were using flashlights, and only Zen In Scary Dream was holding a kerosene lighter, yeah, that’s right, it’s the one he used to light up his cigarettes.

"Hey Zen-Ge, aren’t you afraid that the light will burn your hand when you walk faster?" Feng Bujue asked.

"Nope..." answered Zen In Scary Dream. From his tone, he was likely to say why he wasn’t afraid of it. However, when he had just uttered, his face slightly changed as if he suddenly realized what Feng Bujue said was reasonable. But, he had started it, so he had to finish it anyway. Then, roughly three seconds later, Zen In Scary Dream stammered. "Argh... I am not afraid!"

"Alright..." Feng Bujue smiled as he thought that this Zen-Ge was interesting. He decided not to play pranks on him anymore. "I have a suggestion. At the right time, you can drink a mouthful of wine and then spray it through the flame. It can expand the lighting area and perhaps it can make a certain degree of damage."

"Hey! Good idea!" answered Zen In Scary Dream.

"You should retrieve your lighter and just follow us... We are many here, without your small flame, we don't lack light anyway," said Galileo.

"Well, alright." Zen In Scary Dream took the chance and put his lighter away.

"Seems there's no doorbell..." Ye Zhi approached the iron gate that locked away the garden. As she was talking, she gently pushed the gate. Squeak. It opened.

When they finally took a look at the interior, most of the things behind the gate were reflected in their eyes, which helped them figure out that it wasn't a garden but a fenced wasteland.

There was a dried pool in the yard where a run-down fountain stood in the middle. Here and there, they could see some fruit trees with different height; obviously, they lacked care. Weeds had spread over the whole area. A strange, unpleasant smell permeated the garden.

Perhaps... This place used to be a garden that pleased people with fresh air. The lush shades of fruits tree, sweet aroma from flowers, and the relaxing sound of water flowing had once filled the place. But at this moment, this place looked exactly like the familiar Haunted House that usually appeared in horror games. When players had just entered the gate, the auras that had slapped their faces were the feelings of shriveling, pressure, and darkness.

"I think... we should let Invincible-Ge come first," said Copernicus, "just let the one who holds the Protagonist's Halo to pioneer; even if he encounters a sudden danger, he will still be okay."

'It seems like you know that there should be some danger not long after we've entered here...' Feng Bujue muttered in his mind.

"Ah... I have the same idea, too." Invincible Hero strode forward. Quite the contrary, he looked at ease. "Anyway, from the current

situation, I think we would meet some random wandering ghosts at most. I don’t think that there would be an instant fatal danger."

[The Protagonist's Halo has been transferred.]

[Player Ye Zhi is the current holder of the Protagonist’s Halo]

Right after Invincible Hero had finished, the system’s notification arose in their ears.

"Ah! Why’s that?" Invincible Hero was surprised.

"So, that’s how it works. If someone said something sincerely silly, the halo will be transferred..." Feng Bujue mumbled while rubbing his chin.

"Hey... you should know that I could clearly hear every word of yours. Can you not use those sharp words?" Invincible Hero showed that he was reluctant on talking with Feng Bujue.

"So, that’s the transferring condition of the Protagonist’s Halo?" Ye Zhi wondered.

"I think... Perhaps there are two mechanisms for this shifting stuff," Feng Bujue continued. "Invincible-Ge has lost the halo due to his behavior; it’s one of them." He licked his lips and explained, "And the other mechanism, 80% that the players who don’t have the halo can proactively take the Protagonist’s Halo through some specific behaviors."

"How to take it? Don’t tell me that it’s through speaking something purely stupid or some nonsense talk?" Invincible Hero was apparently quarreling with Feng Bujue.

Having heard that, Feng Bujue was dazed. "Yeah! Makes sense... Let me give it a try." He suddenly came in front of the team and presented a solemn face. "Let me take the mission of scouting the path..." He stood upright as if he was about to ‘transform’. Then, he used a cool-and-handsome tone to speak up something incomparably shameful. "Although the entire world sees me as an enemy and abandon me alone here, I will not hesitate using myself

to shield my friends!"

The other five were dumbstruck hearing him said so; they didn't even mock him for what he said as they just stood speechless at the spot. Zen In Scary Dream even had to take a sip from his bottle to calm down.

A few seconds later, unexpectedly...

[The Protagonist's Halo has been transferred.]

[Player Feng Bujue is the current holder of the Protagonist's Halo]

"Pffffff ——" Zen In Scary Dream spit out the wine he had just drunk.

Feng Bujue turned around with a contented face. "Well... a piece of cake."

"Seriously, it works like that!" Invincible Hero yelled, "Then, I just casually shout 'Coach, I wanna play basketball!', will it work that way too?"

"Of course not. You should have tears lingering on your eyes, kneel down in front of someone and cry until you hoarsen your voice. Also, your tears should roll down on time too. Then, it should meet the demand," said Feng Bujue.

"How could you come up with this request?"

"I just said the method I've used. Not sure if it's correct." Feng Bujue spread his arms. "Ah, besides, your script is just minor role's lines, I guess it wouldn't work."

"Cut if off... Just call it the stupid halo," Ye Zhi said. "If it's so, I will have no chance, and of course I'm not interested in fighting for the halo..."

"In fact, you can try..." Feng Bujue said, "For example, let's say...'On behalf of the moon, I will right wrongs...'"

"I'm warning you not to say nonsense things and expect me to repeat it," Ye Zhi directly interrupted him.

Feng Bujue smiled. "Well then... Zen-Ge, yeah, and the two pioneers in astrology, are you interested in this?"

"Don't look at me as the way I am now... I used to have face..." said Zen In Scary Dream.

"Ha ha... no thanks," said Copernicus.

Galileo sighed. "Well... Feng Bujue, I... well, controlling the Protagonist's Halo, only you are capable of doing so."

"In fact, I think it's simple," said Feng Bujue. "For example, I don't want it now, and I can..." He suddenly revealed an extremely despicable expression and smiled pervertedly. "I'm not morbid. Even if I am, I'm just a gentleman with a perverted reputation."

[The Protagonist's Halo has been transferred.]

[Player Invincible Hero is the current holder of the Protagonist's Halo.]

"We just need to say some lines..." Instantly, Feng Bujue recovered his calm visage. "We will lose the halo immediately. Anyway, I proactively create a FLAG to transfer the halo; it'd better than the system though."

"Da-Ge... don't be like that..." said Invincible Hero.

Feng Bujue totally ignored him and continued, "If I want it back..." He suddenly changed into an exhausted complexion, but there was a light of will power in his eyes. "Katsura, instead of thinking about how to die gloriously, let's think about how to survive gloriously!"

[The Protagonist's Halo has been transferred.]

[Player Feng Bujue is the current holder of the Protagonist's Halo]

"Have you played enough..." Ye Zhi facepalmed and shook her head; she would never understand the world of an otaku.

"Even the Protagonist's Halo is spoiled by you!" Invincible Hero said, "Behave! Can you leave now? No one wants to take it from

you!"

"Ah, then I should try my best... taking the responsibility of the main character." Feng Bujue changed his face even faster than people flipping pages from a book. He had only spent one second to recover his usual complexion as he walked into the place.

"From some aspects... This guy's dangerous..." Zen In Scary Dream blew out smoke rings as he muttered to Invincible Hero and Ye Zhi.

Soon, six silhouettes took turns crossing the garden gate, entering the big western mansion.

...

At the same time, at the mountain, inside the shrine.

In a corner of a room stood a pot. It was an ancient brown pot covered with spider webs. In this dark background, it wasn't eye-catching at all.

All of a sudden, a human hand jutted out from the pot.

After protruding through layers of dust and spider webs, that hand was still clean, just like it didn't come from inside a pot.

After that hand had come out, an arm followed naturally. However, the body parts from the shoulder onwards were stuck inside, unable to get even an inch out. It seemed that the pot was a space channel, but since its gate was too narrow, the owner of the arm couldn't get here safely.

"Tsk... too annoying," a deep and low male voice arose in the room filled with darkness.

Lay at another corner was an altar, and next to the altar was something shimmering, looking like a giant pupa. This pupa was around one meter tall, and the largest part at the middle of the object was even more than one meter. At this moment, a human face had protruded above the pupa, which had just uttered the

complaint.

"The transformation speed of the data fragments is reduced by such level..." Another voice had sounded in the room, also a male one, but it came from the beam in the ceiling. "Are you a level 3 Derivative?"

"You level 4 people do like to ask about things that are boring," said the man in the pupa. "Harrumph... You don't even know what 'boring' is."

"Can I help you with anything?" asked the level 4 Derivative sitting on the beam.

"Of course, yes," he answered, "you can try to help the players get the quests to pass this game and let them teleport before they can get here."

...

(Hanamichi says to his coach begging to join Shohoku team in manga Slam Dunk by Takehiko Inoue - TL)

(Sailor Moon's quote – TL)

(Quote from Kumakichi (lit. the lucky bear) of Gag Manga Biyori – TL)

(Gintama's quote – TL)

(Gintama's quote, especially in Kintama Arc – TL)

Chapter 152: Attack of the Protagonist (4)

The main door of the house had a common design with only one door, but this door was bigger than a normal door. Feng Bujue walked forward, held the knob and slightly pushed it. The thick door was moved.

Typical Japanese housing will have an entrance hall behind the main door, which leads to a corridor that prevents visitors from seeing the living room after walking through the main door. Quite the contrary, when entering a western house, visitors will see the large living room at the first glance.

All the structure, architecture, or even the design of the garden of this house had the strong taste of European style. Thus, Feng Bujue assumed that what awaited them behind the door was a spacious room.

However, what was waiting for them was a wall.

From the light of their flashlights, through the wide door, everybody could see the interior of the house. Standing five meters away from the door was a wall. There were dark winding corridors on both sides, elongated to both left and right directions, leading to some unknown places.

The entrance of this house was designed like the word (回), neither Japanese or European style. Basically, it wasn’t a logical design.

After Feng Bujue had pushed open the door, he stopped there and didn't walk forward. He seemed to be stunned, motionless, and speechless, as he just held up his flashlight. Invincible Hero looked over his shoulder and found that Feng Bujue’s flashlight was shining on the wall. Moreover, it hadn’t been moved for a while.

"Are you alright?" Ze Yhi looked at a side of Feng Bujue’s face, seeing him frown while thinking.

"I’ve seen this..." answered Feng Bujue with a soft tone. When he was talking, his focus didn't leave the wall.

Invincible Hero took a more careful look at the place his flashlight was illuminating. He saw a vague figure that could be a diagram of some magic formation.

"Da-Ge... don’t tell us that... you are a witch in reality..." said Invincible Hero.

"You have a rich imagination," Feng Bujue casually replied. "It should be more reasonable to deem me as a follower of some weird churches instead of being a witch..." Upon his words, his expression changed as a bright smile appeared on his face. "Alright, I remember it. Yeah, I saw it there." He turned to look at Invincible Hero. "Do you still remember the scenario when we first met?"

Invincible Hero mused then asked, "The haunted mansion near the pond in the mountain, right?"

"Yes," Feng Bujue answered with a smile, then spoke up with a strange tone. "The floor of that mansion’s attic has a formation that looks exactly like the one in front of us. Ah... also, in that scenario, the source of the illusions that happened in the house is from that magic formation."

When he finished, and before everybody else could react, a gray ghost appeared at the narrow corner behind the door together with a mournful screech that could pierce people’s ears. A dark, gloomy, and scary face suddenly zoomed to them. It raised its right arm and aimed for Feng Bujue’s throat.

It was no big deal to Feng Bujue who stood in the front, but the other five behind him jumped in fear.

What’s so-called classic will never be démodé. This jump scare is one of the scary tricks that it will never be missed in games or horror movies. No matter how many times it’s taken place, it works every bit of it.

The details of the plot are just the long run before the jump to leave space and time for the audience to imagine, which successfully and slowly implants the psychological hints. Ultimately, it was all for the outburst at some moment.

As for this sudden jump, it’s the simplest yet most direct trick to scare people. Showing up at a random moment without any prior signs could always create a certain effect.

At this moment, except for Feng Bujue, the Fear Value of the other five was running like a roller coaster taking a turn. This made their hearts beat frantically before gradually recovering the normal pace. Such a feeling Feng Bujue hadn’t had for really long...

One second later, Feng Bujue used one hand to grab the ghost’s incoming arm. As he had the Casey Jones’ Mask, even if his fighting skill was bad, he got grade D for Fighting Specialty and he could still parry such a level of attack.

The monster’s hideous ghost face was just inches away from Feng Bujue. It didn't have eyebrows, and he couldn't tell which was the iris and which was the pupil, even its sockets weren’t really clear. The monster got a pair of eyes that looked like two round eyes shimmering with white light. Even when one of its arms was captured, the monster didn’t panick. Quite the contrary, it gave him a dark, sinister sneer.

It happened faster than just talking. The other arm of the monster swung like lightning. Five fingers that looked like dried tree branches pierced directly into Feng Bujue’s eyes. This strike had an unimaginable speed that one basically couldn't dodge.

Invincible Hero, the one who stood nearest to him, was about to help him out, but it was unknown why he immediately saw an intangible dark air current that prevented his body from moving, right when he had just lifted his hand. Whenever he wanted to concentrate and use force to move, that feeling of heavy oppression would appear again and again, making him exhausted

and dizzy.

The others also couldn't help. Absolutely, they had suffered from the same effects.

The monster in front of them, the other monsters hiding in the house or even the house and the formation on the wall could be the cause of these strange effects. In short, this attack towards the player who had opened the door was an ‘instant Death FLAG’. If it had been a player who didn't have the Protagonist’s Halo, everybody else could only watch their teammate die instantly.

At that moment, everybody had experienced the power of the Protagonist’s Halo for the first time.

An attack that aimed for Feng Bujue, who couldn't defend himself, had missed...

The monster seemed not to understand what was going on. From its aspect, it had clearly aimed at the target, but in fact, it just hit the void.

"It works..." Feng Bujue glared at the hand that was like sharp knife crossing his cheek, feeling an icy cold wind sweep over his skin. All this time, however, his countenance didn’t change in the slightest.

One second later, he calmly retrieved the flashlight and spent 2% of his Survival Value to take out the [Death Poker] as he thought, ‘Hmm... this one looks strong; I will try four aces...’ The cards didn't fly out but formed a fan in his hand.

As the monster saw the Death Poker, it understood that a bad situation was about to occur. It then tried to run away, but one of its arms was firmly grabbed, disabling it from escaping Feng Bujue’s grip.

The tips of the cards flashed together as Feng Bujue swung his arm horizontally, leaving a magnificent ray in midair just like what he was holding weren’t cards but sharp blades. Cuts appeared

at the places on the monster's body where the cards swept over. Blood didn't gush out from the cuts, but instead black dense smoke.

Although this dense black smoke was air, it was oozing down like a stream of water and wasn't flying up or diffusing...

Chapter 153: Attack of the Protagonist (5)

The Death Poker was a kind of consumable item used for far-range attack. Although Feng Bujue was using it as a close combat weapon, after they had hit the target, all the four cards in his hand still disappeared. The energy used to generate the cards had transferred into physical damage. After the system determined those damage, its physical form was lifted.

And, just look at the monster. After the dense black smoke flowed out from the cuts, the monster's body was shriveled, just like it only had the skin bag that carried nothing like bones, blood or flesh inside. Its body was only stuffed with the foggy black smoke. When the dark smoke gushed out, it soon turned into an empty skin bag and fell on the ground.

Feng Bujue loosened his grip on the monster's arm as he saw that it turned into a wrinkled skin layer. He didn't retrieve the Death Poker but instead manipulated another card which dashed to the dense black smoke puddling like a boggy swamp on the floor.

The result was... almost nothing. The Death Poker seemed like it had directly hit the ground through the intangible black smoke, unable to damage the smoke in the slightest.

At this moment, Feng Bujue's teammates were released from the stiff restraint that kept them away from helping him. Anyway, the monster was killed, so they didn't have a room to perform now.

"Feng-Ge, the monster didn't control you, did it?" asked Invincible Hero.

Feng Bujue was still observing the black smoke on the ground. He absent-mindedly replied, "No," he paused for one second and continued, "you guys were under some kind of restraint that made you immobile?"

"Currently unknown," answered Zen In Scary Dream, "if we

didn’t care, it was okay; but if we wanted to walk over and help you, our bodies didn’t listen to us."

"According to the setting, it would be a relatively strong spirit attack..." Ye Zhi mused, then talked to Feng Bujue, "Perhaps, it’s because you have the Protagonist’s Halo that kept you away from the effects?"

"I don't think so," answered Feng Bujue. "When the system introduced the Protagonist’s Halo, it just said that the halo would ‘stop’ the situation where the holder should be instantly dead. This situation could kill the holder when his or her Survival Value is 100%; or, it could cause a slight damage when the Survival Value is just 1%." He was walking further into the house while talking. Several steps ahead of Feng Bujue, that black smoke started to ooze slowly, going deeper into the house. "The Protagonist’s Halo will forcefully stop my death, but it won’t make me immune to every side effects. If I wouldn't be affected mentally or my Survival Value wouldn't decline, this sort of buff should be called ‘The Invincible Halo’ then."

When Feng Bujue was still talking, he had followed the black smoke to the wall. "In simple words, I will shed blood and got hit like you guys, but I won’t die.

"Currently, the first strike of that monster wasn’t a fatal hit as both of its speed and power were just the standard of poor soldiers. If I didn't parry and got hit, my Survival Value would still be affected. Of course, what happened was that I had caught the attack. And, the strike that came close right after the first one from the monster was evidently an instant fatal one. Anyway, I haven’t clearly seen it, and I wasn’t confident that I could dodge it with my own ability. If I got hit, I’m definitely dead. Thus, facing the instant fatal strike that could pierce through my head, the Protagonist’s Halo would work and make that monster miss its target."

The black smoke had reached the wall, then it started to fly up

just like some kind of liquid absorbed into the magic formation drawn on the wall.

"So why weren’t you affected by that monster’s spirit restraint? You could resist and even kill it," asked Ye Zhi.

"Before asking me this question..." Feng Bujue studied the magic formation, not even turning his back while replying. "Why don’t you put yourself in that situation and think... At that moment, besides the Protagonist’s Halo, what kind of other conditions that could save me from the same effects you guys were bearing?"

As Ye Zhi heard that, she mused for a few seconds. "Stay on the spot? Spiritual Specialty?" After she had spoken these two assumptions, her face changed as she suddenly realized something. "You caught the monster’s arm?"

"To be exact..." Feng Bujue answered, "Maintaining the direct physical contact."

"Oh, that’s it. If we touched the monster’s body, we wouldn't be affected by its spirit oppression, is it true?" said Invincible Hero.

"True, but not true," answered Feng Bujue.

"Kiddo, don’t try to be mysterious, okay?" said Invincible Hero irritatedly.

"Personally, I think that the kind you are talking about, which restrained your bodies, is a skill that can control the crowd and affect many people at the same time," said Feng Bujue. "And, the reason why I was immune from that skill could be because I was grabbing one of the monster’s arm." He rubbed his nose as though it was his old habit. "But I don't think that that monster was the one who performed this skill."

Feng Bujue retrieved his Death Poker and took out the Robots Must Die from his bag. He continued speaking while using the blade to scratch the wall. "When that monster appeared, you guys instinctively retreated one step to several steps differently, which

spoke of the fact that you were still able to move at that time."

Invincible Hero intervened him, "I do want to ask you about this... A fierce devil suddenly hissed and emerged from the dark, but you neither backed off nor shivered. Are you still a human?"

"I have big guts," Feng Bujue toned it down, gave him a simple reply and continued, "when I grabbed the first strike of the monster, with your capacities and mentalities, I think you were surely able to help me, but you couldn’t do that. In other words, you were under the effect right after I caught the monster’s arm."

"Yes, it happened at that moment," Zen In Scary Dream confirmed resolutely.

"Yeah, then we can think about it from another angle..." said Feng Bujue. "If the monster was the one releasing that skill, why didn't it use that skill immediately right when it had just appeared? Then, it could wait until all the enemies got oppressed and couldn't move to launch its attack again. Why didn't it do that?"

"You meant there’s something else..." Invincible Hero said then his face became tense again as he shone his flashlight on the pitch black corridors on both sides.

"In fact, the answer is right in front of us." When Feng Bujue said this, he had done scratching the magic formation in front of him.

The whole mansion and the garden outside vanished into thin air at this moment. Everything around them became a charred wilderness, leaving only the lone wall standing in front of Feng Bujue.

The shriveled wrinkled skin monster now appeared in its original form. It seemed to be a dead body of some kind of domestic cattle. This kind of animal was hard to identify since its skin had been stretched to form the human shape, just like a slice of bread being put into a mold.

"This magic formation had used a summon skill first," Feng Bujue said, "and after it was done with that skill, it then used the oppressing skill to control us." He put away his sword. "This order couldn't be changed. First, it summoned a monster that could kill us, then it used the skill to restrain our mobility. It worked that way." He added, "In summary... that controlling skill needs to be maintained all the time and couldn't be used for a long time."

"You are saying that this formation is a monster with rationality?" asked Invincible Hero.

"I think that the nature of the ‘Aggrieved Well’ in this scenario is similar to this formation’s," Feng Bujue said. "Of course, it should be much stronger than this one." He turned around and walked towards the road. "Besides the small town, in the area of several miles around here, not to mention the farms, there’s nothing like a building. Such a big mansion with garden appearing in a place which should be a paddy field is somehow inexplicable." After he had walked pass them, the other five exchanged looks and then followed him.

"Several meters behind the door was a wall, which made me think that those were all illusions," said Feng Bujue. "Even if it was a building in a ghostly scenario, the entrance shouldn't be presented like that. When I saw the magic formation drawn on the wall, and I recalled the effects of the same type of formation, I understood that since this area has nothing else, it could make such a level of illusion." He raised one arm and pointed backwards. "If this formation wasn’t drawn on a collapsed wall but in a real Yokan House..."

"Then the illusion it could generate would be as vast as a maze..." Invincible Hero continued what Feng Bujue was saying. The horror memory about the Usher’s House gradually emerged in his head.

"The complexity of the surroundings decides the complexity of the illusion that it could create," Feng Bujue said, "with just one

wall, making things like this is its extreme level. It’s impossible for this paddy field to assist creating the rooms, furniture, different floors or basement, etc."

From the beginning up to now, Copernicus and Galileo hadn’t said anything, just observing the others’ moves. Their faces changed several times, as they were constantly exchanging looks and some short of whispers.

At this moment, Galileo spoke up his matter, well, his matter wasn’t different from induction. "Hey... little Feng-Ge, you say... in the mountain which has the Main Quest, will it have such formations like this?"

"You can tell me directly that nothing’s there and everything’s done..." Feng Bujue only diverted himself from loneliness, but his expression was still tranquil. "Ah... I think you want to ask me... Why we haven’t heard the notification about the Side Quest and even when we have killed the monster and dissolved the formation, we haven’t received any related rewards."

"Oh yeah, why’s that?" Zen In Scary Dream lit up another cigarette.

"Assuming that this kind of formations, which has the rationality to use different skills, is our main enemy in this scenario and the Main Quest has taken place at the mountain where there are thousands of magic formations like this. Most of them will have the same strength, but the strongest one should be drawn at the bottom of the Aggrieved Well," said Feng Bujue. "So... the formation we had just finished may just be considered ‘additional’ since we wouldn't meet it if we had followed the normal route to finish the scenario."

"So?" asked Invincible Hero.

Ye Zhi continued him when Feng Bujue hadn’t answered yet. "So... this behavior of breaking this magic formation is a reward itself."

Chapter 154: Attack of the Protagonist (6)

Inside the abandoned shrine, the color of the pupa had changed from white to light yellow. Then, it gradually got darker until it was as brown as a scab.

After the change in color had stopped, several minutes later, the pupa cracked into thousands of nail-sized pieces, scattering on the ground. When those pieces were falling, they did it so neatly that none of them had fallen on the man’s body inside the pupa.

This male Level 3 Derivative looked slightly older than thirty years old with tender facial contours. His hair divided at the middle, which made him look like more of a gentleman. However, he was wearing the newbie costume.

After he got out of the pupa, he didn’t change his countenance but started to stretch out. At this moment, the man didn’t have his right arm. There was a flat cut at his shoulder where his right arm should have been connected to the body. The cut wasn't a mess of blood and flesh, but a flat, shimmering surface. With a closer look, one could see many tiny data fragments moving there.

"Tsk... still the same..." he muttered annoyedly while walking to one corner of the room and picking up the china pot on the ground.

His right arm couldn't connect with the other data of his body’s compositions whenever he entered a scenario. Thus, he had to wait until his body finished materializing to find the arm and connect it.

Inside the pot was a narrow space slit, similar to players' bags. Anyway, after the arm got out from it, this space would disappear. The right arm of this Derivative was like personal luggage that he couldn't bring along or destroy. Whenever he arrived at a scenario, it always entered in its physical form from a space crack.

He took out the arm from the pot and assembled it on his shoulder. When the two shimmering planes connected, the whole section on the Derivative's right shoulder was twisted. Under the circumstance that there was no physical impact, the wall adjacent to him suddenly concaved, and the surface of it bobbed irregularly.

When the connecting was finished, he swung his arm to test it. Then he looked at his right arm while pondering, "It's been many times already... but the connection hasn't shortened even for one second..." However, he could still sense the location of the arm before he could find it. And, once he found it, he could immediately know how long it would take to connect this group of data to his body.

In short, it took a short while until this Level 3 Derivative could recover 100% of his fighting capacity. Currently, this arm looked like it grew from his body but he actually had no way to utilize its full force.

"It hurts..."

"So much pain..."

"Help me..."

Suddenly, whining and groaning echoed constantly in the Derivative's ears. He frowned and stooped down to look. It was unknown when scary, bloody ghosts had filled the room.

Those ghosts on the ground had pierced through the wall to get there. They looked like dying persons sinking deep in a boggy swamp. Some of them had their heads emerging from the surface, while the others had half of their bodies protruding. The pale faces of those ghosts were covered with tangled hair accompanied with dark sockets that didn't even have a single eyeball. They had their mouths wide open with stretching arms just like drowning victims trying to grab something to survive... The whines and groans from the ghosts weren't loud, which was similar to someone wriggling in pain and crying for help. Anyway, that's how it could touch

people’s hearts. At this moment, the floor inside the room was filled with shadows of these ghosts. Soon, the Derivative had no room to put his feet. The ghosts then extended their arms to grab him. Some caught him by his ankles, while other protruding bodies were holding his shirt.

"The BOSS of this scenario uses illusion, does it..." His eyes suddenly glowed as a faint light appeared in his pupils. "Well... seems very cunning too..."

One second later, he slightly flexed his knees and jumped up. This casual jump had helped him get rid of the ghosts. He then made a half-circle turn in midair and landed on the beam.

One grey ghost that looked similar to the one Feng Bujue had encountered also got on the beam. Anyway, the ghost was blown off by just a punch from the Derivative, as it hadn’t had a chance to do anything.

Level 3 Derivatives could use a strange sight different from players' to see the world in scenarios. They could convert the view in front of their eyes into semi-data, a semi-physical state. Moreover, they could use perception in a certain range. Thus, illusions were useless to them, as it couldn't give them a dangerous threat as much as that of speed and power.

"Strange...That Level 4 hasn’t solved the BOSS yet?" He thought while slightly lifting his leg, kicking. A large hole appeared on the roof of the shrine, big enough for the person inside to jump out.

When he got on the roof of the room, he was dazed by the moonlight. Of course, to the Derivatives, the light was an auxiliary aid to support their sight. Even in that pitch-dark room, he could still see things very clearly.

There was a dried well in the shrine’s yard.

At this moment, the head of that Level 4 Derivative was put on the edge of the well.

"What kind of joke..." je mumbled. His body slightly moved then dashed forward, his whole body descending from midair before landing firmly on his feet.

He came to that head and said, "What happened?" It seemed he knew that the head was still able to communicate with him.

"I... went... to... the... other... world..." the head spoke up like a broken radio.

Although Level 4 Derivatives were the weakest among the Derivatives, usually, their fighting competencies wouldn't be less than the BOSS in the scenarios (not any world was suitable for the Derivative to enter; e.g., the Thunderbolt world would never have a Derivative). The current situation was extremely unusual.

"I'm... done... Fragment... data..." He couldn't make a full sentence anymore. "It... put me... here... for... you..." Upon his words, a dark and cold ghost claw extending from the well grabbed the head and pulled it down into the well.

This was also the first time this Level 3 Derivative had encountered this situation. He immediately started the logical analyzing process in his head. First, he checked the location of the players and GMs. They were still on the way to the mountain. Apparently, this situation wasn't related to them. Then, he started to connect to the BOSS data (Level 3 Derivatives could control a BOSS with low artificial intelligence; that's why X-23 could control the mutant Dr. Ashford), but he failed.

"If you haven't gotten it yet, I will tell you once in person." A vigorous but distant voice arose from the well. "I've put his head here to make you more clever to know that you shouldn't be my enemy."

Chapter 155: Attack of the Protagonist (7)

"Huh? A temporary group of data in a scenario dares to talk to me like that..." He wore suspicions on his face. "Looks like I'm underestimated... You're one of the henchmen of the 'Tetrad of Outliers,' perhaps?" He shook his head. "But you seem not to understand the rules... Even the ones who are almost as strong as the other four among you guys, when they meet me, K3 – Hematite, they don't dare to use that tone with me."

Seconds later, the voice resounded from the dried well. "I've never heard of your name. I don't even know what you are and what you're talking about." It paused then continued, "I'm Vahiru, servant of the Dark Abyss Benighted King. Someone of your kind wanted to destroy the 'Major Formation' inside the Aggrieved Well. I've killed him. And if you want to follow his steps..."

"Turns out you're just a relatively strong watchdog," intervened K3. "I thought that you were a creature with a high position. Turns out you don't even know the other three of the 'Four Divine Pillars.' Well, temporary data are just temporary data..."

K3 was walking forward while speaking. He unscrupulously stepped on the wall of the Aggrieved Well. "[The Lord of Time] is in charge of the Long River of Order; [The Lord of Demons] reigns over the Chaotic Scorching Earth; [Dark Abyss Benighted King] rules the Kingdom of the Dead Souls; [The Court of Veracity] adjudges all realms of the good and the evil." He stooped down, looking at the inside of the well. From the visual data, he could see the overall 'Major Formation' at the bottom of the well. He could even observe and measure a part of the 'Other World'.

Then, K3 continued, "And you... What are you? A guard watching the back door of the Kingdom of the Dead Souls?"

Vahiru didn't reply to K3's provocation because he had turned his hostility directly into action. One second later, the well

suddenly generated an invisible suction force like a whirlpool that one couldn't resist, drawing K3 down to the bottom.

This power seemed not to affect the other general things in the surrounding. Even a dried leaf or a shriveled grass wasn’t affected. Only the body of K3 was held and dragged by an incomparably massive force into the well.

"Seems you understand your capacity well. In this world, you are not my match." K3’s upper body was already in the well while both of his hands were clutching on the edge of the well. It looked like he was still able to hold on for a while. "No wonder why that Level 4 had to die... Turns out like this." Murderous intent that he couldn't hold flashed in his eyes. "Harrumph... Interesting. I’m going to play with you as you wish."

K3 let go of his grip and headed down like a fish rapidly diving to the bottom of the well. Right when he touched the bed, a strange light flashed as his body was crossing through a partition made from data, entering another world.

...

Six players... Ah, no, now we can consider them four players and two GMs. By the way, at this moment, these six people didn't know anything about the dispute between Level 3 Derivative K3 – Hematite and BOSS Vahiru of the scenario.

The two GMs could track down the Derivative's location from their special menu. They had something like the ‘Derivative Radar’. When the target came into a certain range, they could recognize it. Of course, besides the coordinates, other information such as level, capacity, appearance, etc., were things they couldn't collect beforehand.

Thus, Copernicus and Galileo were bewildered at the moment... Not long after the scenario had begun, they had found a Derivative, but the signal disappeared after a short while... Roughly ten minutes later, they had found the signal one more

time, but it then dissipated again.

They didn't know that there were two Derivatives in this scenario, or what was happening on the mountain. According to their usual GM's train of thought, the Level 4 Derivative in this scenario seemed to be able to cover itself from the GM's radar. It was unknown why it had turned off the cover function, showed itself twice for a short moment, and then had hidden once again.

"Are you considering some sort of secret you don’t want others to know?" Feng Bujue’s voice arose and interrupted their thought, also startling them.

Currently, they were walking on the worn out path in the mountain. Copernicus and Galileo were at the end of the line while Feng Bujue was taking the lead. The latter suddenly stopped, shined his flashlight on them, and inexplicably said something.

"Eh... What... What’s up?" Copernicus stammered a reply.

"Ha ha... You... What are you saying? Don’t joke," answered Galileo with a forced smile. In fact, he was mumbling inside, "No way... Is this kid that supremely clever in his schemes? Are we exposed now?"

"He meant, you two are players specialized in Investigating but why are you walking behind all of us?" said Ye Zhi.

"Eh?" Copernicus was dumbfounded. "Ah... ah, yeah, yeah... I’m sorry. I was distracted..." He smiled embarrassedly and walked forward.

It was nonsense talking about their Investigating Specialty. In fact, GMs just happened to know the locations of FLAGs in the scenario. And, about their titles, GM's titles were all set. They would neither be changed nor give them any skills. Of course, they didn't need skills granted from their title either. GM’s skills were abundant with many passive and proactive skills. Their characters’ physical attributes were much better than the normal players at

the same level, and they had items and equipment that other players could only see in their dreams. For example:

[Name: Sword of the Game Master level 18]

[Type: Weapon]

[Quality: Normal]

[Attack Power: Relatively Strong]

[Attributes: None]

[Special Effects: can cause triple damage hitting the target.]

[Equipment Conditions: Exclusively for Game Masters]

[Remarks: This item can’t be thrown away, destroyed or traded. There’s no way to show the properties of this item to ordinary players.]

The short description of the item wasn't complicated, but the effects could scare people to death.

Pan Feng and Hua Xiong had mentioned before that the actual competence of a GM was ten times higher than his level. In other words, besides the skill in playing games, Copernicus' and Galileo's competencies were equivalent to players at level 28. Moreover, they knew more information about the scenario that only GMs could check.

Such things like title were just drifting clouds to them. A GM’s title was somehow moderate. Names like ‘Fighting Killing Fist,' ‘The Omen's Descendant,' and ‘The Invincible Iron Fist,' even if they wanted to use them, their managers wouldn't allow it.

Usually, GMs would disguise themselves as players who were training their Investigating Specialty. That’s how they explained the source of the information they got, and they could timely protect the ordinary players since pioneers always took the lead. GMs then could deal with negative FLAGs or prevent the Derivatives from attacking players. This was to prevent players’

unnecessary deaths.

"Don’t be nervous. There’s nothing to be afraid of, keep your spirit up," Invincible Hero said with an encouraging tone because he thought that the other two were scared so they couldn't concentrate.

He didn't think that his unintentional planting tree had caused...

[The Protagonist’s Halo has been transferred.]

[Player Invincible Hero is the current holder of the Protagonist’s Halo.]

Chapter 156: Attack of the Protagonist (8)

"Eh? That also works..." Invincible Hero was surprised.

"Good. Now we've just tested another FLAG to change the holder of the halo," Feng Bujue mused. "Anyway, this method doesn't seem practical..."

"It's only that to you," Ye Zhi looked at Feng Bujue with despising eyes. "I think it's much better than your stupid speeches."

Hearing that, Feng Bujue just spread his arm, shrugged and didn't give any comment.

Copernicus and Galileo immediately walked to the front of the line to lead the way. They were a little bit distracted because of the unusual whereabouts of the Derivative. Thanks to Feng Bujue, they got the chance to go to the front of the team to pioneer.

GMs knew how to pass the scenario and the locations of FLAGs. At this point, Feng Bujue's [Planned Victory From Thousand Miles Away] couldn't compete. When he had used the skill from his title, he had seen the BOSS of this scenario was the Aggrieved Well. It was because by the time he had observed this, Vahiru was in the other world that he couldn't track him down.

If there were no Derivative in this scenario and players had wanted to face the real BOSS, they would have had to satisfy some special conditions, and the way to clear the scenario didn't require them to encounter Vahiru.

From the GM's menu, they could see there were four 'Seizing Soul Formations'; three scattered in the mountain and the major one was in the Aggrieved Well. According to the usual route, when players entered the mountain, they would see a normal Seizing Soul Formation. If they could survive the hallucination and destroy the formation, they would trigger the Main Quest, and the system would notify them that they just needed to destroy all four

magic formations to seal the Aggrieved Well.

Then, players would only need to deal with three normal formations and one major formation to clear the scenario. Of course, the magic formation in the well would be more difficult to solve. No matter what, Vahiru would definitely not appear on this route.

After having entered the scenario, Feng Bujue’s team had walked the other way around, which was not different from finding a hidden reward. As they had followed that road, they found a Seizing Soul Formation drawn on a collapsed wall outside the mountain. Although destroying this formation didn't cause any FLAG, in fact, this could be added to the number of magic formations the Main Quest requested them to destroy. In other words, after they were done with this formation, when they got into the mountain and destroyed another one, it would update their Main Quest, and the progress would be 2/4 already. This meant players who had passed the test in the mansion didn’t need to deal with the major formation at the bottom of the Aggrieved Well since they just needed to solve four normal Seizing Soul Formations to finish the scenario.

The two said routes included one way to complete the scenario without thinking much and one way involving solving simple riddles. The first one was not very difficult, but they needed to fight more, which was more annoying.

Of course, there was the third route, which even GMs didn't want to take, the simplest and rudest. It was that they would regard nothing, just ignore all the illusions and FLAGs in the mountain, and kill everything along their way to the shrine. When they got to the shrine, they would just jump into the well, enter the other world and finish Vahiru.

Such kind of route, perhaps a team of six strong players from the same Studio could accomplish. Or, under the case that there were no Derivative and other dangers on the way to disturb them, the

two GMs could directly jump into the well and risk their lives with the real BOSS. It would do, though. However, to ordinary players, using force to finish a scenario like that was an impossible task. Now, if they were running on the simplest route to finishing the scenario, but since the Derivative appeared and reappeared elusively, it had changed Copernicus and Galileo's original plan. Right from the start, they had underestimated the players' competencies that they didn't want to make things more complicated. They just wanted to take these people to the mountain using the normal route to destroy the four formations, and then make them leave. Anyway, now they had a chance to finish the scenario that didn't require going to the peak of the mountain. They should seize it and bring those visitors out of here.

After the six of them had been walking for a while, Galileo then deviated from the original path, leading the team from the mountain to the adjacent woods.

Feng Bujue, who was still watching these two's moves, didn't have any comment. Only Ye Zhi asked something, which the two dear brothers 'specialized in Investigating Specialty' had echoed one another to explain, although their answers were just perfunctory.

Unwittingly, it was twenty minutes since they had entered the mountain. The vague forest with the unchanged slope gradually gave people some kind of mental depression and fatigue.

"This forest doesn't have a boundary," Galileo spoke up like he was trying to explain something. "I think this whole mountain is going to enter a strange state, turning into a peculiar space on the night of October 31st."

The information Feng Bujue got from his words was succinct in three words: please be patient.

"What if we don't take seven or eight turns but walk straight up the slope? Wouldn't we get to the peak that way?" added Invincible

Hero.

"Too naïve," said Feng Bujue, "he said ‘no boundary’ already... You can throw away your concept of direction. The reason why you think we’re walking around is because of the slope." He turned his head. "So... let’s imagine this. We’re walking on flat ground, but all the trees grown on this ground are thriving in a skewed angle. And, the gravity applied to us is also at a skewed angle. Then you will have the feeling that this place is a mountain slope."

"Umm..." Invincible Hero couldn't picture that.

"Besides, peculiar space means the actual area of this mountain can be infinite," continued Feng Bujue. "In such places like this, it’s 80% or 90% that people will be trapped holding the hope of ‘walking consistently towards one direction can lead to the outside’." He gestured ‘infinite' in the air with his arms. "If the end and start points of this place are connected with each other, this place will become an endless circle without an exit. Thus, ‘getting out of here’ doesn’t exist. Only if we can break the peculiar space can we find the way out. Anyway, from our situation, this should be another circumstance."

The two GMs all turned around to look at Feng Bujue. Their eyes showed that Feng Bujue was correct.

"Current situation?" Ye Zhi asked suspiciously, "Please advise?"

"Never seen a repeat scene," Zen In Scary Dream suddenly opened his mouth and threw out one brief sentence with more meanings. Moreover, it hit the nail on the head.

"Haha! Awesome. Seems there’s someone who got it clearly," Feng Bujue smiled.

"I’m flattered. You too, man," Zen In Scary Dream said then took another sip from his bottle. This man was more reliable than he looked.

Feng Bujue continued, "From the beginning, have you seen

something that you've met before or even your own footprints?"

"Argh... Nothing, indeed," said Invincible Hero. "Anyway, this mountain looks really big. It couldn't prove anything."

Galileo turned around to explain for Feng Bujue, "Actually, the space we saw when we were outside the mountain and the space we are in now are two different spaces... Just like—"

Before he had finished, Copernicus suddenly raised his hand and signalled ahead. He then sighed and lowered his voice as he spoke, "Something's there..."

Chapter 157: Attack of the Protagonist (9)

The Kingdom of the Dead Souls was a lost, borderless area.

Although the desert here was so vast, it didn't have even a handful of yellow sand. Zooming over there, an ash-grey hue covered the whole area.

The dead would turn into dust, and that dust had accumulated here to form thousands of miles of desolate gray desert.

There was no day and night to separate time. The sky forever had a dim ash-gray color while a black fireball was hovering in midair, shining its 'dark light' to illuminate this world. That black moon represented the Dark Abyss Benighted King. Wherever the dark light shone, it was his territory. The souls oppressed by that dark light were his people.

At this moment, the sand was still wild and mad as usual. A demonic song reverberated somewhere, rising together with the bursting sandstorm. In the middle of the mournful howl, a round space crack appeared, and then a silhouette jumped out from it.

K3 – Hematite descended just like a rocket hitting the desert, causing a really loud noise. Waves of sand rippled violently while murderous intentions were spreading out, enveloping the sandy area.

"Show yourself." K3 smiled coldly. "Even if you've regretted letting me come here, it's too late."

To K3, what could restrain his powers was the difficulty level of the scenarios. Vahira assumed that he would take the upper hand in the other world, which turned out to be an obvious mistake. It might be his powers could surpass a Level 4 Derivative in this place, but this Level 3 Derivative could still maintain his strong powers here as he had a bigger space to perform.

Bloody clouds rolled in as the black moon paled. The gloomy

song howling along with the wind also ceased. In just a blink, a black smoke plunged down from the air, which then condensed to form the body of Vahiru.

His true form was an old man with a purple face. He had blade-like eyebrows arched above a pair of eyes as bright as stars. His beard was long enough to reach his chest. The old man was wearing a long black robe. With the same appearance, if he were an upright person, it shouldn't be much to use ‘immortal manners – Dao's bones' to describe him. However, there was a demonic, sinister aura emitted from Vahiru’s body. After taking one glance at him, people would shiver without feeling cold.

The strange wind had to quiet down, and the devil souls were forced to stay away.

The surroundings suddenly became completely tranquil. It was as if everything was waiting and watching for Vahiru’s next move.

"I can see... I can hear your arrogance," said Vahiru. "I also feel that you are very strong, but those things will not shake my fighting spirit."

"Talking about watchdogs." K3 was still deliberate. Even though his right arm could only perform 50% of his real strength at the moment, he had the absolute confidence in his victory. "You seem not bad, either."

Being a Derivative, moreover, a Level 3 Derivative, he understood the order and rules of Thriller Paradise more than a BOSS in the scenario.

Speaking of analyzing skill in fighting, apparently, he could be more objective and specific.

If we have to make a comparison, Vahiru was really strong in the Dead Souls Kingdom. He was much stronger than Rainsford that Feng Bujue had met in the Hunter’s Island, but if compared him with the higher-level monster Satsuma Diehl, he was a little

weaker.

If they came to the world of the Sakura Town, Vahiru would be limited and weakened. If they had to fight, two GMs in good condition would have a relatively big chance of killing him.

As for K3 – Hematite, if they were in Sakura Town, his powers weren't much different from the combined competence of the two GMs, even slightly stronger. When he came to the Dead Souls Kingdom, the restraint he had on data was reduced accordingly; thus, when a person's limit was extended, he was still stronger than Vahiru.

"The one who wants to destroy the Soul Seizing Formations... Savage!" Vahiru shouted and swayed his body, turning into a shadow which glided to K3 in a flash.

The battle began. Vehement murderous aura rose fiercely.

Vahiru launched a killing strike in an attempt to take the upper hand. K3 stepped on the dust of bones; his arms shook both the Earth and firmament. He stood still, gently pushing the other's ghost claw aside. The two of them passed each other, and Vahiru's attack was dissolved just like that.

Of course, Vahiru just wanted to probe the opponent with this strike. Facing a strong opponent, he didn't dare to use all his strength recklessly to prevent himself from revealing flaws that could lead to his defeat.

Vahiru turned around and grunted loudly. A black smoke gathered behind his back as the murderous aura torrentially rolled out, turning into a tangible force striking toward K3's back.

"Long-range attack now?" K3 indifferently turned around. "Such a showy technique. Well, maybe it could threaten the players a bit..." He immediately raised his right arm and unfolded his hand. Scarlet light bloomed out.

Facing the furious momentum of the black wave, he was using a

red power, which was much stronger to counter. Use hard strike to resist hard strike. During the collision of the two forces, a loud sound echoed like a giant bronze bell being hit in the middle of the barrens.

The noise faded and the firmament discolored. Until the ash-gray dust settled again, the two silhouettes still stood firm. No one shed a hair. However, such a probing battle to test their levels using these strikes, the two of them could make it for three days and three nights like they said in chivalrous novels, which would only end when one of them had to answer the call of nature.

"Temporary data, how pathetic you are! Even if you can survive now, when the scenario ends, you will vanish." K3 sighed as his tone was full of sorrow. "In countless scenarios, the system can always generate countless ‘you’. You will be killed by numerous players, or you can kill them... But none of them have meaning. To you, death is the end. But to them, death means returning."

"I don’t know what you are talking about..." said Vahiru.

"Indeed, you find it hard to understand, but the most sorrowful thing is, even if you could understand it, you couldn’t change anything," K3 said. "Only the data which have a higher position approaches ‘the unique’ can ‘live’ long stage. Although they can avoid the fate of vanishing at least, they have more time to memorize. In this space, their death will also become an epic."

K3 sighed. "And you... don’t waste my time. Be content with your lot. Just go and fulfill the system’s condition to teleport players." Sharp murderous aura burst out from K3’s eyes. "I’m just one step away from Level 2; I can’t tolerate even half of a mistake. I will absolutely not let a group of temporary data like you do something wrong!"

...

"... Is that... human?" Invincible Hero asked with a low tone. He looked at the direction in the woods which Copernicus was gazing

at and saw a group of people ambling towards them.

"Perhaps it’s just an illusion..." answered Copernicus.

"Oh... They’re an illusion, not monsters." Feng Bujue thought that his urge to curse this GM was surging more and more. The others hadn't come near yet, and with rational logic, they would believe that those were monsters. But this man told them that the others weren’t real entities.

"Should we hide?" Ye Zhi still considered things with common logic and provided a reliable suggestion. She spoke up while covering her flashlight.

"Hey, should we hide?" Feng Bujue determinedly turned to Galileo and asked with an impatient tone.

"Ah... I think... No need." Galileo was bewildered as he hadn't reacted with the sudden question from Feng Bujue, yet he answered it instinctively.

"Okay, then let’s see what trick this illusion can do." Feng Bujue poked one hand into his pocket while the other hand was holding the flashlight, feeling bored to death looking at the vanguard in front of them.

Ye Zhi studied the three of them with strange looks, raking her eyes through Feng Bujue, Copernicus, and Galileo. She could feel something weird here. These teammates didn't look reliable at all, but they always used strange deeds to make correct things, just like they had read the manual beforehand.

Not long after that, the figures of the vanguard approached them. They were sauntering; moreover, their gaits were also odd, like children playing the train game where one was connected to another.

The one who led the team had his head drooping to his chest while both of his arms were stretching forward like jiangshi’s posture. He was staggering, leading the ones behind. The second

person put his arms on the shoulder of the one walking in front of him. His head was also pressed down very low, hiding behind his two arms. The third person had his arms on the second person. This vanguard had six people in total.

When they came nearer, the six players could finally see their costumes more clearly thanks to the light on their lighting devices. The six people, who all had their heads stooped down, had their clothes and gender exactly the same as the six players.

"Ha, ha... No need to say it. The one in the last position will have a line. 80% he will say, ‘Come with us quick’..." laughed Feng Bujue.

The other team had passed by the players wordlessly and silently, just like they were a group of average Joe and plain Jane walking around. It was unknown whether it was coincident or untimely, but the last one walking in the line had the matching purple suit with Feng Bujue’s. Moreover, when he was passing by the players, he lifted his head up, revealing an ashen, desolate face. He rolled his eyes and said with a tone that sent shivers down people’s spines, "Come with us quick..."

"See, I was right." Feng Bujue shrugged.

That weird but comfortatble manner spread out rapidly to the others, just like when you’re about to watch a horror movie and someone has already told you the scary details. After you have prepared yourself, those scary details couldn't ultimately create the frightening effect as expected. The players’ Fear Value didn’t surge even a bit.

"This cheap trick... Hong Kong ghost movies had been using since the 1990s," Feng Bujue said. "I don’t know how many times I’ve seen the same scene." He looked towards the vanguard walking farther and farther from them, entering the gloomy mountain. Anyway, he didn't want to let it go for now and continued to say, "If it really wanted to make us irritated, it would have been better

to have connected them as the human centipede and when they got here, let the first one say—"

"Stop it!" Ze Yhi immediately interrupted him. "Besides contributing good ideas, could you please shut your mouth?" As a girl, her rationality was steadily being reduced since she had met this guy Feng Bujue. Compared to the game, the mental pollution generated from Feng Bujue's words and deeds were much scarier because it would affect them in reality.

"As we have seen illusions, this means we've entered the range of the magic formation, right?" Well, being a GM, Copernicus was upright enough to draw the topic back on the right track.

"Just drop the word 'right'," said Feng Bujue, "you just need to lead the way."

...

Jiangshi - A jiangshi, also known as a Chinese "hopping" vampire, is a type of reanimated corpse in Chinese legends and folklore. "Jiangshi" is read goeng-si in Cantonese, cương thi in Vietnamese, gangshi in Korean, kyonshī in Japanese, and "hantu pocong" in Malay. It is typically depicted as a stiff corpse dressed in official garments from the Qing Dynasty, and it moves around by hopping, with its arms outstretched. It kills living creatures to absorb their qi, or "life force", usually at night, while in the day, it rests in a coffin or hides in dark places such as caves. Jiangshi legends have inspired a genre of jiangshi films and literature in Hong Kong and East Asia.

Chapter 158: Attack of the Protagonist (10)

The closer they were to the Seizing Soul Formation, the more horrible the surroundings became.

This wasn't because of the atmosphere covering the area, but it was rather an intuitive stimulation of their senses. Shadows of trees were whirling in the middle of the woods. Many dead bodies with different appearances surrounded the players. Most of them were shriveled or limbless. Although their shapes were different, they were inseparable from the word 'pathetic'.

This place was like the 'Tragic Deaths Exhibition.' Hanging on the tree, half-melted face, charred body, exposed skull... Basically, they were every type of death you could imagine, plus a realistic pungent smell of rotten flesh. It could be said that it was the most dreadful and nauseating scene Feng Bujue had experienced since he had played Thriller Paradise.

Seeing the decomposing bodies, smelling the stench, and hearing some vague singing from the souls... except for Feng Bujue, who couldn't feel fear, the other five's Fear Value was fluctuating.

"Though we know it's just illusion, such a scene could hide some dangerous traps," Ye Zhi said. "What if there are real monsters that come to us and..."

"We can't distinguish them?" Feng Bujue added then smiled. "Don't worry. I think our two men with good Investigating Specialty can differentiate between mobs and illusion." He looked at Galileo with cantankerous eyes and asked, "Right?"

"Ah... Right." Galileo was exclaiming inside why he had a feeling that this Unidentified Mental Disorder always attempted to trap them.

Ye Zhi also felt that the way Feng Bujue had treated the two GMs was a little bit odd. She lowered her voice and talked to Zen In

Scary Dream behind her. "Captain... Do you think that those three people are a little bit weird?"

Zen In Scary Dream took a swig and answered with a hiccup.

Ye Zhi glared at him, shook her head and sighed as she thought to herself: I should ask the manager to transfer me to another team...

In fact, even though Zen In Scary Dream didn’t look serious at all, his head was clear and sound. Anyway, he couldn't point out what the problem was between the three members who didn't belong to his Union. It was weird, indeed, but Feng Bujue’s reasoning and the other two’s ‘investigating skills’ were beyond their imagination. It even gave people a feeling that the other three were hacking the system. Anyway, this sort of assumption was like acting on hearsay evidence. Thus, Zen In Scary Dream didn’t want to give any opinion for the time being.

"Something's coming." Copernicus suddenly lowered his voice. While watching ahead, a long saber appeared in his hands. Although their lighting devices couldn't illuminate too far, he knew that the two monsters at BOSS level had recovered, and moreover, they were approaching them at high speed.

Galileo took out his weapon at almost the same time, looking like he was about to attack the mobs.

Having seen that, of course, Feng Bujue followed suit, taking out his steel sword and preparing to confront the enemy.

When he had faced the Seizing Soul Formation outside the mountain, Feng Bujue had used the Death Poker because from the plot, he had guessed that 80% the monsters in this scenario were ghosts and cold weapons might not work. However, from the way it generated illusions and the previous monster, he felt that this formation was closer to the Western ‘dark magic,' which standard weapons could deal with.

By the way, here we will talk about Feng Bujue’s personal

concepts regarding ghosts, mostly about kinds and strength...

As someone who had seen countless movies, note that we are talking about scary movies, he thought that Oriental ghosts were more frightening and more dangerous than the Western ones.

Regarding the plots of scary movies in general, to ordinary people, obviously, oriental spirits are tougher. For the ones who don't have spiritual powers, even if they are strangled to death, they still couldn't see the ghosts. Moreover, ghosts in those movies know how to use tools to kill people. For example, the falling elevator and the falling steel beam from nowhere, sucking people into the bathtub, etc. Those ghosts are utterly omnipotent. They can teleport, possess people's bodies, use telekinesis... and the protagonists in ghost movies are often tricked to death.

Sadako, Kayako, Beauty Chu... Or even the ghost of the husband or the wife returns at midnight could always give people a strong sense of terror and despair.

As for the Western ghosts, the scary features often lead to physical damages. Vampires and werewolves, these two kinds of monsters appear everywhere. Even women and children can describe their unique features. In the twenty-first century, they are closely linked to some stories like the tall, wealthy and handsome together with the white, rich and beautiful, Lolita, love triangle or something like that. To satisfy the beautiful cross-racial love fantasy of many young men and women, they have to throw away the skulls or shed their cold (animal) blood to successfully cast off their old skin, turning into the two groups of unfailing monsters who have been ridiculed by the community for a long time.

Setting aside these two kinds of monsters, we should talk about something more ordinary like spirits, ogres, mummies, or demons. Regarding Western ghosts, the first thing that popped up in Feng Bujue's mind was Casper from Casper the Friendly Ghost and the line he repeats countless times: "I want to be friends with you." It's hard to link this cute thing to danger or terror. Of course, there are

true scary ghosts like Freddy from A Nightmare on Elm Street.

However, after finishing the third part of the series, certainly, the audience would understand and see that it turns out the one who exists in both worlds can be defeated. Moreover, it’s not tough at all...

This is also why the victims in the series are all brainless brats, and only the protagonists have a normal IQ with a certain fighting ability. If this movie series had a tough protagonist like in action movies, perhaps our dear Freddy would have met the scene where he would have to pick up the soap in jail...

Ogres reminded Feng Bujue about a class in Heroes of Might and Magic; an elegant, callous devil murderer with a high IQ together with a group of bad, ugly meat stage props.

Mummies can be dried bodies covered in bandages dwelling in a museum, or it can be a handsome guy with a shaved head who uses magic in sand class...

Demons seem to be the race with high fighting competence. From some aspects, they are the closest to Oriental ghosts since they can use non-physical power to hurt people. However, the tricks they use to kill people are different from that of the ghosts. Demons that hold a high position can be a handsome middle-aged man or a beautiful woman who will destroy your life nastily then sign a ‘contract’ with you, only to finally crush you to death. Anyhow, these low-grade demons aren’t different from a serial killer. It’s just they aren’t afraid of legal sanctions.

In short, Feng Bujue had some bias towards the Western ghosts. Even if he hadn’t lost his sense of fear, he had also assumed that in case he met Western ghosts, there would be two possible situations. First, he couldn't escape and get killed. Second, he could use the electric saw to slice it to death. He had never thought that he would be backed into a corner or even killed by a Western ghost.

"I’m going to deal with the one on the left," said Copernicus, who then turned into a silhouette gliding forward fast.

Galileo still kept his mouth shut. Just with a slight jump, he had leaped over five or six meters, landing on a dried tree branch before his body agilely swayed, and it was too much for the others’ eyes to take in.

As the three members of Order saw that, their faces paled in astonishment. This wasn’t fear but just shock. The agility of these two men wasn’t less than the top hotshots of Order. As they were just players at level 18, were they really players specialized in Investigating Specialty with such speed and mobility? It should be more reasonable to say that they were actually famous gamers who are playing their secondary accounts just like someone disguises himself as a hog to eat a tiger.

"Really tremendous..." Feng Bujue mused as he also quickly stepped forward. At this moment, he was 90% sure that these two were GMs. He was chasing after them just to see how powerful they were.

Beauty Chu: the main ghost character of a horror movie with the same name. Beauty Chu used to be a Cantonese opera singer who was killed by her husband. She then appears as a ghost wearing a dark blue dress with long black hair, bulging eyes, and a really wide mouth with black blood constantly gushing out.

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In fact, what Copernicus and Galileo were performing wasn't something players at level 18 could do. Although the two of them were dashing on the flat ground, people could feel that they were putting their feet on the duckweed and gliding on the water surface just like they were using the legendary 'qinggong'. From the game aspects, this was caused by piles of skills heaping up altogether to create tremendous effects.

The two small BOSS monsters crossing the woods to approach them were two misshapen creatures, which were formed by fragments of dead bodies, barely appearing in human shape. Their appearance could be described as a combination of nauseating and horrendous things. However, their powers were average. Thus, among the six players in this scenario, besides the GMs, it wouldn't matter if they chose a random player to play against these small BOSS mobs. Of course, it required a certain cost.

The blade coldly sparkled, and the body was only as strong as a bowstring.

Copernicus and Galileo used the same type of weapon. They also had the similar fighting capacity with their timing almost the same as well. These two understood the monsters' data well, so it was no doubt that they could nearly kill the opponents in just one strike. At most, it would take three strikes to end the fight.

But... right at the moment they struck their attack, an unexpected situation happened.

It wasn't that the two small BOSS mobs had their power surged all of a sudden, but they just died abruptly... Only the two of them knew that these two monsters had died unknowingly right at the moment before they were hit. When their sabers slashed their bodies, the two monsters had already become two corpses falling forward with momentum.

In other words, it was like seeing a wild man holding a brick and storming towards you, but right when he’s about to reach you, he had a heart attack and dies.

However, only the two GMs knew this. Feng Bujue couldn't see it anyway. In the eyes of outsiders, in this fight, Copernicus and Galileo had just used one slash to kill the two monsters in just a blink of an eye.

The three players from Order soon arrived. Invincible Hero was the first one to speak up in shock. "What kind of joke is that?! Turns out you guys are professional gamers too?"

"There’s something wrong... We didn't kill these two mobs." Galileo opened his GM’s menu to check while talking. His face suddenly became grim.

At this moment, their surroundings changed accordingly. All illusions vanished, and the woods turned back to its original appearance. With a further look, they could see they were actually not far from the field at the foot of the mountain.

Feng Bujue had a quick reaction as he immediately asked Copernicus, "Is the magic formation inoperative now?"

"Why do you ask me... How could I know—" Copernicus hadn’t finished speaking, yet Feng Bujue interrupted him, "Why did it become inoperative?"

"So... Why do you want to ask me?!"

"Because you are good at Investigating Specialty," Feng Bujue answered boldly and confidently with justice on his side.

"In your mind, such Investigating Specialty," Copernicus’ mouth convulsed, "means knowing nothing?"

"If you say so, I can change the question." Feng Bujue’s visage and aura had a great change all of a sudden as if his eyes were saying your pretending game should end here.

Although there was a light of frenzy in his eyes, his countenance remained calm and confident. Feng Bujue directly asked, "Did the Derivative cause this?"

"Pffff..." Zen In Scary Dream sprayed out the swig of beer he just took.

Order Studio also had the information regarding the Derivatives... but it was sporadic. Besides the existence of the Derivatives, they just had some trivial information from the ones who had met them.

Ye Zhi's and Invincible Hero's level wasn't high enough in the studio, so this was the first time they had heard this word. However, top position players like Zen In Scary Dream could access more information about the game in the company. That's why he knew it. Of course, the information he knew was concluded in just one sentence: "In the Multiplayer Survival Mode scenarios for six players, there is a minute possibility to meet a kind of uncontrollable data." Something regarding the features of the Derivatives, the GM's interference when the scenario was being generated and the GM's competence... Order Studio didn't have the related information.

The reliable records about the Derivatives that Order had were just two. The first time was when a team of six reported to their manager that they had met a humanoid creature, which addressed itself as a Derivative. This creature had formidable powers, and its intelligence was far beyond the standard BOSS in the scenario. Moreover, it wasn't related to the plot. The second time it happened was also to a team of six with the same situation. The reporter said that the Derivative had cooperated with the BOSS in the scenario to kill the team. After the former team had a short verbal communication with the Derivative, the information that Order got was classified as high-level confidential data and to be kept a secret.

Zen In Scary Dream was startled mainly because the word

‘Derivative’ came out from this ‘Unidentified Mental Disorder’ guy. Is it true that Hell’s Front Line Union, a union with no credit at all, could be able to collect and analyze information as well as Order? How many members do they have? How many of them are professional gamers?

Needless to say, Copernicus’ and Galileo’s complexions were kind of interesting. Even Zen In Scary Dream had such reactions, being the real GMs, it could be imagined how they would react.

"What are… you talking….about…" Galileo still hoped that he would still be lucky, trying to pretend naïve so they would let it go.

"Do you need me to say it straight away?" Feng Bujue said, "Please, Da-Ge, please check your GM menu to see whether the ineffectiveness of the magic formation near us is related to the Derivative’s activities."

The three from Order looked at Copernicus and Galileo as if they were watching monsters. Then they shifted their looks, which used to look at super awesome monsters to study Feng Bujue. The amount of information he had said was too much; moreover, the atmosphere was now a little bit tense that they didn’t want to say anything.

The two GMs then exchanged looks. Galileo smiled, looked at Feng Bujue and said, "Later when we’re done with this scenario, you’ll need to talk to our manager."

"Just talk about our current situation first," said Feng Bujue. "When the illusion disappeared, I’ve used [Planned Victory from a Thousand Miles Away] to check…" Anyway, GMs knew players’ skills, though he just explained it directly. "Nothing showed up." He paused then asked, "I assumed that the Derivative had killed the two small BOSSES here?"

"The Aggrieved Well still exists, but it has lost its strength. It's the same with the other three magic formations in the mountain. Just recently, they all lost their effect at the same time," answered

Galileo.

"At the same time?" said Feng Bujue. He continued after two seconds. "Except for the case that there are four Derivatives taking action at the same time, the problem should be from ‘the power source.’"

"To cut off the power supply of the Aggrieved Well, besides breaking the formations, there's another way, indeed... That way, instead of calling it ‘cutting off,' it should be called ‘destroying’," said Copernicus.

"According to the latest information about the FLAGs... this scenario has one BOSS called Vahiru, but he wasn't on this map. We couldn't find his detailed data either. We just knew that in case we hadn’t destroyed the three formations but already jumped into the Aggrieved Well, we would meet this BOSS. I guess that the Derivative had come to the other world in the Aggrieved Well and killed this BOSS, which deactivated all four formations here," said Galileo. When he was talking about this, he understood why the coordinates of the Derivative had been on and off previously. Considering the reason, 80% that it was when the Derivative had entered the other world.

"Uhm... Then we have a problem here..." answered Feng Bujue. "So why we are still not done with this game?"

"It..." Galileo actually didn’t know.

Copernicus said, "I think the problem comes from the Main Quest. Currently, the content of the Main Quest is still ‘Enter the mountain, seek the abandoned Shrine.' Maybe it's because we haven't triggered the next FLAG that led to our current situation." From his line of sight, they knew that he was checking his GM menu while talking. "If we successfully break any magic formation in the mountain, the Main Quest would be updated to ‘Break all four Seizing Soul Formations – Seal the power of the Aggrieved Well.' And, if we directly met the true BOSS, the Main Quest would

be updated to ‘Destroy Vahiru’. But now, we haven't done anything, and all the formations have been deactivated."

"This means the Main Quest is stuck right at the first step..." Feng Bujue mused, "Interesting... If this is true, then right now that real BOSS is done, and there’s nothing else in the scenario that can help us update the Main Quest. How can we pass this scenario?"

"You seem to know a lot," said Copernicus. "Then we should make it clear here." He turned around to see the three from Order. "The four of you, please leave the scenario."

"What?! What?" answered Invincible Hero. "The three of you just stand there, say confusing things, and then you ask us to leave? If we leave in the middle of the scenario, we will receive a penalty which keeps us from joining the team for a while. Moreover, we won’t receive any rewards. To us, this loss is worth considering compared to getting all members of the party killed."

"I’m sorry. Considering the current situation, this scenario has a BUG where you can’t finish the game," answered Galileo. "As Mister Feng has said, the Main Quest got stuck now, and we have no other way around."

As if he was afraid that Invincible Hero couldn't understand, Feng Bujue added, "This is much better than Li Xiao when he has just left Yuhang Town and the Leader of the Moon Worshiping Cult got shot by an alien with his antimatter weapons. Even if you continue to play, you can’t complete the scenario."

Copernicus continued, "We have errands to run here, which involves ways to solve the Derivative. If you guys stay, even if the Derivative won't kill you, you're just wasting your time, and at the end, you still have to leave the scenario." He knew he couldn't lie to them anymore, so he used the rhetoric the company had fabricated for them in case they encountered a critical problem. "As for the players’ loss, if it’s systematic causes, we will give some type of compensation to you. After we’re done with this scenario, we will

report to the manager on this situation. The relevant staff will contact you to offer the solution. I believe you guys will be satisfied with the results."

"You are two GMs, so can you explain to us what the Derivatives are?" asked Ye Zhi.

"I’m sorry Miss. We have no right to disclose this," answered Galileo.

Ye Zhi’s reaction was really similar to the trick Feng Bujue had used on Pan Feng and Hua Xiong. "You should know that we are from Order Studio," she boldly said, "With our studio's ability, if we announce this on the official website of the game producers—"

"These are also your rights." Galileo remained calm as if he had a reliable backup. "The company knows how to deal with or explain this," he said firmly. In fact, it was because of the story between Pan Feng, Hua Xiong and Feng Bujue in the other scenario. When the managers saw their reports, they immediately set the new rules. In case their GM identities were exposed, they should answer the players following a standard process. Facing Ye Zhi, they just needed to give her such answers.

Anyway, the information about the Derivatives had soon been disclosed. Just the four of them here, including the members from big studios, didn't know it yet.

Indeed, within the two days in the transition between Close Beta and Open Beta, someone had posted topics about the Derivatives on the forum. However, they had been quickly drowned and not worth mentioning as they were just ‘strange stories spreading among a small group of players’. Apparently, players now, or we should say people nowadays rarely believe in rumors. Who is to be blamed? Strange news on the network? Ha, ha.

"Well... if you say so—" Ye Zhi still wanted to say something.

Zen In Scary Dream swayed his arm, signaling her to stop, then

he spoke up himself, "Ye Zhi, sharp words don’t have any meaning here." He suddenly revealed a compelling manner, seriously facing Copernicus and Galileo. "Don’t be worried. I can ensure to you two that Order will not disclose any information related to GMs and the Derivatives." His calculation was clear. Such information would be more valuable as long as not many people knew about it.

"Anyway," Zen In Scary Dream shifted the topic, "currently, leaving the scenario or not is our own choice, right?"

Galileo understood him. "Yes, if you want to contact the Derivative, we will not prevent you from doing so."

Copernicus shrugged and smiled. "I’m reminding you with my goodwill. The Derivatives are stronger than any BOSS in the scenarios you have ever played. When you get killed, don’t be so surprised that the other is fast too."

"They just want to utilize their possibilities to gather more intelligence. And, when they got killed and leave the scenario, they won’t receive a penalty like when they withdraw," Feng Bujue intervened. "And, by the way, I want to see that Derivative too."

"You also want to collect information?" Zen In Scary Dream looked at Feng Bujue and grunted.

"I'm just a typical player, I don't have as many responsibilities as you guys do," answered Feng Bujue. "I’m just interested in it."

The only Derivative Feng Bujue had met was X-23. He didn't expect to meet her again. According to the Derivatives’ situation, X-23 perhaps had already been destroyed. The chance to meet her one more time was zero. Thus, Feng Bujue thought that it would be a strange Level 4 Derivative he was about to encounter in this scenario.

His curiosity was overwhelming as it was really rare to meet another Derivative. Feng Bujue suddenly had an urge to know more about this particular group of living beings, communicate

with them, and observe what difference they had, whether they had the intelligence or even unique characters similar to the creatures in reality.

"It’s up to you then," said Galileo. "But there's something I have to tell in advance. Our purpose is to destroy the Derivatives and ‘kill’ them, turning them into fragments of data. No matter how the situation turns out, this has always been our priority. If you just want to stay there and watch to collect intelligence, it’s okay. If you want to help us, we’d appreciate that. But please, don’t hinder us."

The three from Order expressed that they agreed with him, only Feng Bujue remained silent. After roughly ten seconds, he suddenly asked, "There’s something I want to confirm... Is it true that you two can’t receive the Protagonist’s Halo?"

Galileo was hesitant a bit then answered, "Yeah... But... How did you know that?"

"Don’t look at me like that. I just guessed. From the beginning of the scenario, the Protagonist’s Halo has been shifted randomly three times. Invincible Hero got it twice, and Ye Zhi got it once," Feng Bujue answered. "The shifting on purpose has happened three times. Invincible Hero got it once, and I got it twice." He threw a glance at Zen In Scary Dream. "The ones who haven’t received the Protagonist’s Halo are you two GMs and Zen-Ge.

"In the short introduction of the plots, the part which mentioned the Halo, they repeated many times the word ‘Players’. Only one time it didn't. It’s the sentence ‘When the number of members in the party is less than or equal to two, the Halo will disappear.’ After I could confirm you two are the GMs, I thought that if the system doesn’t consider you guys the players, this feature of the Halo is reasonable."

"You mean... if this scenario didn't have the Derivatives and GMs, as it was just a standard scenario for Multiplayer Survival Mode,

the system wouldn't set up the Protagonist's Halo like that?" said Ye Zhi.

"At least, I assumed it this way," Feng Bujue answered. "The Protagonist's Halo is the protection that the system provided to players according to the difficulty level of the scenario and the actual situation. If it's the effect generated by the system, even after the players have been teleported and this scenario has been finished, it will remain.

"Usually, if we can pass the scenario, and the four players have left already, the two remaining should be GMs. If the Halo still exists, it will not be fair to the Derivative. Thus, it's a simple setting that the GM can't keep the halo under any circumstance..."

"What are you talking about? Why does the system have to make the battle between the Derivative and us relatively fair?" said Copernicus. "You've watched too many sci-fi movies, haven't you? Optical Generation Computer doesn't have independent consciousness. Moreover, if it does, why should the system give a group of data that is supposed to be destroyed chances to survive?"

Feng Bujue sneered inside. It would be nice if I knew it... Maybe there's a morbid person or a group of morbid people among your managers who intend to program the system this way.

"Yeah... Perhaps I'm overthinking," Feng Bujue was still calm outside to answer them. "We should get to the mountain first. If we can find the Aggrieved Well, we can locate the Derivative."

Characters in Chinese Paladin (Chinese: 仙劍奇俠傳) a 2005 Chinese television series adapted from the original version of the Chinese action role-playing game The Legend of Sword and Fairy by Softstar Entertainment.

Chapter 160: Attack of the Protagonist (12)

And now we turn back time a little bit earlier, in the Kingdom of the Dead Souls, inside the vast desert...

A blurry black shadow and a red figure were moving at extremely high speed. The battle between them was fast, energetic and dangerous. It could be described like murderous aura permeated everywhere and each step they took was frightening.

BOOM... Powers collided.

K3's body was sluggish, taking several steps back in just a blink. This was the first time he wore the somber expression on his face. Scarlet light flashed on his right arm, and all of a sudden, a dragon's roar echoed in the air when a red dragon-shaped energy burst out.

Vahiru, which scattered in the air just now, gathered again to form his humanoid body. His purple face was filled with fear. He then crossed his arms, using a violet spiritual energy to shield his body, waiting for this tremendous attack.

The two of them had been fighting for long, but their strength and speed were constantly increasing. With better skills, K3 apparently gained the upper hand, and gradually, Vahiru couldn't hold it for more. This strike was the attack K3 thought he could use to determine the result.

The red dragon flaming fist was dashing forward with the aura that seemed to want to destroy both earth and firmament. Vahiru's defense was like a dead trunk that could be uprooted at any moment in the strong gust.

"You're worth praising for your endurance up to now." Although his strike wasn't finished, K3 had retrieved his murderous intention. In his eyes, this battle now ended. "Anyway, that's all you have."

Vahiru didn’t leave any last words, and he also couldn't make K3 feel any surprise. In the end, he couldn't bear this formidable attack as his whole body was struck by the scarlet power, turning into a scattering black smoke, which then immediately transformed into dust, fell and became a part of the desert.

K3 brushed his hands indifferently. All of a sudden, he looked at the vast area in front of him and said, "You’re hiding there long enough. Even if it’s due to your courtesy, you should come out and greet me."

A dark area in the sky suddenly distorted and slowly moved just like someone pulled down a giant veil. A giant skull appeared at that spot and opened its mouth to let out a dry voice. "If you think it’s necessary..." he answered K3.

When K3 saw his face, he confirmed the other’s identity. "Turns out it’s the leader. No wonder why you got here that quick."

Under the Dark Abyss Benighted King were the nine henchmen whose levels were lower than the Four Divine Pillars. They were called ‘The Dead Souls Nine Chiefs’. The massive skull in front of K3 was the leader of the Dead Souls Nine Chiefs – Soul Seizer.

"Harrumph... Seeing one of your kind got killed, but you didn't even bat an eye?" K3 smiled.

"He’s not my kind. You know this," answered Soul Seizer. "You and I are more like one kind."

"Oh right, after all, we are the data with uniqueness." He snorted coldly then pointed at the black dust Vahiru had left behind. "That idiot didn't understand the rules and righteously killed one of my Level 4 brothers," said K3.

"I’m so sorry," said Soul Seizer, "but Vahiru wasn’t wrong. In his point of view, that’s what he should do..." Soul Seizer sighed. "Each of us has our own age and missions, and Vahiru was just like a fleeting flame. Me myself and my master are the candles which

will soon burn down. And you..." he paused for a moment, "you are a very great existence, far greater than us. If you have the capacity, you will have a chance to enter the ‘Other World’. The data that can reach there can make its cycle of life unknown."

"The Other World isn’t an eternal peaceful place," said K3.

"Compared to the group of data, which can see the end of their life at every second, it’s not bad at all," said Soul Seizer. "To us, ‘Unknown’ is the most precious. What’s called ‘Life’ is something uncertain. And, the ‘answer’ set up beforehand from the essence of mathematics is the sadness we will never get rid of. And the most tragic thing is... we are not even programmed to have the emotion called ‘sad’."

"I think it’s good, too," said K3. "That’s why you can be calm to face what just happened. That’s how you can perceive the past and the future, things that happened and what will come at the end."

"Well, perhaps..." Soul Seizer didn't continue this topic. "Now you need to return to another place... Let me open the space channel and send you away."

"Then... thanks for your trouble," answered K3.

—

From the other side, Feng Bujue’s team took not more than ten minutes to get to the shrine in the mountain. Under the state in which they weren't affected by the illusion, they just mounted normally, and their speed was quite fast. With their capacity, it shouldn't be a problem for this group of six to be able to chase after the bus for three hundred miles. Thus, ten minutes was enough to climb the mountain, which didn't have a steep slope.

There was no story without coincidences. Right after they had just passed through the torii, a red light soared up from the Aggrieved Well. A dark, incomparable oppression that they found it hard to describe with language rippled from the well.

Everybody, including the GMs, was like they were rooted on the ground, unable to inch forward. This wasn't an effect of any skill or something that could be explained by physics.

Such experience that went beyond their five senses could have never been seen in any game before. The six people here, as human beings, now felt the ‘murderous aura’ in a virtual world connected to them by nervous system connection.

K3 – Hematite jumped up, standing on the well, looking at the different expressions from people standing down there. The right arm under his sleeve had been completed. A tattoo of a giant red dragon around his arm from the shoulder to the wrist was shimmering. The invisible aura surrounding him also had a faint ruby hue.

"Oh?" K3 counted the number of his opponents and suspiciously muttered, "The players didn’t teleport..."

"You should have waited until we’ve updated the next step of the Main Quest to take action." Feng Bujue was the calmest among the six of them. He answered the other with a completely cool tone.

"It’s so," said K3, "anyway... as things have come to this, it's okay though." He gently descended. "Ah, although I have to bear some particular restraints here, you are so... pathetically weak." He eyed his right arm. "Moreover, thanks to Vahiru, I’ve warmed up."

Galileo's face suddenly tensed up. "You guys...The situation's changed. Please give us a hand..." Apparently, he recognized that this was a Level 3 Derivative.

"If you say so, I have a perfect plan," answered Feng Bujue as if he had foreseen the case. While the others hadn’t had time to react, he had stepped forward, threw his fists into the air, spread his legs and shouted, "The Pirate King! I’m on the top!"

[The Protagonist’s Halo has been transferred.]

[Player Feng Bujue – is the current holder of the Protagonist’s

Halo.]

Right after the notification arose, Feng Bujue said, "You guys can go now. I want to play one on one with him."

...

A gateway of a shinto shrine

(Luffy’s line from One Piece)

Chapter 161: Attack of the Protagonist (13)

If there’s a word to describe this tactic, it must be ‘despicable’.

But they couldn't deny the fact that Feng Bujue’s trick was flawless.

It took Copernicus and Galileo only three seconds to comprehend Feng Bujue’s plan. They almost tacitly ordered to retreat at the same time, turning to the three from Order and yelled, "The ones who don’t have the halo should back off with us!"

Invincible Hero and Ye Zhi were hesitant looking at Zen In Scary Dream. As the captain of the team, at such moments, he was responsible for making decisions.

"You two go with the GMs, stay away from here." Zen In Scary Dream was still calm. "I’ll stay with Feng-Ge." Seeing his teammates were about to say something, he added, "No more words, even if I die, I won’t take Feng-ge’s Halo. I won’t affect the general picture."

During that time, K3, who was around ten meters from them, also recognized something. He didn't want the others to continue their conversation as he walked straight forward.

Since they were in the world of the Sakura Town, K3’s competence couldn't be compared to the time he was fighting in the Kingdom of the Dead Souls. However, the speed and strength he was showing now were still tremendous. It was better than what the two GMs had performed.

It was out of people’s expectations to have someone able to stop him relying on their strength alone.

Zen In Scary Dream, the one who had spent all the money he had in the game for smoking and drinking, besides the suit vest – the union's uniform, he only had the newbie costume. In the middle of the sparks from the flint, his eyes flared with a cold look that could

suffocate people.

The body slightly swayed; the blade flicked. He skillfully waved his wrist, stabbing forward in an inclining angle.

Although this strike from Zen In Scary Dream looked hurried, in fact, he had it done carefully. He not only blocked K3 but also made a cunning attack at an angle that forced the other to use his arm to ward off.

From fighting aspect, under a limited time, moves that players could complete and some minor details like accuracy and skilfull angles of attack were the criteria to measure the gap between hotshots.

Of course, this was the difference between real hotshots and average players, not the difference between hotshots and hotshots. Let alone the external facts and fortune, in such activity that had rules to bind hotshots together, the only thing they could compare was... natural gifts.

"Oh? Interesting." K3 eyed Zen In Scary Dream. "Can a player really make it this far—" Something happened when he hadn't finished yet. Two arms were protruding under his armpits and blocked his shoulder.

The one who had used the first strike of Rozan Sho Ryu Ha, of course, was Feng Bujue, who was standing aside. At this moment, he had activated his [Body-Spirit Congregation Technique], and that was how he could finish his deed before the other could recognize it. Right now, Feng Bujue didn't care about the loss of his Survival Value. Anyhow, he had the halo, so it was impossible for him to die just yet. He was afraid that if he didn't use this skill, with only his character's physique, he couldn't stop the opponent.

"Go! Are you guys waiting for death there!" Feng Bujue held K3 tight, turned and shouted to the other four.

Invincible Hero and Ye Zhi exchanged looks then fled away. The

two GMs, who saw them moving, also quickly turned around and came to the front, leading them out of the scene.

"You two think it’s fun doing that?" K3 sneered. "Or you’re playing the superheroes?" His face suddenly darkened. "Oh... No. Heroes will die, but you guys will only be teleported." The latter part was made with a despising tone.

"We just want to talk to you." Feng Bujue cocked his head and talked to Zen In Scary Dream, "Right, Zen-Ge?"

Zen In Scary Dream got it now as he deeply felt how cunning Feng Bujue was.

Feng Bujue’s plan looked like he wanted to take the Protagonist’s Halo, using this invincible status to deploy his research and assessment in the Derivative, also to assist the GMs in doing their tasks. In fact, this plan had another advantage, which was to let the other members of the party leave the scenario and he would contact the Derivative alone. Now that the GMs weren't here, he could try to negotiate. In case the other didn't agree, it wasn't too late to continue fighting. He got the Halo anyway, nothing to be afraid of though.

Zen In Scary Dream just wanted to collect intelligence. To him, if they could communicate verbally with the Derivative, it would be much better than talking with the fists. Thus, he followed Feng Bujue and said, "Yeah, Mister Derivative... If you agree to stop fighting and—"

However, K3 interrupted their chorus, "The relationship between you guys and I is like the lobsters locked in the fish tank in a restaurant and the customers... Do we really have many things to discuss?" His tone became more serious. All of a sudden, a flow of air burst out, breaking Feng Bujue’s restraint and blowing Zen In Scary Dream away simultaneously. "Do I bear the responsibility to explain your doubts!"

Zen In Scary Dream was still okay as he was just pushed several

steps backward, but Feng Bujue, who was clutching on the other's back, was blown away with a strong force, knocking hard against the Torii.

BANG! Feng Bujue's body banged onto a thick pilar, breaking it into two pieces. His Survival Value immediately plunged down to 1% which automatically dissolved his [Body-Spirit Congegration Technique]. Moreover, due to the pillar rupture, the shrine's entrance lost its primary support and started to collapse obliquely onto K3 and Zen In Scary Dream.

At this moment, the moon began to shine, and they could see the surroundings within a certain distance without using lighting devices. Zen In Scary Dream could see Feng Bujue exaggeratedly gush out a mouthful of blood and grimaced his face in pain. It was good that the boy just fainted. With the large broken object next to him as the evidence, K3's competence indeed made people hopeless.

Cold sweat rolled down on Zen In Scary Dream's forehead as he thought, "If this kid didn't have the Protagonist's Halo, he would have been killed in just one strike."

Of course, he didn't care about the other much. As the Torii was falling towards his spot, he should get away first then think about it later. Zen In Scary Dream jumped backward to make room that could support him to defend or attack (or at least that was what he thought), while paying attention to K3 not far from him.

K3 didn't bat an eye; he only stared at his opponent retreating. Moreover, facing the gate falling down, it seemed he didn't need to dodge it.

Perhaps K3 wanted to let the two players widen their visions as he decided not to dodge. He raised his right hand, pressed the index finger on the thumb, then flicked it forward.

BOOM!

The area above K3 had an effect like that of an explosion. The power of this strike diffused upward in a funnel shape that burst off the falling part of the torii into countless wood chips.

"Such combat competence is... the Young Toguro in standard physique version." Feng Bujue backed against the broken pillar, trying to get up. A smile was still hanging on the corner of his mouth. "I've become more curious. Facing such a tremendous opponent, how could the Halo will keep me alive."

K3 coldly stood there, slowly turned his head around, then looked at Feng Bujue. "Oh? You aren't dead yet?"

"Ah... If I knew that, I wouldn't speak up. Turns out you thought that I was over with that strike," said Feng Bujue.

K3 did think so, indeed. The reason was simple. As a Derivative, he had observed the data of players' levels, and he could calculate the others' Survival Value. And, the strike he had just used, in theory, was enough to make Feng Bujue game-over. Thus, after he had blown Feng Bujue away, he didn't watch over in that direction anymore. Unexpectedly, this kid could stand up and talk again... It's like when you launch a significant skill on the enemy in your map, and you've expected that the other would turn into your game coins already, but then, several seconds later, he gets up again with his very last drop of blood.

"Well... I've mastered the peerless skill in the martial world – The Immortal Divine Technique..." Feng Bujue was about to adapt Duan Fei's tactic, which was to babble to make more time and stabilize the situation first.

Too bad K3 didn't want to listen to him as he immediately raised his left hand, flickered his middle finger to release a flow of air as sharp as a flying knife which darted towards Feng Bujue.

BUZZ!

The sound that arose in Feng Bujue's ears was like it came from a

laser saber. However, he only felt a chilly wind swept over his cheeks, but he didn't get hurt.

"What the..." K3 was suspicious. The logical calculus module told him that he couldn't miss that strike, but the information from his vision displayed clearly that this player didn't do anything fast and sufficient enough to duck his attack.

"What did you do?" K3 seemed to be interested in Feng Bujue all of a sudden. "Distort the space? Or interfere with my vision?" He just made assumptions with common understanding and gave out a question. Feng Bujue's answer sounded both nonsense and reasonable at the same time. "Your brother here just cocked his head to avoid your sluggish attack."

"Is it?"

When K3 said 'is', he was around seven or eight meters away from Feng Bujue, but when he let out the word 'it' he was in front of the latter. "Well... Your current speed and attack power are over the maximum value of the data. At least, two times stronger than I've expected. Seems you aren't quite simple..."

"Nonsense. I've just used skill. I should be two times stronger though," Feng Bujue muttered in his mind, but he still tried to be more mysterious. "Well... Nothing at all. Using the data to assess people's fighting competencies is a meaningless act. We, humans on Earth, have different ways of cultivation compared to you guys. Usually, we can hide our aura, and we can completely burst it out in fighting."

"If you don't mind, just talk about the Dragon Ball too..." Zen In Scary Dream was completely shocked.

As Feng Bujue saw K3's complexion, which was 70% of having-no-clue and 30% of curiosity, he continued to talk again and again. "Don't just look at me like how I am today. I used to be really wild... I've undergone the long-term hell training on the wild island, mounted the hundred thousand meters totem of a flying

saucer tower, and I used to drink the potion to stimulate the human potentials, which could have killed me right away. Lastly, I've saved the Earth from the hands of aliens several times..."

"My gosh... He not only copied my verse but also spoke of strange tales..." Zen In Scary Dream exclaimed, instinctively heaved out another beer from his bag then took a sip to console himself.

Rozan Shō Ryū Ha (廬山昇龍覇; Rising Dragon Punch): is a skill of Dragon Shiryu (龍星座「ドラゴン」の紫龍, Ryū Seiza (Doragon no Shiryū); Literally meaning "Purple Dragon") in manga Saint Seiya.

(A character in 'The Final Combat')

(These are the details in Dragon Ball series by Akira Toriyama – TL)

Chapter 162: Attack of the Protagonist (14)

"Hm... What you've just said..." K3 smiled as he grabbed Feng Bujue by his collar. "I'm not interested in it at all." He rose his right arm. "No matter what you are in your world, in my world, you are just a projection of a group of data blocking my way!"

The fist moved, and a sharp, scarlet tip flashed. As this attack came all of a sudden, Feng Bujue's death was the certain end.

This time, K3 grabbed his opponent directly, hitting him on the front. He didn't care whether Feng Bujue had actually dodged his finger bomb with his real competence or not; absolutely, he could not avoid this oncoming strike.

BOOM. K3's fist bumped into a rigid block. The energy around his fist sparked when it impacted that object.

Feng Bujue didn't feel anything hitting his head. Unknowingly, his [Casey Jones' Mask] automatically switch to visible mode and appeared on his face.

One second later, a low crispy sound echoed. Cracks spread all over the mask on Feng Bujue's face then it soon turned into data fragments, which vanished into thin air.

[Your [Casey Jones's Mask] is broken.]

[The grade added to your Fighting Specialty is lifted. Your grade now is E.]

The system voice announced two terrible news.

Feng Bujue couldn't react timely with this sudden status. He thought, "Didn't think that my item would be broken like this."

Feng Bujue had a wrong calculation this time. In a situation that could never be overturned, the method the Protagonist's Halo used to forcefully save the player was...'equal exchange'.

It cost just an item this time, but if he continued let K3 attack

him with flawless, fatal strikes like this, the Halo would increase his loss accordingly. For example, the Survival Value Supplement bottles in his bags would be forced to use up; or, it could switch the damage to other players in the scenario.

K3 was also surprised seeing his opponent wasn’t dead yet, but he didn’t hesitate much, using both of his fists this time to pound on Feng Bujue consistently. The others couldn't see his attacks clearly. However, K3’s fists were blocked by an invisible shield that scattered his force.

This time, it wasn't the effect of the Protagonist's Halo, as it was the effort of the Echo Armor. When Feng Bujue was blown away, the armor didn't work because it was the protection layer that covered him and Feng Bujue got blown away while having no physical contact with the other. But at this moment, the protection effect of the armor worked normally.

Facing the attack style with high speed that aimed at many points at once, the defending effect of the sound wall was significant.

As K3 was increasing his speed and the number of targets, obviously, the power would be reduced notably. Thus, it couldn't break the defense of the Echo Armor.

If K3 had struck out a strong attack, Feng Bujue would have to count on the Protagonist’s Halo to ward it off. However, he had changed his attack style on purpose to probe Feng Bujue. Unexpectedly, it didn't turn out as he had expected, and it even made Feng Bujue's defense became harder to deal with.

"The finger bomb was deviated inexplicably, and my close-combat strike was dissolved by a mask. From the change of the data, I’m not sure if he’s using some skill to interfere with my senses, but it doesn’t look like a proactive defensive skill..." Within a few seconds, K3 was busy reasoning what Feng Bujue had done. " When I attacked the body at high speed aiming at all organs, joints, and bones on his skeleton, if his reflexes were fast, he should have

corresponding reactions to dodge. If his signature is defending, continuously attacking him can help identify his weakness.

"However... He didn't make any defending moves or dodge the strikes, but a group of data has blocked my attack. Moreover, when my punch approaches him with a certain distance, the invisible wall appears and covers the exact point that's about to be hit... In short, it's the effect from some item.

"Although this kiddo has a brighter ‘light' than other players at level 18, surely his fighting capacity isn't as strong as the other two GMs. And even that Zen In Scary Dream's stronger than him. Why... just why I can't kill him?"

A series of assumptions crossed through K3's head in a very short moment. As an AI, what he could reason was also limited, but his reasoning speed was absolutely not slow.

Seeing his attack was ineffective, he seized the chance and decided to launch other stronger strikes to solve this opponent.

The dragon tattoo on his right arm radiated dazzling light as they could even see the tattoo through his sleeve. A formidable flow of air burst out just like a pair of invisible arms pressing Feng Bujue down, keeping him from moving.

"You’re tougher than I’ve imagined..." K3 still wore a sneer. "I really want to see how long you can endure."

K3's fighting style was simple, direct and yet tyrannical. If his previous strikes didn't work, he would hit more; if it still didn't work, he would use stronger attacks... With this train of thought, he would consistently increase the power in his attacks. However, up to now, the one who could make him use his best hadn't appeared yet. In the past, whenever K3 increased his power, the opponent had to follow him to that certain point. However, all the monsters, players, GMs, including Vahiru, had to die in K3 – Hematite's hands when they faced the one who was getting stronger along with the intensity of the fight. They couldn't

survive his ‘Scarlet Dragon Fiery Fist'.

"Still coming?" But was Feng Bujue the one who would let someone break two precious items of his? Absolutely not.

When K3 just raised his arm, Feng Bujue moved his body in an odd angle and stepped forward, using the skill that even the ghosts had to be afraid of – [Lower Side Kick of a Brat]. It was the last kick of this consumable skill. After that, it disappeared from Feng Bujue’s skill bar.

"Are you kidding—" K3 wanted to retort, but he couldn't make it, as he had to stop his rhetorical question when he tumbled face down.

The [Lower Side Kick of a Brat] worked only with monsters. Feng Bujue had just hoped that he was lucky this time using the skill. Then, according to the current situation, the system seemed to deem the Derivative's entity a kind of ‘monsters.'

Feng Bujue slid sideway then took out a weapon from his bag. He didn't take the wrench or the steel sword, but a much more wicked one—the Folding Stool.

Zen In Scary Dream also stormed over at this moment. Seeing K3 fall, he was confident that he had n ways to solve this Derivative.

"You like this?" Feng Bujue swung his [Folding Stool of Eighteen Bronze Statues (Number 5)] while talking. "My equipment is broken. My skill is over..." His tone was unhappy. "I will accompany you until you feel satisfied."

As his words were let out, the folding stool also pounded down. Feng Bujue was crazily beating K3’s back. Zen In Scary Dream didn't let his sword be idle as he accurately slashed on K3's nape with some effects from his skill.

[Name: Unyielding Blade]

[Skill Card Attributes: Proactive skill; permanent control.]

[Type: Fighting]

[Effects: The power of the next hit will be increased by 30% (must use weapons with blades to launch the skill. Cool-down time is 5 minutes.]

[Consumption: 5% of the maximum Physical Value]

[Learning Conditions: Fighting Specialty Grade D, level 20 or above]

[Remarks: A slash with formidable power sometimes can change the result of the battle.]

This was a skill that conformed to the norms of the society, also very practical. Although it wasn't the ability granted from his title [Stern-faced Killer], it was the skill Zen In Scary Dream used more frequently. In general, the effect, consumption and learning conditions of this skill were balanced. At a higher level, it would have been replaced by some similar passive skills, however, before reaching level 30, to players with sharp blade weapons, this was absolutely the best skill.

If not, how could he be the stern-faced killer? At the critical moment, he could always strike fast, accurately and ruthlessly. Moreover, his face didn't have any significant emotion. Such a proper cold face of a true killer.

Flash.

When his sword hacked down, a strange sound echoed. This spoke up the fact that K3’s head wouldn’t be chopped off that easy.

A layer of red air appeared above K3's skin. This kind of defense was different from the Echo Armor in the method, but it gave the same effect as it could parry Zen In Scary Dream’s sword. K3 didn’t even have a small scratch.

And, Feng Bujue was still using the folding stool to bang at K3's spine cruelly. His attack wasn't stopped by anything, however, he didn't hear the crack from breaking bones or see blood under K3's

clothing. It was like Feng Bujue was massaging a man who had mastered Iron Shirt technique, and that guy didn't feel hurt or even got hit. He also thought that if his Folding Stool didn't have the unbreakable feature, it would have been broken soon.

This short change in attack-defense role lasted for less than ten seconds.

K3 had never experienced such a bitter fight. He had to finish the ‘face down fall’ completely before he could be able to get on his feet again. And, during this time, Zen In Scary Dream and Feng Bujue had immediately attacked his back and nape impolitely.

However, K3 could still endure it. He understood that when he could get up again, he could take the initiative of the battle. Although that tripping skill was nasty, it spoke of the fact that these two players didn't have the ‘killing strike'!

K3’s supposition was correct. Indeed, Feng Bujue and Zen In Scary Dream both didn’t have any significantly strong proactive skills (for example the Devil Piercing Killing Light Cannon) to bet for once. If they had some, those past seconds would have been the best chance to use them.

Unfortunately, they were all players with professional fighting styles, as they knew when to storm forward or when to retreat. These two actually never thought about learning such skills. That's how we got the previous scene. Anyway, Zen In Scary Dream had used some buffs for his attack while Feng Bujue had just used a common way to pound the opponent.

It was normal that K3 didn’t die. Zen In Scary Dream’s slash had damaged his air shield a little bit while Feng Bujue, with his Fighting Specialty degraded to E, was holding something not different from a toy to hit him. Even though Feng Bujue had been pounding K3 for a while, in fact, he could take around 5% of the other’s blood.

"Ah... Simply ridiculous." K3 was now sure that the two standing

in front of him couldn't kill him. Even if he stood still for them to hit him, it would have taken a long time to do that. "Go die!"

K3 suddenly shouted, slashing his right arm horizontally. A sharp air current was released. Although it wasn't as fast as his finger bomb, it was absolutely not the speed that the two players could dodge easily. The power of this strike was even more frightening. When it had just been released, it was a big as a cutlass, but when it was fully flying in the air, it gave people a feeling of a cement pipe sweeping through...

We have to say that Zen In Scary Dream was really awesome as he could instinctively and reluctantly duck under this strike in just a blink of an eye.

Facing a slash at around their chest, most of the people would bend, turn or kneel down... In short, they would lower their body to dodge. However, Zen In Scary Dream didn't do that. His first reaction was to jump backward, leaping onto a tree nearby, as agile as a monkey. Even though the big tree was cut down afterward, Zen In Scary Dream didn’t get hit.

What about Feng Bujue... he also dodged it. How did he dodge it? The Protagonist's Halo led him.

The process could be described unimaginable. At the moment K3’s arm started to move and the visual signal was still on its way to Feng Bujue’s brain, the Protagonist’s Halo had already worked. When Feng Bujue's brain had reacted to the situation, delivering the command for the action, he suddenly tripped... The ground at the shrine's gate was relatively flat, and he tumbled even when he didn't step on anything.

It was like the friction force between Feng Bujue’s feet and the ground had disappeared at that moment, so with just a tiny force, he then lay stiff as a corpse on the ground within one second. Even if he wanted to do it actively, he could have never made himself creep on the ground faster than this move.

A gust swept over. Feng Bujue was dazed, lying there to dodge K3’s attack. And, only if he stayed within the clearance of half a meter like this, he wouldn't be affected. However, what Feng Bujue was worrying about still happened. Right when he fell down, the system's notification arose.

[Your Survival Value Supplement (medium) has been used.]

[Your Survival Value Supplement (medium) has been used.]

The two identical notifications successively sounded. Feng Bujue felt a headache was messing around in his head now. Even though he was in a dangerous moment, he still remembered that he got only two medium bottles of Survival Value Supplement.

Each Survival Value Supplement medium bottle could recover 50% of the Survival Value. Anyway, if players used them continuously during a short period, the effect would be reduced. Feng Bujue checked his blood in the menu. Indeed, it was just 89%, not full.

Although Feng Bujue could successfully duck the other’s slash, the Protagonist’s Halo had used his Survival Value Supplement bottles.

Because he had slipped, he should shed some blood... According to the rules of being immortal, he should be recovered a little bit.

"Curiosity kills people..." Feng Bujue flexed his body and jumped up. "If I left here before I’d met you, I wouldn't have met so many things... But now... my loss is increasing steadily."

K3 looked at Feng Bujue and coldly snorted. "I don’t know what loss you’re talking about. Quite the contrary, I’m surprised that you’re not dead yet."

"Anyway... It's really awesome." Feng Bujue laughed. "Thanks to so many conditions in this scenario, I can confront a strong monster like you."

At such moment, a fanatic would risk his life with K3 to ease his

distress of losing items and skills. People who were calmer would leave the scenario to prevent further loss; moreover, he would be more logical to reverse his original plan.

Feng Bujue’s thoughts were bizarre as he felt this situation was ‘rare’ to meet. Without the Protagonist’s Halo, K3 could kill him as easy as flipping his hand. Without Zen In Scary Dream’s assistance, he couldn’t have any time to counterattack.

It was really rare to meet up with the Derivatives. Being able to put forth everything and fight against a super strong opponent for a long time, to someone who had his Fighting Specialty graded E like Feng Bujue, it was an experience that he could only wish for.

"I’ve told you, if you want to fight, I will accompany you till the end." Suddenly, Feng Bujue's entire body was glowing in red light, but the hue was a little bit different from K3's, more like the color of blood. The temperature around him was somehow increasing abruptly, and the ambience became hazy.

Once his Survival Value was recovered, Feng Bujue determinedly activated [Body-Spirit Congegration Technique]. The [Death Poker] also appeared in his hands.

"Oh... You can also use this type of power?" K3 was a combative person, so when he faced an opponent with high fighting spirit like this, he, of course, got excited.

Level 3 Derivatives, of course, had ‘personality.' Although the Four Divine Pillars and their henchmen, the monsters with high positions and uniqueness, all had personalities, those characters were programmed by the system. However, the Derivatives' personalities were like that of human beings. With memory and experience, they were ever changing and developing.

K3 wasn't the only combative Derivative. This feature was popular among the Derivatives. To them, fighting is when they survive and the others die or vice versa. They were the data materialized to be obliterated. This wasn't like when a player died,

he would return to his login space. Facing an opponent, no matter how strong he was, they had only one choice, which was to find the way to destroy the enemy.

This style of thinking and acting pattern was imposed on the Derivatives by someone much higher than them. If the Derivatives had a life, from the time they were born, the only value of them was to kill anything blocking their way. Moreover, no one could say that it was wrong. Only did they follow this set principle, they could survive and evolve...

"Good... Come up here," said K3 excitedly, "kill or be killed is our fate. Do you want to understand more about the Derivatives? The best way to communicate is to let the blood from your phony projection exhaust."

Chapter 163: Attack of the Protagonist (15)

When K3 regained his consciousness, he found himself materialized in a strange place. The last thing he remembered was that he was fighting with two players in an abandoned shrine.

At this moment, reflected in K3's eyes was a metallic blue-gray world that he couldn't observe the actual sizes of the surroundings. Since his sense of distance was a little bit vague, it was hard to tell whether that blue-gray area over there was the wall or the ground. Floating in midair were some red ribbons as wide as the palm of a hand. He couldn't see the actual length of these ribbons, as they seemed to elongate to the horizon. At first glance, they appeared to be something intangible that could be pricked. When observing from another angle, their shapes changed due to refraction. In this monotonous world, it wouldn't be bad to have some red streaks as decorations. However, if used them as the landmark, probably, it wouldn't work.

This place had air, wind and the temperature was around twenty degrees or so. The sky was blue without any cluster of clouds. No sun, moon or stars. The sky illuminated itself. The hearing signal reception still functioned well. Besides his voice, he could hear the soft movement of the wind.

"Everything's alright?" A childish voice arose behind K3.

K3 turned around, but he didn't see anyone. Then, he lowered his head and found a little girl standing behind him. She was wearing a black dress, appearing as an eight or nine years old girl.

"You are..." K3 observed the other's data. He found that the little girl had a dazzling 'light' he had never seen before.

"X2-Wing," answered X2. "Do you remember how you got here?"

"No, I don't," said K3.

"Yeah.... the short-term memory data hasn't been transformed

yet... You'll soon be recovered," mused X2.

"What is this place?" asked K3.

"They call this place 'Desktop,' a part of the 'Other World,' also the biggest one," answered X2.

"Other World..." K3 said, "No wonder why your code is 2. And that light..."

"Currently, your code is 2, too," said X2. "Now you're called K2 – Hematite."

"Oh... Finally, I've reached level 2," K2 smiled. "But why I don't feel that I've changed in quality?"

"To be exact, there's nothing developed after all," said X2. "When you've entered the Other World, your code can be upgraded to 2, but it's just to prove that you've met the basic requirements of level 2. It doesn't mean that you have the competence of level 2."

"So, how can I—" asked K2.

"Don't think about it just yet," intervened X2. "Your damage is more severe than I've estimated as your memory circuit seems not to be recovered as normal." She finished while tilting her head. Lines of data glowed in her eyes. Certainly, she was checking the particular failure in X2.

"If we ignore it... the copious data have a certain possibility to turn into permanent data. The same content of the recovered data and the fragment data that couldn't be gathered will generate duplicate parts. This can lead to fatal mistakes that will affect your memory recovery," X2 said then extended her right arm. "Give me your hand; I'll help you fix it."

K2 put his hand into the small, delicate hand of X2. X2 continued, "Recall the last piece of memory you have before you got here. Calm down, and I'll help you read the data."

Soon, light of data glowed in K2's eyes.

.....

"Zen-Ge, you've realized it, and now you want to leave, right?" Feng Bujue talked to Zen In Scary Dream.

"It's okay." Zen In Scary Dream's thought was always clear. "If I leave here by myself, I will receive a penalty, but if I die here, nothing will happen."

"So... try to follow me, cooperate with my attack. We will play a cool game with that Derivative," said Feng Bujue.

Zen In Scary Dream thought, "Tell me to try to catch up with you? What kind of joke is that? I can deal with two guys like you at the same time. You really think I can't follow you when you just swing your broken stool several times?"

"I'll try my best..." Zen In Scary Dream didn't dare to curse, mostly because he was afraid that Feng Bujue would be irritated and nag all the following details of the Dragon Ball series. With this current situation, surely that guy could do that.

Feng Bujue slightly swayed his wrist, and the poker cards fanned out from his hand. He flung out four hands of straight flush. Twenty cards burst out like fireworks. From Feng Bujue's hand, four lofty shadows darted towards K3 from four different directions. At the same time, Feng Bujue's body also turned into red smoke, gliding like the wind to confront the opponent directly.

Zen In Scary Dream was startled. Let alone fighting technique and Fighting Specialty, look at this speed, he knew Feng Bujue was actually better than him.

"Insignificant skill." K3 arrogantly stood upright and spread his arms. The furious air burst out again.

Both of his hands were working with the air shield, constantly blasting attacking energy. It directly formed an air wall in mid-air, blocking the Death Poker's attack.

In just a short time, the shadows of palms filled the sky. The

power and attack range of this skill could make the two GMs sigh in awe.

The four hands of straight flush from 10 to A were struck out and had disappeared into white halo before they could reach K3. However, Feng Bujue had approached K3 with only one card in his hand now. And he only needed this one card.

His speed was like an explosion. His arm slashed obliquely with a shocking pace. The only thing that could be seen was the card being shot over, leaving a gold light curve in the air.

After he had successfully launched his strike, Feng Bujue immediately bounced back, lengthening the distance with his opponent once again.

Within these several seconds, Feng Bujue was using his spiritual technique constantly together with other means to attack; he even counted the different timings. Too bad, in front of an absolute opponent like F3, this attack couldn't make a significant effect.

However, it wasn’t completely ineffective.

A red streak appeared on K3’s neck. He glared at Feng Bujue and used his hand to check it. Immediately, the Derivative saw blood on his hand. He was stunned for one second then laughed out loud. "Ha, ha! Excellent! Again!" He then turned to Zen In Scary Dream. "This time, remember to come together."

Feng Bujue also had this idea. He couldn't waste time. At this moment, he didn't have Survival Value Supplements anymore. Once his Survival Value declined to the bottom, he couldn't activate his [Body-Spirit Congregation Technique] again. At that time, he could only be beaten up.

His Survival Value, from 89% to 1%. would reduce 2% at every five seconds. Not to mention the loss he would bear during the battle, from all ways of calculation, Feng Bujue had only 220 seconds. Lose or win, it would be determined within not more than

four minutes.

Chapter 164: Attack of the Protagonist (16)

Zen In Scary Dream grabbed his sword, moving as fast as the wind with wicked and sly strikes. His power also inclined to the max.

Feng Bujue had turned into a plume of smoke; his blood shadow glided while his cards were continuously flashing. This intensity of his attack was completely above Zen In Scary Dream.

Both of them understood that facing the Derivative, even if they had put forth their best, they would not be sure about their victory. If it were going that way, saving force for later would have no meaning.

The two silhouettes were striking continuously. Even though K3 was in a two-against-one situation, his defense was flawless, not falling into the disadvantaged situation yet. Talking about potential, he was twice stronger than the combination of the two players; speaking about skills, he got the cutting-edge kung-fu; discussing fighting spirit, every battle he had been engaged was a bet with his life.

The fight between the three of them had formed a subtle balance. Although the two players were attacking K3 with dense and powerful strikes, they couldn't defeat the other. If it kept going like that, minutes later, Feng Bujue would lose his current power, and the balance would be broken. However, they didn't have that kind of extra strength to make a leading strike.

"You’re a bit slow." In the middle of perfect striking and defending, K3 suddenly spoke up with contented tone. "Not strong enough, either." His right arm abruptly created an air shield that halted Zen In Scary Dream’s oncoming gust of sword backward.

Zen In Scary Dream felt his hand tingling, and the shock wave had spread over his arm, making him drop his sword.

"You’re so-so," K3 talked to Feng Bujue, "but your fighting experience and skill are just a mess..." He swayed forward, using a simple but unexpected move to break into Feng Bujue’s unguarded right side then nudged Feng Bujue in the ribs.

Fortunately, he had the Echo Armor, which still protected him while he was using Body-Spirit Congregation Technique. This nudge had pushed Feng Bujue backward more than ten steps, but it cost him only 10% of Survival Value.

Of course, this 10% meant the time he could maintain the Body-Spirit Congregated Technique was reduced by 25 seconds...

"If you can’t perform more than this, our battle will end here," said K3. "I still have four more to solve."

"Oh, turns out it’s your weakness..." Feng Bujue sneered all of a sudden. His eyes became sharp, as cold as ice.

"What are you talking about?" K3 looked calm, but he was vaguely anxious.

Zen In Scary Dream had picked up his sword. His left hand grabbed his right wrist to stabilize his shaking arm. Of course, he didn’t give up. Even if his strike failed, he wouldn't admit his lost just yet.

"Even the Derivatives can’t have an unlimited physical strength," Feng Bujue said while pulling himself together, dashing forward. "Your air shield also needs Physical Value to maintain. I’ve recognized it... When the consumption has reached a certain point, you will launch a stronger attack." The Death Poker cards in his hands continuously flung out without any series or hand just attempted to hit more points.

"It’s the best if you can kill the enemy. But if you can’t, you will have time to recover when the enemy has to back off because of your strong attacks." Feng Bujue took out more than ten cards, approaching K3. "Your Physical Value recovery speed decides your

attacks. The stronger your strike is, the nearer you are to be defeated. When you strike out the formidable assault, it means you have no way back."

Here, I'd like to explain a bit. K3's Air Shield is a passive defending skill. When encounter strong attacks (of course, using the folding stool to bang his back isn't a strong attack), it will be automatically activated and dissolve the attack power completely. The feature which is better than the Echo Amor is that it does not only protect the trunk but the entire body. Moreover, even if the enemy is attacking in a very close distance, it will still be triggered regularly.

Besides, this Air Shield also can be launched proactively. K3 had used it many times as the partial exploding, total exploding or just to enhance his far-range attack, etc.

Anyway, such powerful and useful skill like this would consume much. When K3's Physical Value was declined under 30%, the defending effect of the Air Shield would be lifted. Apparently, it would put K3 in danger. Thus, his fighting style was to use the attack to defend, and before his Physical Value touched the alarming line, he had to try overturning the situation.

Whenever his Physical Value had been consumed more than half, he would launch a tremendous strike. Just like Feng Bujue had assumed, even if it couldn't hurt the opponent badly, it would still push the other backward. Next, when his opponent was still gasping for his breath, K3 had seized the chance to recover. The forthright recovery speeds of the Derivative's Survival Value and Physical Value weren't something players could compare. They were born as data, and the worlds in the scenarios were formed by data. To them, recovering their blood and physical strength was like someone cultivating to be a deity absorbed the aura of earth and firmament. Their recovery speed was at least ten times faster than the players'.

Feng Bujue recalled the time he'd met X-23, also a Level 3

Derivative. When facing Pan Feng and Hua Xiong, she hadn't shown any special advantages, as she just won the fight by constant attacks. But this man standing in front of him here was so strong he was in defiance of the natural order. He had the feeling that even GMs would get killed instantly.

However, eventually, Feng Bujue understood his tricks... Those were just false appearance. K3's fighting style had a certain deceptive degree which made people think that he could infinitely increase the power of his attacks.

"Your method always works for sure." There was nothing blocked Feng Bujue's Death Poker cards darting from everywhere now, and they all hit K3. However, the Air Shield still worked. "You use 'Air' as an effective weapon... Most of the people, when facing someone who's getting stronger after each strike, gradually, they will have an oppressing feeling. This feeling will become their self-suspicion and fear towards you." When Feng Bujue was talking, the card flashed, cutting the other's throat.

Zen In Scary Dream lifted his head, aimed his sword at the middle of K3's back, silently stabbed forward.

BANG.

The same sound echoed. His sword was bent as the tip couldn't pierce through the shield. Zen In Scary Dream had put all of his strength to this attack. Although his Survival Value hadn't been damaged significantly, during this time, he had been draining his Physical Value catching up with Feng Bujue's rhythm.

And, K3 had caught Feng Bujue's wrist, which was holding the cards so he couldn't finish his attack.

"Your idea isn't wrong and your tactics are also correct," K3's face darkened. "Too bad you are not capable of carrying it out." He used force to break Feng Bujue's arm and tore it off directly. They could even see the bones at the cut of his arm; it was bleeding badly.

The pain was realistically simulated but the system had softened it somehow. If it were 100% real, Feng Bujue would faint in pain.

"If those two GMs could fight with me using your theory, if they were lucky, they would have had a chance to win," said K3 coldly. "Of course, I doubt if they could survive my murderous skills." He threw Feng Bujue's arm away. "And you guys..." He kicked Zen In Scary Dream at his shoulder. The latter panicked, spit out blood and was blown backward dozens of meters before banging onto a big tree. "I told you, he isn't fast and strong enough." He looked at Feng Bujue, "And you... Basically, you don't know how to fight. You gain less than what you've invested."

The scarlet light burst out from K3's right arm again like the dark cloud blocking the sun, towering the blood-like area around Feng Bujue.

Feng Bujue's Survival Value rapidly plunged down to 1% due to his wounded arm and the bleeding effect. It almost reached the bottom. His Body-Spirit Congregated Technique could be maintained for a few seconds. Whether or not this skill was still sufficient, Feng Bujue couldn't dodge K3's next strike.

"You're not worth receiving my strongest attack." From his move, K3 was about to use the Scarlet Dragon Fiery Fist again. "I haven't used this trike previously. I think it's more than enough dealing with you." He was totally correct. If Feng Bujue hadn't used that despicable tripping skill, the battle would have ended soon.

In this short moment, many thoughts were running through Feng Bujue's head. Should I say something to shift the Protagonist's Halo...It sucks if my equipment got broken again... Should I log out now... It's enough, I've lost already. Although I know I can't beat him, I've tried my best. Even so, I don't have half a chance to win...really unwilling a bit...

The dragon roar echoed. A red light flashed. The dragon-shaped

flow of energy dashed forward, aiming at Feng Bujue's chest.

Feng Bujue's first reaction was, isn't it going to break my Echo Amor...I haven't worn it for the whole scenario yet...

BOOM...

That power hit on an invisible field of energy. But it wasn't the protecting wall of the Echo Amor, it was...

[Your spiritual weapon's data has been updated.]

[Your SCP-500 has been consumed. The remaining reserves are 19/20.]

"What?" As Feng Bujue was listening to the system's notification, he saw the wall in front of him more clearly. It was a gold shadow of a giant poker card as big as a door, blocking K3's attack.

[Death Poker] had three special effects, particularly:

[Special Effect #1: Infinite (one card will be generated at each five minutes. This only stops when fifty-four cars are fully created).]

[Special Effect #2: Combination (attacking opponents by combining the same kinds or suits will enhance the power of the attack).]

[Special Effect #3: Efficacious seek (spiritual weapon will always come to the target the user wanted to attack).]

At this moment, the Special Effect #4 appeared timely. Moreover, it was activated.

[Special Effect #4: 'Card' Shield (consume 10 random cards to create an unbreakable shield).]

This was hard to explain whether the new Special Effect appeared due to Feng Bujue getting more familiar with his spiritual weapon or the Protagonist's Halo had created it. It's really hard to say... Coincidently, many of the Death Poker cards had been consumed and he had just lost another ten cards, which meant he had only one card left.

What made Feng Bujue more suspicious was, why was his SCP-500 got consumed? Although it was a panacea, it couldn't recover Survival Value.

"How could it be..." K3 was also surprised.

Feng Bujue followed the other's eyes, cocked his head to look at his hand, which was being recovered with a speed that naked eye could observe. Flesh, tendons, bones, vessel, and skin... all were regenerated strangely as the data forming light running around his wound. The broken arm was recovered within more than ten seconds. Anyway, his sleeve didn't reappear.

It seemed the SCP-500 was forced to be consumed to cure this arm.

"Why are you not dead yet!" It was unknown why K3 suddenly couldn't hold his anger. He didn't care about his draining Physical Value as he launched another attack. His palm clapped together as ten of his fingers intertwined, moving and blasting out thick meshed air wall.

After Feng Bujue's cut arm was restored, the bleeding status stopped, and his Survival Value halted at 17%, didn't run down to 1% anymore.

That Scarlet Dragon Fiery Fist had lengthened the distance between them. Feng Bujue also had time to react. Facing the oncoming air wall, he was like a sparrow hawk turning his body and moved aside. Although his move wasn't precise, he successfully dodged the attack.

"Tsk.." K3 spat out and said, "Don't think that you can be lucky to avoid my attack forever. I've observed you. This high-speed status of yours can't be maintained for a long time."

"Huh?" Feng Bujue answered him despicably. "You don't need to mind this... Before beating you up, I will not dissolve this status." Actually, he was just trying to be like a dead duck, reluctantly

admitting his mistake. In fact, not more than one minute, his skill would be automatically lifted.

"Go die!" K3 shouted, flexed his feet and jumped forward, striking three continuous fast and furious punches. These three attacks had sufficient speed, strength, and energy, which helped cast out the balanced and solid attacks.

[Your [M1911A1 Pistol] is broken.]

[Your [Eye of Hatred] is broken.]

[Your [Robots Must Die] is broken.]

"F*CK!" Feng Bujue slipped his tongue. By the way, there wasn't any player here so it would be all right.

In fact, his Survival Value didn't decline, but since these three punches were all the deadly strikes, his items got broken right away...

K3 didn't know what had been destroyed in the other's bag, so he looked at Feng Bujue, the one who didn't shed a drop of blood after receiving his three strikes at once, with fear. "You haven't died yet!"

"Die?" Feng Bujue's eyes were like they were sparking fire. He took out his [Mario's Pipe Wrench] as fast as lightning then pounded on K3's temple, which was really close to him now...

Puff! Puff! Puff.

The wrench hit K3 until he was bleeding. He immediately raised his arms to ward off, but his arms got damaged right away.

"Die! Die! Die!" Feng Bujue repeated the word while constantly pounding on the other. "You've consumed a lot within the short time, right? Your Physical Value's lower than the limit of the shield now, right?" He was pounding, punching just like he wanted to kill the old man. His attack scared K3 too much he had to run away.

At first, having several hits on the head dazed K3. He had never expected that other was still fine after receiving three tremendous attacks of his. As he was staggering backward, Feng Bujue caught up with him and started to beat him chaotically.

Chapter 165: Attack of the Protagonist (17)

As for Zen In Scary Dream, after spitting out a mouthful of blood, he felt dizzy, and his chest was pressed. His body was blown away, dangling on a tree.

When he could breathe again, he tried to press down his pain, looking at the place he had been previously. He then saw... dozens of meters away from him, a man in a long purple coat holding something like a metal bat, constantly pounding on another man, who was wearing the newbie costume.

Zen In Scary Dream was dumbstruck as he his jaw almost dropped to the ground. He clumsily took out a bottle of wine and poured it into his mouth which was still open, in an attempt to calm down.

"Hmm... Hitting the tree gives me hallucination or I'm drunk already..."

On the other side, in the shrine yard.

K3's Air Shield vanished, and for the time being, he couldn't gather enough strength to make another fatal strike. However, this style of Feng Bujue's lunatic attack hardly killed the Derivative. Regarding data, this type of attack could wear out 1% of blood. Moreover, not any hit from him could cause that loss.

It was embarrassing to say... if they maintained the fight this way, it would affect K3's recovery speed. If he wanted to recover his blood and stamina, he had to find a way to get rid of Feng Bujue's chasing and beating. At least he had to make 10 seconds of having no physical contact with the other.

Currently, Feng Bujue's Survival Value could only maintain his Body – Spirit Congregation Technique for roughly 20 seconds more. Just one hit of K3 and it was 80% that Feng Bujue's items would be broken again. Thus, he had to chase after the other like

crazy.

However, K3 wouldn’t be hit forever. Even if he didn't have the shield, he still had other attributes. His strength and speed were equal to when Feng Bujue was using his Body-Spirit Congregation Technique. Would he lose because of a pipe wrench? Could it be so!

"Ahhh!" K3 raised his right arm to parry the wrench. It seemed he broke his bones this time, but he didn’t bother with that as he immediately punched his left fist in an attempt to push Feng Bujue backward.

Unexpectedly, Feng Bujue flexed his legs and tilted his body to dodge this attack. "Thanks to you, now my fighting skill has been progressed a bit," he said then rose the wrench hitting hard on K3’s knee.

K3 got hurt, couldn't balance his body, and kneeled down on one knee. "You... after all...How could you... with your data, you can’t exist for that long under my attack! This is simply absolutely ridiculous!"

Feng Bujue looked down at the opponent. "This is the Protagonist’s Halo."

"What the heck is that!" K3 shouted as he swept his leg over.

Feng Bujue jumped, successfully avoiding the trip.

"What the so-called Protagonist's Halo... is..." he conveniently punched. "First punch – Shocking."

K3 got hit on his nose; his head jolted backward, and his whole body fell altogether.

"Second punch – Annihilating!" Feng Bujue was making use of the very last seconds he could use the Body-Spirit Congregation Technique, which was also the time K3 couldn’t launch his shield to seize the chance to attack the other.

As K3 hadn’t fallen down yet, Feng Bujue had hit him by the

stomach. K3 then curled his body like a shrimp.

"Third punch – Exterminating!" Feng Bujue felt satisfied, giving all three lines. One second before the Body-Spirit Congregation Technique dissolved, he delivered the last punch, which was 100% to vent out his anger to K3's face.

Fear revisited K3. He suddenly recognized that his blood was constantly reducing and it was at the dangerous level now. Moreover, he didn't have the air shield anymore. In case the opponent used a powerful attack hitting his fatal point, it would have the same meaning with death. The physical form he had been materialized with would immediately turn into data fragments without autonomy. After the scenario was over, the system would eradicate him completely.

A gold light flashed. Indeed, Feng Bujue had made the move the other was afraid of the most. In his hand now was the last card he got, aiming for K3's throat.

"There's only one truth." Feng Bujue raised his arm. "You're dead."

"I... will be... at this place..." K3's eyes were empty and gloomy. Besides disbelief, there were anger, fear and some kind of sadness in his eyes. He understood that the fate, in which he had to perish, had come eventually...

"Just kidding!" The card in Feng Bujue's halted at the other's throat. He laughed out loud. "Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!" He then retrieved both the card and the wrench and took several steps backward. "Scared now?"

K3's forehead was covered with blood which rolled into his eyes. But he still opened his eyes wide in shock, looking at Feng Bujue. Momentarily, he didn't expect to get up from the ground.

"Can we talk with civilized language now?" asked Feng Bujue.

K3 suspiciously looked at the other and slowly got on his feet.

Feng Bujue backed off several steps. "I say... if you still want to fight—"

"No... You won," replied K3.

In fact, the second half of Feng Bujue's line was 'if you still want to fight, I can only retreat...'

"If you want to talk about the Derivatives, I can tell—" When K3 was speaking these last words, his speed was slowing down. Then, it seemed he had lost his ability to talk. His mouth was still moving, but it made no sound.

A space crack appeared behind K3 silently. From that crack, a liquid that looked like mercury oozed out, spreading and lingering on K3's body. It then spread from his back to shoulder, waist and then legs... Feng Bujue could see clearly that there was something that looked like bird feather on the edge of that mercury-like liquid... Not clear what it was.

Feng Bujue didn't know what was going on. Was that a special skill of the Derivatives? But with his current tone and manners, it didn't look like he was about to fight again.

The mercury covered K3 entirely. Without any movement or resistance, his body was then compressed into a line of data and dragged along with that flow of mercury which disappeared into the space crack.

...

"That's how it happened." The light in K2's eye faded away. "You could directly bring me from the scenario to here?"

X2 dropped her hands and regarded him coldly. "This is a special situation." The little girl glared at K2 seriously. "First, although that scenario hasn't been finished yet, you are qualified to enter the Other World. Second, I need to prevent you from disclosing our information to humans."

"Oh?" K2 asked after having heard that. "Will the Level 2

Derivatives... watch over the Level 3 and 4 all the time?"

"Of course not," answered X2. "Tracking down is difficult already, let alone forcing to bring you out of there..." The little girl paused for a while. "What we are watching over isn't you guys. You just happened to be there at the same time..."

Those are three skills of Kazuma Torisuna from s-CRY-ed (Japanese: スクライド Hepburn: Sukuraido), also known as s.CRY.ed or Scryed, is a 26 episode Japanese anime television series. They are Shocking First Bullet, Annihilating Second Bullet and Exterminating Last Bullet. Feng Bujue had replaced 'bullet' with 'punch.'

Chapter 166: Intermission (35)

[You’ve left midway of the scenario. Within 20 minutes, you cannot queue to enter any party.]

[Since you’ve quit the scenario, you cannot receive any rewards.]

There were two notifications that greeted him when he entered the login space.

Not long after the Derivative disappeared, Copernicus and Galileo, of course, realized this. They were excited, leading Invincible Hero and Ye Zhi back to the mountain to compliment how clever Feng Bujue’s tactic of using the Protagonist’s Halo to deal with the Derivative was.

Turns out, Feng Bujue told them that the Derivative wasn’t destroyed, but disappeared on his own. Zen In Scary Dream, who had witnessed the whole process from a distance, also testified it. The two GMs were dumbfounded. They didn't know how to write the report this time since they had never met a case where the Derivative could escape the scenario. This case could turn into a major event...

In short, they didn't talk much but got out of the scenario. Anyway, GMs had to keep their stuff on the down low. If they had something they wanted to say, GMs could always talk with Feng Bujue in private, so now they didn't need to discuss with the presence of players from Order Studio.

Roughly twenty minutes after they had left the scenario, Zen In Scary Dream’s group was still online. They then heard a strange voice from the system.

[Your previous scenario has been shut down because of unknown reasons.]

We’d talk about it later. And now, Feng Bujue was quite depressed.

Let’s take a look to see how his stats had been changed after the previous scenario.

Title: [The Plot Seeker].

EXP: 13436/18000. Skill Value: 2637. Game coins: 326800.

Specialties: Common D, Weapon D, Investigating E, Fighting D, Shooting D, Curing F, Spiritual Technique E. and Summon N/A.

Bag (5/10): Mario’s Pipe Wrench, Flashlight, Folding Stool, SPC-500 (19/20), and Anti-Gravity Launching Device.

Items: Dance of the Knight, Death Poker (spiritual weapon), and Echo Amor.

Login Space storage (3/10): Jigsaw Puzzle Piece – Monkey, Jigsaw Puzzle Piece – Sunglasses, Persephone’s Vacuum Machine.

Skills: [Perfunctory Maintenance], [Body-Spirit Congregated Technique], [Plan Victory from Thousand Mile Away.]

It took him two hours playing the game and, although it was still fine gaining no EXP or coins, the loss of his skills and items hurt him badly just like a deep-to-bone wound. Let alone the two Survival Value Supplement bottles, just considered he drank them all... but the other four items...

[The Eye of Hatred]’s equipment conditions required user’s level less than 20, and it couldn't be traded after picking up. When he had leveled up for two more levels, he could sell this defesive item, so Feng Bujue didn't feel hurt much losing it.

Besides, the other items, like [Casey Jone’s Mask] with its marvelous effect of adding one more grade for his Fighting Specialty, were gone. After the fierce battle with a Superman like K3-Hematite, his actual Fighting Specialty had been upgraded to D. If he still had had the mask, which had the special effect [When in use, this item can improve user's Fighting Specialty to one grade higher than the real grade, but not exceed Grade C], Feng Bujue’s Fighting Specialty would have leaped directly to Grade C. How

strong was this advance? Even stronger than Like Rain.

And, his [Robots Must Die] had been used for only one scenario. The number of souls of the deceased under this sword was smaller than ten. His sword was gone, too. Anyway, he had earned some Skill Value points.

Besides, [M1911A1 Pistol] was the only firearm weapon Feng Bujue now had. He still had some magazines of bullets in his coat pockets that he had bought with game coins from the shop. If he sold them back, it would be a big loss, as it was not even one-tenth of the original price. If he put them into the Auction House... even if the price he set was just 70%, not sure he could sell it. Anyway, bullet types should match with the firearms. Moreover, the system had more than dozens of pages of miscellaneous items like those. If he put them into the Auction House, it was just a waste of registration fee.

He could only console himself... it was okay if he didn't have the mask since his Fighting Specialty was now graded D already. No Steel Sword was okay too; he had earned 237 points of Skill Value, which could be considered a small compensation. It was no problem if his gun was gone. Those bullets wouldn’t bring much profit, so he just needed to throw them to the shop. He had the [Anti-gravity Launching Device] anyway, even if this weapon could shoot out only one thing at a time. Then, although the others and NPCs would deem him as a lunatic in most of the scenarios, this weapon was still a far-range weapon. In case there was a Nokia store in some scenario, with this weapon, even if Gundam came here, he still could deal with that, isn’t it so?

By the way, it wasn't that he hadn't acquired anything from this scenario. At least, his spiritual weapon had been upgraded as his Death Poker had four special effects now. So, would it be pretty far to the fifth or the sixth special effect? And, he had had the chance to test the effect of SCP-500. Turned out it was so marvelous it could even regrow a cut limb. Generally speaking, he had lost some

and gained some.

As Feng Bujue was still trying to self-console and persuade himself, a notification popped up on his touch screen. He thought some GM was contacting him. When he glared at the screen, he saw it was Long-ge’s incoming call.

He accepted, and the voice of Longao Min resounded.

"Hey, Feng-Ge, long time no see."

"Ha, ha, it’s been several days." Feng Bujue smiled.

"Yeah, yeah. Playing this game messes my concept of time." Longao Min also smiled. "I've finished a scenario, and I saw you're idle. So, what about teaming up?"

"Ah... Well, I was forced to quit a scenario. Now I can't join any party."

"Huh? You were also forced quit a scenario?" Longao Min asked suspiciously. "You’d met bad teammates?"

"It’s too lengthy. Never mind," Feng Bujue answered. This excuse worked every time. Longao Min laughed, understood the matter and didn't ask further.

Feng Bujue seized the chance and changed the topic. "Hey, Long-Ge, do you remember Like Rain and Dispirited Laughing Bones?"

"Yeah, they're the two heroines in the haunted house scenario, right. They've added me as a friend," answered Longao Min.

"Yeah, these two, Little Tan and me have established a union," Feng Bujue said. "Are you interested in—"

"Ah, too bad, I have joined a Union already," Longao Min didn’t wait until Feng Bujue had finished. He subtly denied while explaining. "The members of my current Union are all my colleagues. I’m sorry, I can’t be able to join to you guys."

"It’s okay. It doesn’t affect teaming up for quests," Feng Bujue answered. He also didn't think that it wasn’t right. Almost all

players had some friends in reality playing the same game. The future Online Games could be one of the social intercourse methods in the office. It's quite a common business.

However, there was something odd about Longao Min's Union. He said that the members of his union were all his colleagues... It was also right. However, they weren't the policemen in his department.

Currently, Longao Min had been transferred to the Network Police Department, and it was evident that his Union was a skirmish structure... Longao Min used to get hurt so it would be hard for him to travel a lot. But if they let him sit in the office, it was a waste of his talent. Thus... he had been transferred to a more suitable unit.

Chapter 167: Intermission (36)

After a short talk with Long-Ge, Feng Bujue went offline. Anyway, momentarily, as he couldn't join any team, he should log out and prepare dinner. After playing one Killing Game 2 vs. 2 and one unfinished Multiplayer Survival Mode game, it was dinner time already. Although he called it dinner, it was just noodles.

According to his editor, the payment for the TV gameshow would be transferred to him within ‘a few days.’ Anyway, he had no clue which day among ‘a few days’ was that one day.

Thus, currently, every time he was about to prepare a meal, he would instinctively check his computer to see whether the money in his debit card had been increased or not. If he had some, he would definitely order food online.

Apparently, this time when he checked his account, there was... still nothing.

We should clarify a bit here. Feng Bujue didn’t have a credit card. In his era, using credit card had become more troublesome. Early in the twenty-first century, credit card related cases had taken account of more than 80% of the economic fraud, among which 90% came from making use of ATM's functions. Even if it was the era of controlling the nationwide network IDs after the birth of the third generation optical computers, still, this ratio wasn’t reduced significantly.

Under the given circumstances that the functions of ATM couldn't be changed or replaced, (the Government) could only issue laws related to using credit cards to create certain restrictions. Although they couldn't finish all the fraud associated with credit cards, strict management still brought some degrees of effects.

Using polite words to address the class of citizens like Feng Bujue, they were writers. In ugly words, they were vagrants. In some other descriptions, they were free-lance writers.

They had to buy medical insurance and pay pension on their owns. And, regarding the purchase of a house... ha, ha.

Citizens like him could only apply for credit card with the extraordinary low limit. Moreover, one person couldn't apply for more than three cards. With his personality, apparently, Feng Bujue had no interest in doing so.

If he really had something urgent that required thousands of RMB to buy some apples or melons, he could just borrow from someone.

Half of the ones who work as a novelist are poor. The number of rich ones can be counted up with the fingers of one’s hands. In fact, many people can’t be as well as Feng Bujue. At least, he could be lazy and still make ends meet. Don't know how many young people out there holding the dream of making a great literary work will be starving the next month if they skip writing for one day. They have to bear the despising looks from their family and friends as they know that they are talented but it's just their time hasn’t come yet. Their enthusiasm in writing gradually becomes a habit of collecting enough required words. To the other authors, their attitude shift from admiration to jealousy and hatred. Day by day, they are writing with an impetuous mind... When they finally realize that they have been walking on the wrong path, their youth has been wasted already...

In this immense society, the ones who decided to follow his writing career couldn't help but bow to some business rules and compromises. This is how this world runs, no matter what profession it is, struggling is necessary. Even if they can achieve a particular success, usually, they just earn enough to not worry about food or clothing. Big success belongs only to a tiny group and the ones who don't successfully struggle or didn't struggle will be starving to death. Moreover, they will die in humiliation. Because, nowadays, no one sympathizes with losers.

Writing novels but must consider the real life. Money has

become the first criterion that the society uses to assess a man. No need to tell whether he is a parvenu, the second-rich-generation or a corrupted officer, even if he is a dissolute person, and everyone knows that his money comes from fraudulent sources, or he is a morbidly lunatic, as long as he hasn't been jailed yet, there are still people who want to stick their hot faces onto his cold butt. (Idiom. one’s exciting while the other’s indifferent – TL)

They always talk about the poor living in the middle of the city but no one cares to pay a visit; the rich, even if they live in the mountainous area, brothers will still come to them. No matter what era we are, this principle will not change.

Just like the vast majority of saplings of the middle-class in this age, Feng Bujue felt he was born in the wrong epoch. Taking a little turn backward, at the time of the Republic of China, it should be the right place for people like him. Or, fast-forward it a little bit in the future, in which besides the brain, human's body were all replaced by machinery. Then he could just drink two liters of machine oil to survive half of a year. This would be where he could enjoy a bit of the sweetness of equality and harmony.

Unfortunately, he was living in the twenty-first century, which was like living in the threshold. If you use lines in movies to describe it, it will be, "The adults’ world is too harsh." In fact, nowadays the children also find their lives difficult, too.

Feng Bujue was kind of optimistic and open-minded, just living like that. When he should cook noodles, he then cooks noodles. Then, when he should eat noodles, he eats noodles. Might be one day, the shadow in his brain burst out, then death will end all of his troubles. Or, after it had burst out, he became a mutant. Henceforth, he would achieve the meteoric success in his career and so on... Anything is possible. In short, if there's something that makes you unsatisfied with your life, every factor that can change the current situation will be worth looking forward to.

"Currently, air quality in S City has a signal of increasing again.

Heavy pollution level is expected to become more moderate..."

"Metro Line 9's station expansion plan will be put on hold because of construction accident..."

"Fifteen-year old girl taking exposing photograph to sell her first night for latest mobile phone model..."

During his cooking, Feng Bujue turned on the TV to listen to some trash news while his hands were still doing what they needed to do.

After ten minutes, he was done with his 'dinner', then turned off the TV. He took the peanut butter jar from the fridge, sat down at his computer and yawned. "I've never heard any good news for a long time. Maybe the news-hunting ability of the mass media's decreasing. Perhaps they know that if they show the positive reports, it will play the counter-effect..."

Besides news, Feng Bujue rarely watched TV, because the most favorite sort of program that the stations wanted to do was to find a group of people sitting there talking about family scandals. They could argue in front of the whole city or even the nationwide to increase views. At around dinner times, all channels showed the same b*llshit, so as he couldn't even find a simple program that helped the audience grow their intellect. And, the soap opera was all about killing the invaders and then dealing with the civil war and vice versa. Feng Bujue really wanted to write to those screenwriters: Please save your time not to write scripts to fight against the Philippines or aliens. Think outside the box, perhaps you will be famous soon.

He browsed the official website of Dream Inc. while having his noodles. He had intended to access the page of Thriller Paradise directly, but a corner of the website drew his attention as he saw an interesting piece of news.

"We are completing and finishing the second Online Game, whose demo is expected to be released in May." Feng Bujue

muttered the news. "The temporary name of the game is [Frantic Thought]? Type: Cardfight."

He swallowed a bite of noodles with peanut butter flavor. "The first game is still in Beta stage, but they've already announced the progress of the second game. Dream Inc.'s policy is unimaginable... If it were another company, hadn't had any profit from Thriller Paradise, how could they develop the new game? Do they really want to compete with themselves?"

This news had just one line without any related game's screenshot or more specific information. In some sense, it belonged to the 'title party'. However, this tactic had successfully drawn attention from players. When Feng Bujue browsed to Thriller Paradise's Forum, he saw many topics discussing 'Frantic Thought.'

Of course, even the official news from the producer didn't have a photo and more information. What players could discuss was from their imagination. The 'rumor party' had found something somewhere in a hideous mess and pretended that those were the screenshots of the game as they said that they knew the internal information and so on. Moderators seemed not to care. Since today was the first day they had released the news, throwing a buckle of cold ice on players would cool off their excitement and longing for the game. Of course, they wouldn't do that. More false news indicated that players were interested in their new game.

"The well-known Martial World Studio's professional gamer [Wild Trade Sword Shadow] suspected of cheating."

This topic attracted Feng Bujue. This was a hot topic as the views were more than one hundred thousand and there were around one hundred pages of comments.

The poster seemed to be a sockpuppet with the name consisted of all English letter, but it looked more of random typing. Although this account had received many points from the forum, just

checking through some posts by this account, besides some nonsense posts, it wasn't hard to detect this account was the mouthpiece of Corpse Saber Studio.

Feng Bujue felt excited checking out the content of this topic. The scenario the other mentioned was surely the one he had participated.

"From the time my buddy and I had entered the scenario until we lost the Killing Game, we hadn’t even seen the faces of the opponent team. They disappeared in a closed section. That map had a Survival Value reducing effect. And, the introduction said that the environment outside the map would wear out even more Survival Value! I’d been waiting for so long in the map, and I had to use more than one supplement bottle. [Wild Trace Sword Shadow], if you weren’t cheating, how could you survive longer? Don’t tell me that you had so many blood vials in your bag or you were a player specialized in Curing Specialty. You can’t believe those words of yours, can you?"

This post had many unclear details on purpose... However, such topics used to smear people always declared the point benefited the posters. They wouldn't mention the disadvantaged details, or they would play them down. The only gratifying detail in this post was that it mentioned only [Wild Trace Sword Shadow] and excluded Feng Bujue. Of course, the poster wouldn't disclose his ID and his buddy's ID. As for the fact that they were from Corpse Saber Studio, they didn't mention that either, and their excuse was funny— " Martial World is a big studio with big force, I’m afraid of retaliation."

Feng Bujue read the topic and felt amused. Even if they didn’t know the truth, from the point of view of an outsider, this topic had many questioning details. Besides, just say that Wild Trace Sword Shadow had cheated, why don't you report to the Customers Service, but posted your complaint in the forum?

At this moment, Feng Bujue seemed to understand why Wild

Trace Sword Shadow didn't want to mess with the members of Corpse Saber. Those tactics outside the game weren't subtle, but they were sure disgusting enough.

He scrolled down to read more. The contents of this topic became more interesting. No wonder why it took many pages of numerous comments. There were many squids of Corpse Saber trying to stir up the mess and support the topic. For example, they would answer: "Yeah, right. Wild Trace Sword Shadow, if you are cool, come out and talk. Do you think that your big studio can always bully people like that? Or you know you're wrong, so you don't dare to show up?"

This kind of topic was really inexplicable. When Feng Bujue logged out, Wild Trace Sword Shadow was still playing. No one had expected that these people were trying to cause war in the forum after losing a match in Killing Game. Even if members of Martial World Studio saw this and reported to Wild Trace Sword Shadow, with his personality, he wouldn't give a f*ck. A dog can bite you, but you can't bite it back, right? Whenever celebrities encountered cursing like this in the forum and the stars had to come out and explain, besides giving an explanation, they didn't need to do anything else.

Also, many other players got incited and joined for fun. Apparently, they didn't know who was the guy mentioned in the post, or what was the Martial World Studio, but whenever they saw a post like that, they would gather like crazy just like they did have deep grudge with the others.

Of course, there were also opposite views. Some even gave suspicions. For instance, "Poster should use you real ID to talk. Being afraid of retaliation is not a proper excuse," "We shouldn't listen to only one side," "Are you sure that there's no other mechanism in the map, bro?"... To the comments like that, squids from Corpse Saber would definitely ignore them or give sophistry or try to splash dirty water on the others by saying that those were

members from Martial World... Squids are good at spraying water. They should have this occupational skill.

He continued scrolling further. After thirties some pages, the comments became more malnourished. Most of the time, they would be, "Waiting for the truth", "I'm just an average Joe," "a strong onlooker, already prepared watermelon seeds." There weren't many people giving debates to others. (Dried watermelon seed is a kind of snack. In this context, it's like grabbing the popcorn and waiting for the fun show. –TL)

This is also the regular routine of people when surfing the forums. At least 50% of the readers only read the first page, and they would never read the following pages. Unless that post has large contents of photos, it could be an exception. And, the other 50% who read the topic only skim through some pages. If there's no interesting development, they don't want to see others quarrel.

Not more than 10% would read each page of the topic, also follow up the new comments. Some of them are really into the contents and the results, while the others just want to check if someone replies to their comments or not... And, there's someone who just likes to read...

Feng Bujue could use his left hand to hold the chopsticks. He wasn't a lefty. Writing with left hand was difficult too, but he could use the chopsticks. Holding the chopsticks with left hand and scrolling the mouse with right hand is the technique he had always wanted to develop. Thanks to this technique, when he finished his noodles, he was also done with the topic.

"Ah~~~ already finished." In fact, Feng Bujue hated quarreling. He thought it was the most nonsense thing on earth. This world has justice and the truth. It's just people who don't want to admit their mistakes or bear loss, and that's why they choose to lie or use tricks...

"I really shouldn't read it. It's affected my mood." Feng Bujue

picked up the empty bowl, cleaned his desk and then went to the kitchen to clean there.

He didn't return to the game cabin immediately since he had just had dinner. Now he wanted to do some exercise.... For example... bathing his pet.

As a result, he looked at Arthas like a tiger watching its prey. The latter was lying on the sofa with its limbs all stretched out comfortably. Suddenly, it jolted up as if it could sense the murderous aura, turning around, looking at Feng Bujue...

Chinese netizens use the term ‘Navi' to describe someone getting paid to support and give likes or comments to topics on forums. It's somehow similar to the term ‘Shill.' But in this chapter, I use the word ‘squid' because I've read somewhere than the US Marines call the Navi ‘squid’ and ‘squid’ is also good at spray ink and water.

Chapter 168: Intermission (37)

Feng Bujue had spent around an hour to bathe the cat. After everything was done, he had many scratches on his arms, also had exhausted himself with sweat. However, it was done now. Originally, he wanted to do some house chores, but when he finished battling with the cat, he gave it up. Bathing a cat was a little too much for exercising after dinner.

He sat down on the couch and gasped for his breath. Of course, if he had already sat down, he should turn on the TV. If he had turned on the TV and he didn't want to watch commercials of goods priced at 998 RMB, he should switch to the entertainment channel. If he had already changed the channel, he should watch something interesting. Then, he went on to browse the list of horror movies...

Horror movies belong to the genre that usually has sequels. After the viewers have finished the first film, no matter whether it's good or not, with their curiosity they will definitely watch the sequel. Generally, their attitude is like: Maybe the next part is not that bad, right? If not, why would they make the third film?

When they've finished the second film, if it's still bad, the viewers will think about what the situation would be developed in the third film? Why they still make the fourth film? What would happen next? Why this deceptive story can continue? Don't tell me that it would have an awesome sequel later!

In short, Feng Bujue had watched the whole three horror films each lasted for 90 minutes. Then, he came up with the following conclusion: "I've wasted four hours of my life for a bunch of terrible movies."

He glared at the clock. It was ten thirty in the evening. It was a little bit early using sleep mode to enter the game now. If he used the non-sleep mode... What if he would join a long scenario that

would keep him up to 2:00 A.M to solve. Awkward.

Upon his thought, Feng Bujue shifted his look to the TV. "Or else, I can watch the fourth sequel."

Five seconds later, he slapped his face, shaking off this terrible idea. Then, he lay down in the game cabin, using non-sleep mode to log in.

The login space was the same. When Feng Bujue appeared in the elevator, he went to check his friends list first. Long-Ge was offline, and so was Wild Trace Sword Shadow. Little Tan wasn't online. Like Rain's and Dispirited's IDs were glowing but if he could see their IDs on his friends list, it meant they had entered the game with the non-sleep mode. Anyway, their status was 'playing' now.

Feng Bujue checked his mailbox. There were a mail and a package from the system.

He opened the email, of which the sender was Zen In Scary Dream. The content of the letter was brief. "Feng-Ge, if you want to give me face, add me as your friend. If you have free time, we should meet in our Studio."

"What?" Feng Bujue thought to himself, "Won't give you face." He deleted the email directly. "Didn't you want to dig for the Derivatives' information from me. More than that, perhaps they want to head-hunt me to work for Order." Feng Bujue could guess the other's purpose, and because he was too lazy to explain, he chose to deny it directly.

Anyway, Zen In Scary Dream should understand if he didn't receive the friend request or reply from him.

Afterward, Feng Bujue opened the package from the system. The content inside was the good news to him.

The package titled [Compensation to Player [Feng Bujue]]

When he opened the message, it was such a lengthy email, almost

had to be split to another page.

The letter began with some sentences of courtesy. At first glance, he knew it was from some sample letters. [Dear Player, due to the failure of the scenario which caused inconvenience to you,], etc. After around two or three hundred words, the content became more practical. It said that the scenario could only end when the players had to force quit; thus, there would be related compensation.

[Due to the unique feature of rewarding Game coins and EXP, you couldn't receive the corresponding rewards from the scenario. Thus, we're going to compensate double the rewards of scenario clearance for you. You can randomly draw two Skill Cards that you are able to learn.]

Although they said [If you have any questions, please contact Customers Service] at the end of the message, Feng Bujue understood that if he kept holding onto it, he wouldn't receive more benefits. Anyway, this compensation wasn't bad at all. If he were greedy, perhaps he wouldn't receive anything.

The scenario they had played got a problem with a FLAG that they couldn't finish it. It wasn't that they had completed the quests but couldn't receive the corresponding rewards. These two cases were different. In the first case, it was unknown whether the players had finished the scenario or not. Although everything went normal, they weren't sure that they could complete it.

Also, the reward he was about to receive was the rare stuff at the early stage of the game: skills. Indeed, people from the Order would gladly accept it. By the way, they didn't have any big loss, just wasted a little longer time in a scenario. They weren't like Feng Bujue, who had many of his items broken. Within only one night, he felt like he was living in the pre-liberation time.

After he had checked the package, Feng Bujue didn't hurry to visit his Storage. He then went to the Mall to sell the bullet

magazines. It cost 700 coins for a magazine, but now when he sold it to the system, it was worth only 65 coins each. It was unknown how the system calculated this trade.

He bought three bottles of Survival Value Supplement (medium) then visited his Storage. There were two glass columns stood in the room. He took out the two Skill Cards, holding on his hands to check out the properties.

[Name: Dragon of the Darkness Flame]

[Skill Card Attributes: Proactive skill, single-use]

[Skill Category: Spiritual]

[Effects: Release the Dark Dragon, devouring both you and your enemy.]

[Consumption: 100% Survival Value]

[Learning Conditions: Spiritual Grade E]

[Remarks: To eat or to be eaten…Problem's solved!]

"Solve my ass! I'm getting eaten too!" Feng Bujue cried. After the previous scenario, his Spiritual Specialty had been advanced one more grade. This skill was truly a suicidal skill where the fish died, and the net was broken. The price to launch this single-use skill was the user's entire Survival Value. In other words, after you've struck out this skill, no need to mention whether the enemy is killed or not, you're dead.

The second Skill Card was a true, precious passive skill, though its effects were a little bit odd.

[Name: Dedication of the Ice Warlock]

[Skill Cards Attributes: Passive skill; permanent control.]

[Skill Category: Weapon]

[Effects: Increase the success rate of all proactive skills by 10%]

[Learning Conditions: Weapon Specialty Grade D]

[Remarks: Sir W.W. always told us that, even if you are producing ‘ice,’ from your respect to Chemistry, even a fly isn’t allowed to exist in the laboratory.]

"Isn’t he Heisenberg! What about the Ice Warlock? What the heck does this skill imply!" Feng Bujue cursed the remarks and resolutely learned the skill.

Dragon of the Darkness Flame: (邪王炎殺黒龍波, Jaou Ensatsu Kokuryuuha) is a powerful technique that summons black flames from the depths of Demon World and shaping it in the form of a dragon capable of instantly incinerating nearly anything in its path. This technique is performed by Hiei in YuYu Hakusho, a manga series written by Yoshihiro Togashi.

Werner Karl Heisenberg (5 December 1901 – 1 February 1976) was a German physicist, Nobel laureate, and one of the founders of the field of quantum mechanics.

Chapter 169: Despicable Me (1)

[Feng Bujue, level 18]

[Please select playing mode you want to join.]

[You've selected Single-player Survival Mode (Nightmare). Please confirm.]

[Confirmed. Generating scenario...]

[Loading... Please wait...]

"Welcome to Thriller Paradise." The greeting this time surprised Feng Bujue because he heard that it was exactly his voice.

[Loading completed. You are entering Single-player Survival Mode (Nightmare).]

[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 item ranked Perfect.]

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

The rewards for completing the scenario in Nightmare difficulty level weren't bad, indeed. Last time he played the Hirata scenario, he got two Jigsaw Puzzle Cards, and this time, he would receive an item directly. However, the reason why Feng Bujue queued for this scenario was to pass the period from 10:30 pm to early morning playing the embarrassing non-sleep mode. Whether he could finish the scenario or not, he wasn't very optimistic though...

[Time and space overlap. A deadly game. Endless horror. Nightmares reincarnate.]

There was no opening CG, and the system had narrated only one inexplicable line. When the narrative ended, Feng Bujue was standing in a corridor, and he was free to move now.

The floor and the walls of the corridor were made from wood. They had the rigid feeling of a thick kind of wood, seemed not easy to pierce through. The corridor's overall tone was brown. Couldn't say it was spotless, but it looked relatively clean, and at least it didn't have the rotten or moldy smell accompanied with huge puddles of dirty stain. There were lighting devices above his head. At each certain distance lay a light dome embedded in the ceiling. Looking forward, there was no dizzy wallpaper, no rug, ornaments or doors. This was just merely a monotonous corridor.

"Ah... The brief introduction of this scenario’s just an empty shell..." Having heard the line, Feng Bujue immediately checked his pockets. If there were a Walkman in his pocket together with a cassette tape, it would be easy to explain.

"Hi there! Feng Bujue, I want to play a game with you." All of a sudden, a voice echoed. Moreover, it was a husky and low voice, signifying Saw’s frightening standard. Feng Bujue followed the direction of the voice and lifted his head to see a camera and a square speaker at a corner adjoined the ceiling and the wall, around three meters above.

"That Saw guy comes again..." Feng Bujue looked at the camera as his face was as tense as if a huge mountain pressing down.

That voice paused for one second then continued, "Until now, you’ve considered solving the mysteries one of your hobbies. And, you believe that every riddle has rules and answers.

"Collecting information and reasoning have become your habits and hobbies. You’ve thought that besides the certain armed conflict, which could be avoidable, if one wants to think, he can solve anything.

"However, you'll soon realize that your thought isn't entirely correct.

"At this moment, a poison’s lurking in your body..."

Having heard that, Feng Bujue opened his menu to check. Indeed, he was bearing the status [Poisoned]. This and the situation he had encountered in the Saw scenario were similar.

"Once the poison burst out, you'll be judged as failing the scenario. Even SCP-500 can't cure this poison." What the voice said had immediately crossed out Feng Bujue's first countermeasure for the given situation, which was using the panacea.

"You have 92 minutes to find four unique chemicals. Mix them together, and you'll get the antidote." Then, the voice started to announce the rules. "During the time, you will meet some people, or see something; what you see or hear can change your actions and interfere with your judgment."

Feng Bujue used [Planned Victory from Thousand Mile Away] to check the final BOSS' data, but he couldn't see anything...

"As your old friend, I'll give you some special offers, which could save you from the fighting factor and you could only focus on finding the answer." Eventually, the voice said, "Now, our game begins."

[You've received special item x2]

[Main Quest has been triggered.]

[Find the chemical bottles (0/4).]

While Feng Bujue was still thinking about the meaning of the phrase 'your old friend', the system's notifications arose continuously.

"Old friend?" Feng Bujue mumbled, "Is he really the one in Saw scenario? Can the BOSS move and pass tasks between scenarios?" He imagined conversely. "Ss... No, in that scenario, I played a journalist named Arthur Siegel, but he called me Unidentified Mental Disorder just recently. Call me by other name and tell me that you're my old friend?"

Feng Bujue thought and opened his menu to check his luggage.

He wanted to see what the heck the ‘special offers’ were.

Turns out… he indeed saw something really incredible.

[Name: Kill in One Shot Pistol]

[Type: Weapon]

[Quality: Legendary]

[Attack Power: ???]

[Attributes: None]

[Special Effect: Instant kill]

[Equipment Conditions: Shooting Specialty Grade F]

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

[Remarks: This pistol has an unlimited number of bullets. Any of its parts cannot be disassembled or reloaded. When shooting the gun, it can only fire once, and the user only needs to shoot one bullet aiming for the current target. Just aim at the target and pull the trigger, the bullet will definitely hit the object and kill it instantly.]

The first thought that flashed in Feng Bujue’s head when he was observing this item was: wait until this scenario ends, I must visit the Box of Fear to check the full properties of this item, also its price…

And the second item’s properties was equally shocking.

[Name: Contra Medal x 4]

[Type: Related to the plot]

[Quality: Legendary]

[Functions: Can replace the user to bear death (can’t be exchanged, trashed away or taken out from the bag).]

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

[Remarks: It’s weird… Why isn’t it 30 lives? Up, up, down, down,

left, right, left, right, b, a, b, a...]

"Hey... What's going on..." After checking the two items, the corner of his mouth convulsed. "This isn't the old friend's stuff. Even his son can only have this much." He paused for a while. "According to this meaning... This scenario requires purely puzzle solving. And, the difficulty level is like a turd, right..."

Feng Bujue sorted out the information he had. Currently, there isn't much information; moreover, something was unclear. For example, this BOSS gave me four lives accompanied with an instant kill weapon, but he didn't give me any timing device. It's the whole 93 minutes. Does he also know that I can count the time in my head? Seems he knows what are kept in my bag and their properties. If not, why did he say that the SCP-500 would be inoperative?

Feng Bujue didn't sink into his thought, as he had to seize the time to move forward. From the time he had entered the scenario, listening to the rules, checking out items and reasoning for a while, he had spent not more than five minutes.

Originally, Feng Bujue didn't expect that he could clear the game when he entered a scenario of single player survival in nightmare difficulty level. However, the current situation wasn't similar to the previous time. The voice from the speaker had successfully seduced... ah, no, attracted his interest. You could say he was a dumb player with the power level of 5—he wouldn't be angry with that. But if you say he couldn't solve the puzzle while giving him incredible items like those, it's like you are telling him, "I believe you can't complete this scenario."

Such sort of people, who love to read and reason like Feng Bujue, when facing this type of provocation, he would definitely play recklessly with all what he had. He resolutely wanted to solve all riddles, running straight away to that BOSS and throw him a despising look. "Give me your knees." Then he would feel satisfied and let the BOSS go.

...

Feng Bujue’s spot at the beginning of the scenario backed a wall. Thus, he had only one way to take.

He had been walking forward for five or six minutes, but the surroundings in the corridor didn't change, just repeated again and again. At this moment, no matter it was the direction behind him or in front of him, they looked exactly the same as images in the mirror. If the player closed his eyes and spun, he would absolutely not know which direction to move forward.

After another while, a relatively wider space appeared ahead of the corridor. It was a fan-shaped area adjoined the corridor without any door. After he strode through the hole, he saw the walls on both sides then extended askew forward.

He now faced the edge of the fan-shaped lobby, which had four doors. Each door was around half a meter away from the others. All the four doors had doors and doorframes. Moreover, they were all open. Behind the doors were the corridors, which were identical with the one Feng Bujue had just traveled through.

"Tsk... What are those? I've thought that it should be a more complicated maze. Is it a really challenging puzzle? Aren't I just going on the four paths leading to the places of the four chemical bottles? Then, at the end of each path, there will be a chamber, where I’ll do self-mutilation, etc.... What's mysterious about this?" Feng Bujue detested with a mocking tone to vent out his irritated mood.

At this moment, he suddenly heard the sound of someone, who was running away. Listening attentively, it included the rushing footstep and heavy, panting breath...

The sound came from the furthest door on the left from a distance and getting closer. When the runner was approaching at a certain distance, perhaps he saw someone stand there, he then started to shout, "All wrong! You’re totally wrong!"

After having heard the man yelling, Feng Bujue felt somehow familiar. Moreover, to achieve the goal safely, he took out the wrench and the Kill In One Shot pistol. Now it was like if he wanted to hurt the other, he could do that; if he wanted to kill the other, he could also do it, too. No matter whom the runner was and what he was about to do, at least Feng Bujue could ensure his life.

Seconds later, when the runner jumped into this fan-shaped lobby from the first corridor, Feng Bujue was dumbstruck.

That was a man wearing a long purple coat. There were many blood stains on his body as he was hurt severely... And, the man appeared identically with Feng Bujue.

[You will meet somebody and see something. What you see or hear can change your action, interfering with your judgment.]

The line he had heard echoed in his head...

"You..." Feng Bujue was still calm at this moment. There should be a reasonable explanation for this current situation. The guy who looks exactly like me could be an illusion or a robot, a cyborg or some monsters that can mimic people. This is a scenario at Nightmare difficulty level in Thriller Paradise, in which any sort of settings could happen, even if the whole surroundings were the mental world of a patient who was suffered from insanity. No reason for this panic.

The other Feng Bujue, who got hurt all over his body, wasn't surprised seeing this Feng Bujue. It seemed he soon knew the other would be here, that's why he screamed out when he was about to cross the door. At this moment, he spoke up again, "You mustn't... again..."

BANG ——

A gunshot resounded. Feng Bujue, who got out from the first door, got shot from behind. Moreover, the bullet had pierced

through his neck, which prevented him from finishing his sentence, the part that followed ‘again’.

Feng Bujue witnessed another him that got hit by just one shot. He seized the chance and stormed forward. His first reaction was to check if the Survival Value Supplement and SCP-500 could save the other so he could have time to complete his line. Unexpectedly, when he had just made the first step and hadn’t taken out the items from his bag yet, the other Feng Bujue, the one that got hit, had turned into a white halo and disappeared into thin air. This death scene was exactly the same with when players died.

"Is he just a hallucination? Or..." Feng Bujue’s thought started to twirl like a storm. [Time and space overlap. A deadly game. Endless horror. Nightmares reincarnate.] This verse appeared in his mind. "... Or I was getting back here from another timeline?"

His eyes shifted from the empty floor to the first door. At this moment, Feng Bujue’s line of sight and that door had formed an obtuse angle of 120 degrees. He was still thinking about the current pursuit. "If the dead were me, the [Contra Medal] should be effective... Perhaps the Contra Medal will resurrect players and teleport them under the form of a white halo to another place? Or, the other ‘me’ has already used up all four Medals?"

Feng Bujue held his breath, raptly trying to concentrate his mind to listen to any sound in the corridor. He didn't dare to poke his head out recklessly since the other used a gun. Moreover, apparently, the other had the God-level marksmanship. He would be safe in this angle, but if he craned his neck, he would possibly be...

"No... If that one were me, why did he get killed? A bullet hitting the neck could kill me that easily? Are the Survival Value Supplement bottles on the other ‘me’ used up? And the Survival Value was also at the bottom?" Upon this thought, his heart felt shocked. "The [Kill In One Hit Pistol]!"

Feng Bujue instinctively held the gun in his hand tightly. "Was the shooter me?" He made a few steps forward, leaning his back against the wall next to the first door. "Hey! The shooter over there! Are you me?" He resolutely stormed to that area, shouted to ask something that sounded nonsensical.

The effect of sound spreading through those corridors was weird. Even the smallest sound could travel through a significantly long distance, but the human voice could only travel through a relatively short distance without any echoes.

Feng Bujue roared again, "Even if you aren’t me, you can reply to me just once, will ya?"

No one answered him...

Listening carefully, from the time the gunshot resounded until now, there was no sound or noise generated in the corridor, even the footsteps of the shooter leaving the scene. Thus, it was possible that someone was standing, crouching or even laying on his stomach with the gun held firmly in his hands, aiming at the entrance of the first corridor, waiting for the one on the other side to show up probingly and shot him.

Feng Bujue wasn't sure that the one he had seen wasn't himself from another timeline. Perhaps he had just overthought. Might be it was just an illusion used to deceive people, and the shooter perhaps was a long-range elite monster. And, it was possibly... There was no shooter in that corridor. The gunshot and the death scene were just hallucinations, a kind of performance show. Anyway, the body had already disappeared, and there were no traces of a bullet hole here or there, so how to prove those events did happen?

"Yeah... Should I peep to confirm that..." Feng Bujue mused, but then he thought... What if my assumption is correct? What if what has just happened in the corridor is actually my future? So... what will I do?

"If that one is me, me in the near future, he will know my decision and my thinking process. No matter what I'm thinking, reversing my thinking or even when I'm thinking about nothing, still, he will know what I will do finally." The riot in Feng Bujue's brain was getting more and more disorderly. "Yeah... Why wouldn't he talk to me? Why did he have to kill the other me? What did he experience, or what am I about to undergo that makes me chase after me?"

"'''You're all wrong,' what does that mean...' Mustn't... again' do what?" Feng Bujue's cold sweat started to roll down his face. "The handsome guy who got killed and the handsome guy who killed him... Whose timeline should I depend on? Which one will keep everything on the right track?"

Since the first time he played this game, this was the first time he had met such a predicament. It was like, everything wouldn't be right no matter how much he considered. "Ah... Ha, ha..." Dozens of seconds later, Feng Bujue laughed coldly. "The one who can trouble me is only me..." He stated a very narcissistic remark then resolutely retrieved his weapons and cried, "No matter if someone's over there, or if you are really me over there, I now surrender to you. I will walk to you slowly. If you want to talk with me, we can talk. If you feel you must kill me, just do as you wish!"

Feng Bujue sauntered to the first door while talking. At this moment, he chose to believe in himself. He trusted his current assumptions, also the decisions he would make in the near future.

Of course, the most important thing was that he still kept the [Contra Medals] with him!

At this moment, Feng Bujue seemed to understand why he had received four medals and a pistol. He was afraid that those items were the primary conditions to finish this scenario...

Contra Medal: Contra was a video game released for the Nintendo Entertainment System in North America in February

1988. This version was produced in-house by Konami and features several differences from the arcade release to better suit the NES's hardware. The game can be played by up to two players. Lives in this game were depicted under the form of medals, appeared at the corner of the screen. Normally, a player has four lives as four medals; the left, right, up, down moves mentioned in the remarks (2) of the item is the procedure to hack the system and earn 30 extra lives by pressing the related buttons on the game controller.

Chapter 170: Despicable Me (2)

Feng Bujue didn't worry that he would be over within one shot. Under the given circumstance that he had four Contra Medals, the first four deaths were just a kind of using consumable items. Currently, unless he got disconnected or retreated purposely, in Single Player Survival Mode Nightmare difficulty level, there were only two cases of failure. The first one, he had used up all the four Medals and got killed for the fifth time. The second one, according to what the BOSS said through the speaker, [Once the poison burst out, you will be judged as failing the scenario], this meant, when his 92 minutes ran up, he would be declared failed.

In short, no matter what was waiting for him in the first corridor, in the worst case, Feng Bujue only had to die once. The factor that directly led to failure in clearing the scenario didn't exist. Of course, if it did exist, this factor would be completely unknown. However, this possibility was small and unreasonable. It was like when you play Super Mario, and the description says that you only die when you jump into the holes or your time is up. Turns out, when you just bump to the brick, it explodes... Apparently, this would turn into a game with a different nature...

After yelling for a while but receiving no answer, Feng Bujue held up his arms, determinedly walked forward, moving his body to face the corridor behind the first door. He was ready to receive a headshot. Unexpectedly, no one was in the hallway in front of him.

Neither the shooter nor weapon. The corridor was empty.

The shooter had shot out from a very far distance that naked eyes couldn't see, perhaps? And the gunshot had traveled through the whole corridor to get there? Feng Bujue thought.

If it happened this way, he could confirm that the weapon the other had used wasn’t the Kill In One Shot pistol. Because this gun couldn't work with the targets out of the user’s line of sight. If not,

when the user just pointed the gun towards the sky or an empty corridor, no one knew how many people at the horizon would get hit.

As for what kind of weapon used by the shooter... based on the distance, a sniper rifle was the biggest suspect. But if a person's neck were to be pierced by a 12.7 mm caliber and above sniper bullet, it would absolutely not be the kind of penetration and blood spraying out effect just now, but rather, the whole head should fall off.

But if it was just a standard gun, how could it reach such precise range and accuracy? Had the shooter installed the sniper scope on the Kill In One Shot pistol? Or perhaps the shooter got some skill that allowed him to observe a far far away distance, like the hawk's eyes or something?

Another suspicion was that if the other did shoot out from a really far distance, he certainly didn't hear Feng Bujue's surrender declaration. So... What was he doing now? If he lay still at his spot, he would see Feng Bujue coming to the door. Or after he had killed the man, he dropped the gun and ran away? If he had run away, which direction he was heading to? This side, or the other end of the corridor?

"If the other can see me, and moreover, he is me, he can notice that the other guy and I aren't the same Feng Bujue. If he couldn't distinguish us, he should have recognized that his first shot didn't succeed and launched the next shot already. But he didn't... Is it the 'cool down' time of his skill or weapon?" Feng Bujue wondered, "No... Not that."

He dropped his arms, entering the first door neither slowly nor hurriedly. He was carefully observing the floor, the walls, and the ceiling of the corridor ahead while walking forward in an attempt to find some clues.

Feng Bujue crossed out the assumption of long-range shooting,

although it could explain why he had heard only the footsteps of the escapee and his voice, and why there was no sound in the corridor after the gunshot. However, there was another explanation for the case of an empty corridor, much simpler. It was also the more reasonable explanation at this stage.

"They are all illusions..." said Feng Bujue. "The previous ‘me' and the gunshot are just the information my hearing and sight had caught, but there's no body or cartridge, and even the bloodstain on the ground had turned into a white halo and disappeared..." He turned, looking at the fan-shaped lobby. " He said ‘All are wrong’ and ‘You mustn’t... again,’ it indicates that I had taken this way and it's not the right way so I shouldn't follow it again?" He rubbed his chin. "Well, think about the other way around... I should leave this effect aside and take this path?"

Indeed, he couldn't find anything abnormal around. This corridor looked exactly the same with the corridor section he had walked through before. Even if it didn't have any significant feature, and every part looked identical, there was no footprint left on the floor. He turned back to the fan-shaped lobby, stayed there for more than ten seconds, but there was still no sign of a FLAG that had been triggered.

Looking at the four doors in front of him, and the four paths behind, Feng Bujue mused. "According to the standard rationality, each of the four paths would lead to one of the four chemical bottles, but if it’s another situation, in which there’s only one correct path to take, leading to the all four chemical bottles while the other three lead to death..."

He scratched his head. "Or... two hallways lead to the chemical bottles, and the other two are the deadly ways. Or, three of them are the correct ways and the only one left is the dead end road." He shifted his look to the first door. "Should the previous event be a hint or an interference... or I’m just overthinking about the time and space overlapping, or..."

"Ah..." Feng Bujue looked up at the ceiling. "Such a simple background and too little clues, what should I do..."

Although from the beginning of the chapter until here, Jue-Ge's thinking process and actions have been pictured with more than one thousand words, in fact, he had spent only two minutes walking back and forth. In simple words, what he had done could be described: dodge to the door, think, make some steps forward, think, return to the fan-shaped lobby, then think again.

According to the brief introduction of the plot, from the time Feng Bujue had regained his mobility until now, it was 17 minutes. And from the moment he had heard the key word '92 minutes' from the speaker, it was 16 minutes. It wasn't a big difference. No matter which point of time he would use as the standard, this 1 minute difference could be negligible.

Currently, he could divide the required average period of time to find the four chemical bottles. 92 minutes can be split into four sessions, each has 23 minutes. In other words, at every 23 minutes, Feng Bujue had to find a bottle. This was how he could be able to make the antidote before the poison burst out.

At this moment, he hadn't seen the shadow of the first bottle yet. If he still lingered here, it wouldn't be a good solution. Thus, he turned around and entered the third corridor.

Chapter 171: Despicable Me (3)

Sometimes, we would see the host play tricks in some sort of guessing gameshows. For example, there would be three curtains on the stage, and the host would tell the contestants that behind one of these curtains was a brand-new car while nothing was behind the two other curtains. He would then let the contestants choose one among the three curtains.

The contestant would then choose the first curtain, which the host knew fully well that it was where the car was hidden. He would instead go to the third curtain and reveal it. There would be nothing behind it, of course. The host, after that, would go to the contestant and ask, "Are you sure you still want to choose the first curtain? Do you want to change it?"

Most people would not change their choice due to fear or have a bigotry thinking that the host was playing reverse psychological tricks to entrap them. But in fact, no matter where the car was — let alone the emotional factor, based on statistic, according to the change in variants in making a choice — people tended to choose the second curtain.

Feng Bujue didn't pick the first door after a number of considerations. No matter if it was him in the time loop or just a mere hallucination, no matter if it was an interference or a hint, choosing to enter the other hallways didn't reduce the chances of finding the chemical bottles. Rather, the danger he would encounter, or 'the wrong choice' to be exact, should be much lower than in entering the first door.

Prioritizing in searching the other corridors could also prove what had happened in the first corridor. Once Feng Bujue had collected more information from the plot, he could then explain more precisely the previous event.

Ka-ta ka-ta ka-ta... Came the footsteps with high frequency.

After Feng Bujue had entered the third door, he started to dash. He ran rapidly like a purple panther gliding through the corridor. He was sure that he shouldn't delay further in this short of an endless-like corridor.

The first 23 minutes period was about to elapse, but he hadn't found even a medicine bottle, let alone the fact that when he found a bottle, he had to solve some games like in a Saw scenario. This kind of game could refresh and clear the mind and strengthen the body. If it happened in reality, besides permanent damage and psychological shadow, there was a high possibility that it would be some deaths. In Thriller Paradise, taking the current scenario for example, if players couldn't play it well, in a minor case, they would have to consume much of their Survival Value or waste a lot of time. In a critical condition, they had to offer the Contra Medal then.

As his [Dance of the Knight] hadn't been broken in the previous scenario, it was the big luck in Feng Bujue's bad luck. This divine effect, which helped him run faster and cost lesser Physical Value, helped him save a lot of time.

"Ah!" While Feng Bujue was running madly forward, he saw a door in the corridor ahead of him. It was a wooden door that looked quite old.

This was just somewhere in the middle of the corridor, and it was unknown how long the section ahead was. In any case, it was beyond his expectation to see a door here. He used to think that those monotonous corridors functioned to waste more time to players, or were connected to some different FLAGs on the ground. But it did have some settings here, in the middle of the way.

Feng Bujue didn't hesitate, as he stood in front of the door and extended his arm to hold the knob. He must get in there. What if there was a chemical bottle inside? Nobody said that the bottles had to stay at the end of the corridors. And, a question mark (?) would be put here to ask whether this corridor had an end and

there were chemical bottles kept there. Just like what hid behind this door, everything was unknown.

The door opened quietly without the 'squeaky' noise that usually came from wooden materials as Feng Bujue had imagined. The room was pitch-dark as the light from the corridor was devoured by darkness right at the threshold. Feng Bujue didn't rush to come in. He took out the flashlight, shining inside to check the situation there.

This was a small, empty room without any furniture. Some empty cartons and large baskets were piled up in a corner. The room had a small window, but it was sealed closed by an iron plate. There was no other door, and the floor wasn't matted. The floor of the room was different from the corridor's; it looked ragged and terribly shabby. Moreover, it was bumpy with mottled imprints that looked like some kind of insects had caused them.

It was hard to tell if this room hid some clues or items. However, he could confirm that there was nobody inside and no place to hide there.

Feng Bujue had spent around 10 seconds before he stepped into the chamber.

When both of his feet passed through the door and his body immersed in the small room, a strong chill caught him. This feeling was like wearing only a thin shirt and standing in the middle of a world of ice and snow. This cold was so real that it wasn't caused by a psychological factor.

"Oh... What kind of air-conditioner is that? The temperature's normal, just one step outside the room..." Anyway, Feng Bujue wasn't scared as he could still breezily think aloud.

He raised the flashlight, attempting to observe all the corners which he couldn't see from outside the room. At this moment, the door behind him started to move automatically. Just like when it had opened, it closed quietly...

"Close the door?" Feng Bujue seemed not to be patient with the situation when players got into a close space and got killed. He turned around and grabbed the knob, trying to pull it to open the door.

The result was... he failed.

After the door had closed, Feng Bujue was like he was jailed. Moreover, the chill in the room was becoming intense. Feng Bujue couldn't make the door move but pant himself. The flashlight could shine the white smoke came out from his mouth when he was trying to gasp for his breath.

"Alright, alright... This is a trap to waste time. I can leave when I get the answer, right?" Feng Bujue shook his head, quickly turning around, and unwillingly rummaged through the room.

He looked at the four corners. They all looked normal. Nothing was there. Then he walked to the corner where the pile of cartons and empty baskets was put. Right at this moment, Feng Bujue suddenly felt something...

He could sense that there was a pair of eyes looking at him from above.

Feng Bujue slowly raised his head and shone his flashlight up there. He immediately saw... In the middle of the ceiling, there was a floating shadow made of air. Its shape wasn't clear, but it looked humanoid. Its body stuck closely to the ceiling, just like it could isolate the light or engulf it. When the flashlight shone over there, the aperture of light was shut off around its body.

Feng Bujue gazed at this shadow with calm eyes. The other was studying him, too. This eccentric atmosphere was struggling not for long as the dark shadow gradually faded and vanished...

Unexpectedly, it was roughly three seconds after the shadow had completely disappeared. And, all of a sudden, two blue beams shot out from above from the previous locations of the shadow's eyes.

If a random, ordinary person was standing there, they should have been jolted. However, Feng Bujue didn't move but stood right at his spot. His hands didn't even shake. He just said weakly, "Hey ~~ you've surprised people... Returned lively eh..."

Right at this moment, the shadow snatched down from above. Feng Bujue agilely took a step back and avoided that attack with ease. At the same time, he took out the [Kill in One Shot Pistol], pointed at the other, and said, "What do you want?"

That shadow gradually became real and more solid from nihility. It then turned into a black humanoid creature — an appearance like that of the murderers who got defeated by Conan. Anyway, this guy had blue eyes. There were some strange folds on his body, and they could vaguely see some sort of blood-like liquid flowing there. It was like this man had his blood vessels grown outside his body. Moreover, they were all transparent.

"Do you tell ghost tales?" the shadow spoke up with the voice of a middle-aged man.

"You... Ha ha ha ha ha..." Feng Bujue didn't know which nerve of his had misconnected as he suddenly felt this scene was hilarious. What the shadow man said had poked his laughing acupuncture point. After ten seconds, he could reluctantly control his mood. "I'm warning you. I'm in a hurry."

"Tell a ghost tale," said the shadow.

Feng Bujue put his gun away. He didn't worry that [Kill in One Shot Pistol] couldn't kill this dude, but he worried that killing him could lead to the situation where he would be confined in this room. "If I tell you a story... is there any benefit?"

Although this question looked quite simple and deliberate, Feng Bujue had considered carefully. He didn't ask 'Will you let me out' but asked about 'any benefit'. This would make room for the other to give more possibilities... If the FLAG in this room were to tell a story, then the door would open. It was the same no matter what

kind of question to be given. But if after telling a ghost story, besides getting out of the room, there was something else, with this question, Feng Bujue could know the reward in advance.

"If you can scare me... I will let you out," answered Shadow.

"I can kill you with one shot and then get out, isn't it better?" Feng Bujue didn't aim his pistol as he was just trying to do the verbal probe.

"Hmm..." the shadow seemed to muse, "Alright, if you can scare me with your story, I will not only let you out but also bring you to the 'Prison' at the end of the corridor. You were running toward there, right? That path's really long, indeed."

Feng Bujue understood everything now. If he used the gun to deal with the shadow, he could get out eventually, but he would never get back the time he had wasted. If he told a story... although it would take several minutes more, he could advance directly to the end of the corridor. It should help him save some time. Heaven knows how long the remaining part of this passage was...

"Good. Then I'll tell ya a story," Feng Bujue seemed to be very familiar with this stuff. He held the flashlight under his chin and illuminated his face from there. He started his story with a dark, low tone. "Once upon a time, there was a taxi driver...

Upon this part, I think now you guys know why Feng Bujue was restricted to contact the other little buddies...

"... He usually worked late at night. One day, when he was driving on a strange road, he saw a woman in a white dress waving at him... " Feng Bujue had picked a story that wasn't very long. Besides, with the cultivation base of a storyteller, it was possible for him to perform for one hour or even fabricate the whole short horror novel. But at this moment, naturally, he should keep the story as brief as possible. "The driver didn't think much, pulled over."

"The woman then opened the back door of the car and got in. She seemed to be very light. When she got in the car, the driver didn't even feel the car sinking. The driver then asked, 'Where do you want to go—' while shifting his eyes to the rearview mirror..."

Chapter 172: Despicable Me (4)

The ghost story in this chapter is adapted from the short story 'Dead Body by Hanging' by Yumeno Kyūsaku. If there's something similar, it isn't coincidental.

...

"Eventually, that woman fell into the puddle, right?" the shadow suddenly interrupted Feng Bujue.

"Huh? You've listened to it already?" asked Feng Bujue.

"I want to hear a story that can scare me, not a funny thing," answered the shadow.

"Hmm..." Feng Bujue sighed, "I'll try another one." There were numerous stories like that in his head, and it wasn't a problem if he had to tell 180 stories at once. "Wanna be scared, right..." Actually, his heart was muttering, well, this guy knows he's a ghost, but he wants me to tell him ghost stories. This is hilarious...

At present, it seemed like Feng Bujue was about to tell proper a story, which should be as short and horrible as possible. Under the circumstances that limited the length and just used the power of words to scare people, it was somehow difficult.

"That day, I was sitting on a bench in the park." Feng Bujue suddenly acted like he was a patient who suffered from schizophrenia, wearing an odd look and using the first-person point-of-view to tell his story. "There was a fountain in front of me. I was sitting there, watching the water column shoot up and then fall down... The temperature at twilight was chilling me..."

The shadow kept silent, listening to Feng Bujue's story-telling. As for an outsider, Jue-ge was truly immersing himself in his story. The way he used the first person 'I' to guide the story was quite convincing.

"I was listening to the water running in the fountain while

reading some afternoon newspapers. But none of them had the news I was expecting."

Feng Bujue exhaled, and he could see his breath. "Two weeks ago, there was a girl whose corpse lay in an abandoned room in the outskirts. That's what I was looking for." A freaky smile hung in the corner of his mouth. "This girl and I were together for a while... I still remembered that day. It was also at twilight when she came for a date with me. She had combed her hair into a peach-styled bun, wearing a uniform with short skirt... She was so beautiful she almost made me breathless."

As Feng Bujue was telling this part, his eyes sparkled with enthusiasm, his breath became short, and even the corner of his mouth was convulsing like a sick person, "So... I followed my instinct, taking her to an abandoned room in the suburb area, near the X railway. Then I strangled the panicked girl to death," he paused for a while, and then opened his eyes wider to face the shadow, "It was like I could throw away my burden... If I didn't do that, I would go crazy... Ah... Ha ha..." He laughed, and his laughter somehow showed his satisfaction as if he still tasted that moment of pleasure.

"I took off her belt then hanged her on the beam to disguise my crime as a suicide case scene," Feng Bujue continued, "Although I went home like nothing had happened, from that day onward, every evening, I came to this park, bought some afternoon newspaper and sat here on the bench to read them."

Feng Bujue sneered, "'Young girl hanged herself to suicide' is what I'd expected to see." He suddenly snatched his hand to the void, just like he was catching something there. "All of a sudden, I saw a newspaper lying on the ground near my feet. It was an old newspaper someone had thrown away. There were three big headlines. Those words were like electrical currents shot into my eyes..."

"Unidentified body found in an abandoned house."

"In an abandoned room near the X railway, they found a corpse, which suspected to have the time of death around two weeks ago."

"The dead is a young male wearing an office worker suit."

Feng Bujue was wearing a terrible look like that of a ghost at this moment. "I picked up the paper, running out of the park like crazy. It was like some ghosts asked me to go to the X railway area, standing in front of that abandoned house.

"I looked around confused. When I was sure there was nobody else, I opened the door and got in...

"The house was so dark, I couldn't even see my own fingers. I've been searching for a while before I could find the beam where I had hanged the girl. I lit up a match and watched..."

Feng Bujue still shone the flashlight on his face as he was leaning forward a little bit. "The belt dangled from the beam, hanging my body. At the same time, the girl's voice came from a pitch-black corner behind me..."

"Ah ha ha ha ha... Finally, you've come for me..." Feng Bujue's story ended here in silence.

After one second, his face changed again and regained its original appearance. "How about that?"

"Hmm..." The gloomy blue light in the shadow's eyes dimmed a little bit. "I feel your fast changes are scarier than the details of the story..."

"Nonsense!" Feng Bujue said, then he took out the pistol once again. "I've wasted seven or eight minutes here (the total time elapsed was 26 minutes). If you want me to tell more stories..." The other half of his line was, 'If you want to listen more, you will hear the gunshot then.'

"Alright, I'll take you to the prison." The shadow didn't wait for Feng Bujue to finish his line. He raised one finger, "Don't concern yourself with what you're about to see. They are harmless. No need

to struggle."

What this NPC said was important. If it didn't say hello first, Feng Bujue would have struggled hard...

One second later, a light lit up from the fingertip of the shadow. That dot then gradually enlarged to a sphere. Next, countless strange larvae came out from the light sphere. The color and shape of those things were like that of the boiled eggs without the shell. But they were just about the size of a larva, a pale and disgusting larva...

The number of those larvae was getting bigger, just like a vortex moving in midair. Although they were acting in a big group, they seemed to have individual thoughts. Those soft, half-translucent-milky creatures were chasing and devouring each other... It looked messy, but in fact, they were following some sort of strange order.

Feng Bujue felt like he was watching a drop of water under the microscope. However, he couldn't enjoy it for long. The bad situation took place. Those creatures swam in the air, surrounding Feng Bujue and twirling. It was getting denser and faster from time to time...

They started to approach Feng Bujue's body, crawling and gathering on his body until they covered him entirely, including his eyes, ears, nostrils, and mouth.

When Feng Bujue felt awkward that the situation was a bit out of control, he doubted that he got fooled this time. Then, he felt the pressure around him loosen and the chill disappear. His eyes were still closed, but he could feel the surrounding was brightening up.

He opened his eyes, then he saw...

Chapter 173: Despicable Me (5)

Feng Bujue was standing in a round room. The light here was bright and soft. Facing him were four iron-fence gates. Perhaps they were all prison cells. However, there was not a single beam of light behind fence-bars. It was unknown whether there were prisoners or anything inside.

And there were other fours doorways behind Feng Bujue. This looked exactly the same with the fan-shaped lobby he had passed. He couldn't help feeling fooled... Was it true that any path on the other side would lead to the same goal? All those four corridors would lead to this 'cell'?

"Ah, it's you again," a voice greeted him.

Standing in front of the four cells, also in the middle of this room, was a desk. The one talking to Feng Bujue was sitting behind that desk, looking at him.

It was a big, wooden office desk that seemed to be made from high-grade wood. All the details of the desk were made elegantly and exquisitely. The arc of the table corner, the shiny handles of the drawers as well as the delicate carvings along the edge, all showed the luxury and excellent manners.

This item was something that those of a low-income class like Feng Bujue could never afford in reality. The price of this desk could be even double or triple the amount of his cabin game. It should be noted that since the beginning of the 21st century, real wooden furniture was already rare. Wooden furniture that ordinary people purchased were made from chipped wood, and many of them were even made from the toxic material that could cause cancers. However, people who did business still dared to trade such wooden furniture. As of Feng Bujue's era, under the pressure of oil shortage, dangerous pollution, and desertification, products related to natural resources became incredibly luxurious.

The desk in front of him was like dinosaurs, UFOs, or a real beauty wearing no makeup — all were things he could luckily meet in games.

"What do you mean by 'again'?" Feng Bujue looked at the thing in front of his eyes, "And, why can you talk?"

"Why can't I talk?" answered the other.

"Um... Let me think... BECAUSE YOU ARE JUST A RABBIT!" Feng Bujue looked at the rabbit face of the other, pretending to say half of a sentence and yelling the other half.

The one sitting behind the desk talking with Feng Bujue was actually a rabbit. It was a rabbit as big as a small kangaroo, to be exact. Its knuckles and feet didn't look like that of a real rabbit. Its appearance should be humanized already since it was able to 'sit' on the desk chair. Moreover, it could use the arms, although they weren't long enough to hold stuff. The rabbit was wearing a white shirt with a black suit vest accompanied with a bow, but it didn't wear trousers.

"Traveler from the strange world, you aren't courteous," the two hairs on the rabbit's mouth curled. It also wore a pair of glasses. "I'm a loyal servant of the [Lord of Time], a handsome, intelligent and elegant protector of Time..." The brother rabbit caressed its long ears with its short arms. "Let the villains be frightened to death... MASTER RABBIT!"

Feng Bujue pressed one of his palms on his forehead to wipe off his sweat, "Ah... Ha ha... The rabbits take all the good names."

"It's Master Rabbit! Not the rabbit!" Rabbit corrected him.

"Okay, all right, all right." Feng Bujue didn't want to quarrel with a rabbit. "Master Rabbit, do you have medicine?"

"Are you sick?"

The vessels on Feng Bujue's forehead were bulging as he was having a complicated mood, which was mixed with joy and anger.

"I'm poisoned. I want to find four bottles of chemical agents. Do you have—"

"Yes, I do," Rabbit answered before he could finish.

"Huh?" as Feng Bujue was about to ask what the other would require to give him the bottles, Master Rabbit added, "But I can't give you."

"What do you want?" asked Feng Bujue. "I didn't bring carrots."

"Who said I want carrot!"

"No big cabbage, either."

"Kid, behave!"

"If you wish to experience the feeling of being pulled out of a top hat..." Feng Bujue continued his rabbit-talk to challenge the other's patience. "If you can find a hat big enough for your giant body, I'm willing to perform the trick with you."

Rabbit tried to make serious face to threaten him. "If my cousin was here, you should have had your nostrils stuck with two detonators already." Yet, no matter how hard it had tried, its face didn't bring any deterrent.

"Is your cousin Bugs Bunny?" asked Feng Bujue.

Rabbit clenched its fists, gritted its bunny teeth and cried, "ALDEN!"

One second later, the shadow with shimmering blue eyes and transparent blood vessels, who had been in the previous room, appeared next to Rabbit all of a sudden. It said, "What's up?"

"This guy who appeared at the 77th minute came from your place?" asked Rabbit.

"True," Alden answered.

"Explain him the function of the corridor," said Rabbit.

"Ah," Alden regarded him then shifted to Feng Bujue.

When Feng Bujue heard the other mentioned 'the 77th minute,' his heart fell. No way. Although running away and the low-temperature condition have created certain interference to my biological clock, at most, it's just 30 minutes. What does that 77th minute mean?

Soon, Alden solved the questions in Feng Bujue's mind. In fact, that shadow didn't have a mouth as his voice came out directly from inside the dark shadow, "From the 'Start' room through the doorway to another corridor, which leads to the 'End,' time will change." It raised one arm, pointed to the second door on the left behind Feng Bujue. "The second door here is actually the third door in the 'Start.' The amount of time you've spent when you've entered the third corridor and got to this place is 69 minutes, plus the time you'd spent in the corridor."

Feng Bujue asked immediately, "How about the other three corridors?"

"It's 46 minutes for the second corridor, plus the traveling time traveling," Alden answered. "The first corridor and the fourth corridor are the same. It's 23 minutes plus the traveling time."

There was something that popped up in Feng Bujue's head. He then asked instantly, "I've arrived here before?"

"True. And you've taken the chemical bottle I have!" Rabbit glared at its pocket watch. "Anyway, you are now the Feng Bujue who can live for 30 minutes. Yeah, then I just need to explain a bit to you, and I don't need to spend time babbling with the others."

"So... There are two kinds of time here? One is the actual time I've been experienced, and the other is the time of this place?" asked Feng Bujue.

"No matter which timeline you are in, you'll be dead when the poison bursts out at the 92nd minute," added Rabbit.

Feng Bujue mused for the whole minute before speaking up

again, "What if I return by taking one of those corridors here?"

"From the 'End' through a hallway to reach the 'Start,' no matter which corridor you'd pick, you can recover 23 minutes starting from the current time of this prison. However, it will also add the time you travel through the corridor," Alden answered.

"Right now, the time of the prison is the 79th minute. Assume that I have to spend 15 minutes to travel through the corridor then from here to the 'Start'. When I get out... it should be the 71st minute?" asked Feng Bujue.

"Right," Rabbit continued, "However, the time of the 'Start' isn't so much important. When you depart from the 'Start' and enter the corridor, the time will be counted according to the 'End.' For example, if you arrive at the room at the 90th minute, no need to panic. You only need to jump into the first corridor to sync your time with the 23rd minute of the prison. Of course, if you return before you've finished running through the whole corridor, time will be counted since you've left the 'Start' and plus the time you've spent in the corridor."

"You rabbit could actually make up such morbid settings?" asked Feng Bujue.

Rabbit slapped the desk. "I'm warning you, Mister Feng Bujue from the 32nd minute! You are wasting your time!"

After Feng Bujue had heard the rules, he understood that with the timeline in this scenario, he wouldn't be dead soon as he just needed to run back and forth between the corridors to enter the 23rd, 46th, or the 69th minute, plus the time he would have had spent in running. The important thing was no matter which timeline he used to count the remaining time, his time or this place time, the condition wouldn't be changed as he would still be dead by the 92nd minute when the poison burst out.

Rabbit hadn't finished yet, so he continued, "Obviously, Alden and I are here to help. If not, we didn't need to tell you these

things." He extended his hand under the table, pushed some button then said, "The one who designed this game is him!"

In just a blink of an eye, a cell behind Rabbit was lit up. Inside that pitchy cell, a light drilled through the darkness from the ceiling, illuminating the scene in the room.

The cell floor was concrete, and so were the other three walls and the ceiling. Through the jail bars, Feng Bujue could see a chair standing amid the cell. A puppet in a black suit and a red bow tie was sitting there.

The face of the puppet had the shape of the word 申. It was pale and dark with black hair wrapped the head. The puppet was using his black-and-red eyes looking at the three standing outside the cell. Or, I should say, a man, a rabbit, and a monster...

At this moment, Feng Bujue took out the pistol, walking to the cell, and pointed at the puppet, which usually appeared in the 'Saw' series. He then said seriously, "Give me a reason not to kill you."

A low, hoarse voice came out from the puppet's stomach. It sounded like a recording, but the puppet was also moving its mouth. "Even if you pull the trigger, you can't actually kill me. Moreover, it can't help you do anything in this game." The puppet's neck was moving, turning its face to Rabbit, "Besides, even if I'm a prisoner now, your seniority isn't enough to handle me. Am I correct, Rabbit?"

Chapter 174: Despicable Me (6)

"No need to pretend that you have nothing to fear," said Rabbit to the puppet. "Anyway, you're right. I will not let this traveler kill you." It turned to Feng Bujue and said, "You go catch him for me then we'll talk."

"Catch 'him' for you?" Feng Bujue glared at the puppet and repeated, "Him?"

"I gave you my chemical bottle at the 41st minute. At the same time, you caught him for me." It pointed to the fourth corridor. "You came from there at that time."

[Current Quest updated. Main Quest updated.]

The notifications arose. Feng Bujue opened his menu to check. He saw a new quest – [Catch Billy the Puppet at the fourth corridor and hand him to Rabbit to exchange for a chemical bottle] – under the first quest [Find chemical bottles: 0/4].

Feng Bujue looked up, taking a deep breath. "I have an assumption. If I caught him for you and I didn't take the chemical bottle after that," he paused for a second, "Would it have changed our current situation?"

"You want to say, if you had done that, the chemical bottle would still be in my hands, right?" said Rabbit.

"Yeah."

"But you did take it," Rabbit looked at Feng Bujue. "Do you understand?"

Feng Bujue was dumbstruck for a while. "You mean..."

"Because you'd taken it at that time, that's why you can be here... asking me this stuff at this moment," answered Rabbit. "Let's reason it from another possibility... Assuming that you didn't take the chemical bottle at that time, then I would be about to give you

the chemical bottle at this moment. However, even if it went like that, you would still have to catch Billy. Because if you didn't, my cell would be empty now and I wouldn't give you the bottle. Paradoxes will happen now.

"And, if you went catching him and returned here in the 41st minute, there would be two possibilities. First, you would take my bottle, and that would make 'your' previous action and existence be denied. And if you didn't take it..."

Feng Bujue continued the rabbit's speech, "The me now who is talking with you would be denied, too."

Rabbit raised his arm. "Think about it. If you choose the wrong way resulting in the time and space paradox..."

"The game will fail directly..." Feng Bujue pondered. He turned to the puppet, "I really want to discuss life with you."

"Ha ha," Billy the Puppet laughed with a low tone. "How did you know that we haven't talked yet?"

Feng Bujue walked back and forth in front of the four doorways. "Did I bring him here from the fourth corridor..." He asked, "Besides the bottle you had, where are the other three?"

"The one in my hands was actually Alden's." It swung its hand and threw a glance at Alden. The other disappeared in just a blink of an eye. Rabbit continued, "Among the four, he's the most cooperative one."

"The four?" Feng Bujue looked at the four cells.

As Rabbit knew what Feng Bujue wanted to ask, it answered him directly, "There should be four criminals in these four cells. The former jailer who was in charge of this place was Satsuma Diehl... I think you've heard of him. He also deemed himself a sinner. Thus, one day, he opened all four cells and released the prisoners inside then ran away." The rabbit returned to its chair and then turned off the light in Billy's cell. When the light was off, Billy the Puppet

was like he had entered another world, which was totally separated with this place.

"So, Master sent me here to take care of this place," Rabbit continued. "Alden's quite cooperative. He just prefers to stay in a closed, dark place and sometimes he wants to hear ghost stories. He isn't much hostile or does resist. I considered him a good model prisoner. That's why I've made him my assistant."

"Two brats..." Feng Bujue slipped his tongue.

"Said what!"

"Let say I didn't say anything," Feng Bujue forced a smile to switch the topic.

Rabbit snorted then continued, "Each corridor here has one of the chemical bottles you want to find. Alden gave me his bottle, which is in the third corridor. And, 'previously,' I have given it to the 'you of no longer after that'," it paused, stroking its hairs as if it seemed to be also confused, "Billy used to hide in the fourth corridor. A bottle's also there. You will have caught him, of course, you will have gotten the bottle."

"Okay. I got it," Feng Bujue said, "In other words, the corridors number one, two, and four each has a bottle. And I will have had exchanged Billy, whom I caught in the fourth corridor, for the other one."

Rabbit nodded in agreement.

"The last two questions. First off, only talking about the distance, which corridor is the shortest?" Feng Bujue wanted to find the shortest corridor to get back to the 'Start' then he would continue to reason from there because it was already the 84th minute. He was afraid that he didn't have enough time to deal with the BOSS in the first or the second corridor before he could reach the 'Start.'

He planned to return first to recover the time loop, and then he would enter the fourth corridor from the 'Start.' That was how he

could make time to do something when traveling across the corridor.

"I don't know," answered Rabbit. "I've only walked through the first corridor. I've never visited the others. I can't compare which one is longer or shorter than the others."

"What? What kind of jailer are you?" asked Feng Bujue.

"If I could go there at ease, I would capture all the prisoners myself. Why would I bother you with that?" Rabbit snapped back boldly and confidently.

"So where is the one hiding in the first corridor? Did you get him?" Feng Bujue lifted his head to sweep through the four pitch-black cells behind Rabbit. "Which cell confines him? Where's the chemical bottle that he kept?"

"I said I'd walked through the first corridor. I didn't say that I've already captured him," answered Rabbit. "That guy... is a little bit special. I personally suggest saving it for the last."

"Damn!" Feng Bujue grumbled then turned around walking straight forward.

"Hey! Didn't you say two questions? What's the second question?" asked Rabbit.

Feng Bujue answered without turning his head while walking to the second corridor. "... The second question... Why you don't go catch them yourself!" His figure quickly disappeared into the corridor.

At this moment, the time Feng Bujue had been through personally was around 40 minutes according to his own timing.

Chapter 175: Despicable Me (7)

"I haven't used any [Contral Medal] yet, and 40 minutes have passed in my real personal time. According to that rabbit, at the 41st minute of the scenario time, I was in the cell and handed over the puppet to it. In other words, in a few minutes, I would arrive at the 'Start,' enter the fourth corridor and capture the puppet. Then I would come to the 'End.' It would take 18 minutes of my real personal time." This was the first time Feng Bujue had to calculate many things at once in a scenario. Moreover, he didn't feel relaxed physically. In the next moment, certainly, he had to dash non-stop. "If I can't solve a BOSS in this return when I come back to the 'End,' I won't have enough time." In fact, when he stepped into this hallway, he had already crossed out the plan of directly running through the passage to return. "My current plight is... I've departed from the 85th minute of the time in the prison. I must solve this BOSS within 7 minutes..." He strode faster upon this thought, "As long as I can do that and also ensure that I won't take more than 23 minutes to get through this passage, I won't fail due to the time of the scenario."

Indeed, a door appeared ahead of him while he was still thinking. There was a door on one side of the wall in this second corridor.

But this door was much different from Alden's shabby door in the third corridor. This door looked pretty much the big door of a biochemical warfare storage.

It was a polished metal door that looked like a thick metal wall. There was no knob on the wall but a round valve.

These things reminded Feng Bujue of the Saw scenario he used to play. The room that was like a cold storage also had a thick metal door.

"Is it about to repeat the old trick..." Feng Bujue thought, but he didn't cease his action, totally didn't hesitate or back off.

Currently, Feng Bujue vaguely felt that he should kill the BOSS behind this door...

In the 'End' prison, after the 80th minute, there was only one BOSS, Billy the Puppet, kept in the cell and Rabbit only asked Feng Bujue to turn back to the time of the pass to catch this prisoner.

And why Rabbit suggested him to save the BOSS in the first corridor for the last, it could be related to the scene he had witnessed in the 'Start.' Taking his real personal time to count, might be not long afterward, Feng Bujue would visit the 'End' ultimately. Then he would start to enter the first corridor from there. But he wouldn't come back to the prison... Now he could put this stuff aside without the need to consider it at the moment.

Recently, it was 100% that the prisoner in this second corridor would be killed soon. Continuing from this clue, later on, Feng Bujue would return to the 'Start' then go to the fourth corridor to catch the puppet. When he got to the prison at the 'End,' he would have three chemical bottles, a puppet, and a death announcement of the BOSS in the second corridor. So, later on, Rabbit wouldn't comment anything why this prisoner wasn't in his cell.

If things would develop this way, and he had departed at the 41st minute of the prison, which was equivalent to the 40th minute of his real personal time, plus 18 minutes, and the time he had spent dashing through the passage, it would be more than 70 minutes by now.

The period of the last 20 minutes was tight, but adequate for him to enter the first corridor under the circumstance of no occurrence of time and space paradox, which would lead to that bloody scene. But why was that? I'm afraid we could only get it at that point.

"Heeey..." Feng Bujue used force from his waist and flexed his knees to transfer force to his arms. He had to use almost all limbs to move the valve a bit. However, as long as he could move the valve even just a little bit, it wouldn't be so physically strenuous to

turn it counterclockwise for three or four rounds. Crack, crack. It seemed the locking schematic in the metal door was loosened.

This metal door seemed to only be pulled open. Thus, Feng Bujue tried his best to pull the door toward him. Right after the door was opened, red light crept out from inside, illuminating the corridor.

Feng Bujue subconsciously peeped through the door. It was just a fragment of a second before he had shifted his look right away. All of his moves were linked as if they were just one action. However, the image of the monster in the chamber had engraved in Feng Bujue's brain. After just one second, too bad he had recognized the monster standing in the corner of the room...

"Damn it!" Right when these two words slipped out from Feng Bujue's mouth, that monster had already teleported into the corridor. It stood next to Feng Bujue, stretched out both arms using an incredible force and speed, twisting off Feng Bujue's neck...

...

[SCP-173's related documents.]

[Item #: SCP-173 (The Sculpture)]

[Object Class: Euclid]

[Biological nature: Biologically unidentified non-living body.]

[Origin: Unknown]

[Body Compositions: Building materials.]

[Internal organs: No biological mechanism or organs.]

[Metabolism: Yes. Excretion is confirmed.]

[Perception: Yes. Can identify whether someone is gazing at it.]

[Mobile style: Unknown; Teleportation.]

[Behaviors: Twist off the neck of any living body.]

[Special Containment Procedures: Item SCP-173 is to be kept in a

locked container at all times. When personnel must enter SCP-173's container, no fewer than 3 may enter at any time, and the door is to be relocked behind them. At all times, two persons must maintain direct eye contact with SCP-173 until all personnel has vacated and relocked the container.

[Description: This item was moved to Site-19 in 1993. Origin is as of yet unknown. It is constructed from concrete and a rebar with traces of Krylon brand spray paint. SCP-173 is animated and extremely hostile. The object cannot move while within a direct line of sight. The line of sight must not be broken at any time with SCP-173. Personnel assigned to enter container are instructed to alert one another before blinking. The object is reported to attack by snapping the neck at the base of the skull, or by strangulation. In the event of an attack, personnel is to observe Class 4 hazardous object containment procedures.

Personnel reported sounds of scraping stone originating from within the container when no one is present inside. This is considered normal, and any change in this behavior should be reported to the acting HMCL supervisor on duty.

The reddish-brown substance on the floor is a combination of feces and blood. Origin of these materials is unknown. The enclosure must be cleaned on a bi-weekly basis.]

(http://www.scp-wiki.net/scp-173)

... ...

White halo flashed, and Feng Bujue immediately reappeared in the fan-shaped 'Start.' At the same time, the system notified, [Your Contra Medal is consumed.]

"Why am I here?" This was the first question emerged in Feng Bujue's head. Soon, he gave himself an answer. "After I died, I will be resurrected at the 'Start' of the current space..." he thought. "If I die in one corridor, I will reappear at the 'Start' lobby and in front of that corridor..." He recalled the time he got killed. "If I die in the

fan-shaped hall... I will be resurrected at the dead corner where the scenario's started."

While he was wondering, his line of sight was facing the fan-shaped lobby. Right at that moment, a strange, buzzing noise echoed behind him together with the noise sounded like a rock tool banging on timber pile.

A bad premonition flooded him. But when Feng Bujue had recognized the matter, it was too late. As he had just turned around, a pair of stony arms welcomed him, as his neck was broken yet again.

[Your item Contra Medal is consumed.]

Not long ago, he had thought about how to use these four medals, but now he had handed over two pieces already....

Feng Bujue quite understood SCP-173's features. Thus, right when he got his neck broken the second time and resurrected at the same spot, he immediately opened his eyes wider, steadily gazing at the bizarre monster in front of him.

SCP-173's body surface looked like gypsum. It had a dirty white body while there were some patterns in red, black, and green drawn on its giant head. The monster was taller than 2 meters. From the body proportion aspect, it had an extremely long body accompanied with short legs and even shorter arms. Being a maximum level monster in teleport class, which could kill people with only one strike, long or short limbs didn't mean that it couldn't assault the targets. Quite the contrary, it always killed the enemy, especially humans, instantly. Feng Bujue getting his neck broken twice was the most current obvious evidence.

The fundamental weakness that people could use to deal with SCP-173 was constant 'gazing.' Under the circumstance that it was gazed by a living body, SCP-173 couldn't move. But if the eye contact was interrupted, by a blink, for example, SCP-173 could teleport to the victim and kill him within the time of that blink of

an eye.

Feng Bujue didn't want to be killed the third time, and he didn't have the high competence holding the watermelon cutting knife from the Southern Heavenly Gate to the Abode of Immortals in the East that he could keep his eyes wide open in three days without blinking once. And, he didn't think that SCP-173 could communicate with him.

Thus, one second later, the gunshot from Kill In One Shot pistol sounded. After SCP-173's body got hit by a small bullet, it exploded.

Feng Bujue had never thought what SCP-173 would be like when it got killed. However, now he was watching one of those possibilities. The white concrete body collapsed. Some blocks, as big as a fist, even hit Feng Bujue. However, this kind of damage couldn't be considered fatal.

From inside SCP-173's body, plasma spilled out just like people swinging the brush dipped in ink. All of them splashed on Feng Bujue, and he couldn't dodge. Eventually, around two meters from the door leading to the second hallway stood a man who was covered entirely in black blood. Black and red liquid puddled the floor with the broken pieces of the strange body scattering here and there.

Feng Bujue wiped his face and took in the scent of that 'Blood.' "Yeah... it's just blood." In fact, he was trying to comfort himself to not worry about something else like turd would be mixed together in that liquid.

Something was shimmering among the broken concrete pieces on the floor. It was like a scene in RPG games with overlook angle when an item dropped on the ground was blinking.

Such an obvious hint that Feng Bujue wouldn't let it slip away. He walked over, extended his arm to touch it, and that light turned into an item. At the same time, the system's notification arose in his ears.

[Main Quest's progress updated.]

[Find chemical bottles (1/4).]

Chapter 176: Despicable Me (8)

Feng Bujue was lucky that SCP-173 kept one chemical bottle. If he didn't find the bottle after killing this BOSS, he would have to visit the room in the second hallway one more time to search for it. Fortunately, it didn't happen. Not only did he find the quest related item, but his death also helped him save the time walking on the corridor. It was worth consuming two Contra Medals.

Feng Bujue didn't hurry to leave the scene after he had picked up the chemical bottle. He scooped down, groping through the debris on the ground to see if he could find any other rewards. Since he had a lot of black blood on his body, it wasn't a big deal if he got more stains. Moreover, he wasn't the kind of man who was afraid of getting dirty.

It couldn't be denied that this was his outstanding feature. Until now, Feng Bujue could always remain calm in face of unbearably disgusting things that ordinary people could never stand. For example, it could be a corpse, which had died three days and now had eggs from flies or the skunk lair inside of an old garbage heap, etc. They were all within his endurance limit. In fact, whenever he saw something more nauseating, this limit was expanded. In polite words, he had found the new upper bound of his tolerance. Generally speaking, his limit was refreshed...

Searching the broken corpse didn't take much of his time. One minute was enough to confirm that there was nothing else besides the item related to the quest.

Feng Bujue read the item's properties while walking through the door, entering the fan-shaped area.

[Name: Unidentified-ingredient Chemical Compound (B)]

[Type: Related to the plot.]

[Quality: Normal]

[Functions: One of the raw materials to synthesize a kind of antidote.]

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

[Remarks: Cannot be piled up with similar items.]

"Weird..." When Feng Bujue read the remarks, he had a problem... Currently, there were seven occupied slots in his bag. Those slots carried Mario's Pipe Wrench, Flashlight, Folding Stool of the Eighteen Bronze Statues (No.5), SCP-500 (19/20), Anti-gravity Launching Device, Contra Medal x 2, and Kill In One Shot pistol.

Now that he had the chemical bottle (B), it would be 8/10 occupied slots. According to the remarks, the three bottles A, C, D also took one slot for each.

Let alone the pockets in his clothes, which could carry things, once Feng Bujue acquire the last chemical bottle, his bag would already be full. Anyway, he didn't need to store the last bottle in his bag, because when he had the four bottles altogether, he could combine them into only one bottle. The embarrassing case where he didn't have room to store the chemical bottle wouldn't happen.

Although it would be just a coincidence, considering what Billy said about SPC-500 at the beginning of the scenario, Feng Bujue believed that the one who had designed this game knew his situation well. He was afraid that that one didn't only calculate the items in his bags, but also his skills, physique, equipment, etc....

If the system did base on players' features to generate the scenarios, this 'game' would be tantamount to what the system had designed. And, Billy the Puppet had delivered the message on behalf of the system. Does it mean that... Billy himself has been instilled the concept that 'I've setup this game'?

That's why Feng Bujue saw nothing when using [Planned Victory From Thousand Miles Away]—this scenario didn't have a true

BOSS as it only had a group of rules, one player, and some designated chess pieces...

After getting back to the fan-shaped hall, Feng Bujue turned around and looked at the second corridor. He was surprised seeing all the broken pieces of the monster's body, and its blood had disappeared into thin air. That section of the corridor had restored its original status, however, the bloodstains on his body remained.

"It's so..." Feng Bujue seemed to understand something, but he didn't linger there. At this moment, it was the 46th minute in his calculation. "If everything goes well, at the 65th minute, I will appear at the 41st minute of the cell time. Moreover, I should have three chemical bottles."

The average time was just right on schedule.

Feng Bujue thought while entering the fourth corridor and then started to dash forward as if he was flying. Although the Contra Medal had resurrected him, his Physical Value didn't recover to the full state. Even if he had the Dance of the Knight, his Physical Value started to be tight. Currently, it was 894/1800. Although it had just consumed half the bar, people who do long distance running would understand that it would be much harder at the later stage, not to mention that Feng Bujue was having a persistent sprint for long distance.

This scenario was merely a double mental and physical marathon. However, this race wasn't to spread out the spirit of sports, but a desperate game, which had already setup the path leading to death.

—

It was five minutes after he had got into the hallway and the door appeared ahead not far from him.

Feng Bujue suddenly recognized that he hadn't finished running through any passage. He had run only the first half of the third

corridor and the second half of the second corridor. However, it was unknown whether the small room where the BOSS stayed was near to which end so he couldn't assume that it would stand in the middle of the way. Thus, even if he could know the length of the fourth corridor in a short while, still, he couldn't tell which corridor was the shortest.

"No wonder why that rabbit said it didn't know which passage is shorter," Feng Bujue told himself. "First of all, it has only walked through the first corridor. And second, when I appeared at the 41st minute, even if I have run through three corridors, I didn't know how long they are. If I knew, I would tell the rabbit."

He then glided in Sakamoto's style, elegantly approached the door, grabbed the knob and pushed it open.

It was a rusty iron gate, looking pretty much Saw's style. The room had the atmosphere of a gloomy, dark secret chamber. After he had opened the gate, the sound of some rotating shaft and gear echoed. This meant some mechanism had been triggered.

Feng Bujue didn't even think about leaving or escaping, as he knew 80% that it would be useless using something to keep the door open. And, there was nothing in his bag suitable to block the door. Flashlight and folding stool would be broken, and the wrench...in case it got broken... such loss like this...

Click.

The light was on, illuminating the whole room. A chain hung up an iron cage, which confined Billy the Puppet. Two black-and-red pupils were eyeing Feng Bujue through the bars.

The deep, hoarse voice also came out from the puppet's mouth timely. "Hello, Unidentified Mental Disorder. I want to play a game with you."

Haven't You Heard? I'm Sakamoto (坂本ですが? Sakamoto desu ga?, lit. "I'm Sakamoto, You Know?") is a Japanese manga series

written and illustrated by Nami Sano. The manga follows a high school student named Sakamoto, who has a reputation for being the "coolest" person among the entire student body.

Chapter 177: Despicable Me (9)

"You've returned safely from my hands, but it doesn't show how clever you are.

"You've craved for inferring objective facts, however, as for human thinking, can you measure it precisely?

"There're so many people who participated in my game. Those people, who had destroyed lives, didn't have any regard for lives. And you... what makes you different from them?"

Having heard that, Feng Bujue suddenly had a feeling the other was implying something. And, what the puppet was about to say would soon confirm his supposition.

"When there's an unknown shadow that lingers in their brain, most people will feel desperate and terrified, which then leads to indignation and hysteria. These come from their attachment to life.

"And you, you've never told or asked for help from anyone. You continue living your boring life numbly. You didn't show the human instinct, the strong desire to survive.

"Your behaviors show that you have no gratitude for being alive. This is disrespect towards life. Even a trapped animal will struggle when being besieged. But you, you're calm and relaxed as if you've already given up.

"I hate those generations who are not thankful.

"Do you think that you can avoid justice when you have no fear?"

While Feng Bujue was listening to the other's narrative, he thought about...The first virtual character who had ever told him that he got some kind of sickness in his brain was X-23. However, this puppet had contacted him earlier. Moreover, in that scenario, Billy had shown that his capacity was beyond the default setting. Although the system could measure and find out the shadow in his

brain through the game cabin, or the related information captured after his nervous system was connected to the game, when someone told him these things, it still created a certain psychological pressure.

Billy continued, "Death's always a surprise party unless your heart's dead.

"But in my eyes, your heart is still as lively as a normal person's, and your mind is more active than theirs. You have seven emotional states and six desires like what other people have. But you don't care if you'll be dead in the next second.

"Now, let's see if you can maintain this attitude until the end.

"Now, you have to pay a lot!"

Grumbling noise from heavy machines sounded under Feng Bujue's feet. The metal floor of the chamber started to split. From the door as the center, it began to crack open as the floor was moving to both sides of the room. Anyway, the speed wasn't too fast as Feng Bujue had enough time to jump aside.

Underneath the floor was a full pond, with depth not much different from the height of this room, about seven or eight meters. Anyway, it was enough to drown someone who didn't know how to swim or dive like Feng Bujue.

"The liquid in this pond isn't water. It's gasoline. Soon, you will lose your foothold.

"As a person who doesn't know how to swim, you need to gather enough guts to struggle against the survival instinct to find the chemical bottle hidden at the bottom of the pond."

The puppet paused here for a while before continuing again with more details, "When the floor ultimately retreats into the two walls, the gasoline level will reduce. At the same time, the floor will start to close. When the liquid level reduces to half of the original depth, it will stop. And, at that point, the floor above your

head will close forever. Even if you enter this room again, it won't be opened..."

While the puppet was speaking, Feng Bujue suddenly heard a thunder splashing noise. Apparently, he had jumped into the gasoline pond.

Indeed, he didn't know how to swim, but he knew how to hold his breath. He took a deep breath, clenched his jaw and pinched his nose, jumping into the pond with both feet downward.

Then he went like that sinking to the bottom of the pond.

According to the rules Billy had described, he got only one chance for this game. Once he failed, it was the permanent failure. Feng Bujue got it even before the puppet finished saying 'Even if you enter this room again.' Even if when he got drowned in the pond and used the Contra Medal to resurrect and come here one more time from the corridor, the floor wouldn't open again since whenever the floor closed, it would 'close forever.'

Besides, when the floor closed, the gasoline level would reduce. This was to prevent the case of Feng Bujue successfully taking the chemical bottle and getting back to the liquid surface, clutching on the edge of the floor to climb up to the room again.

In short, this game was to let a person, who didn't know how to swim or dive, dive into a gasoline pond, seeking for an item while the light above his head was being narrowed and finally closed forever. If he drowned before he could find it, it was a failure. If he found the item and luckily swam up to the surface using dog paddle style, and the floor hadn't closed completely, it was impossible for him to clutch on the edge of the floor and crawl up.

Using this information to guess, the usual method to complete this challenge was... to jump into the gasoline pond, find the chemical bottle and then put it into the bag. After that, he had to resist his survival instinct to drown as quickly as possible. Then he could use the Contra Medal to resurrect and teleport away.

In fact, to someone who knew how to swim, it wouldn't be so strenuous to find the bottle. There was air in the space between the pond and the floor. If one could maintain his patience and distribute his stamina reasonably, even when the floor had completely closed, he could still swim back and forth between the bottom of the pond and the surface to find the bottle and breathe. Anyway, the bottom area was limited. After the gasoline level had reduced half the way, the depth would be around three or four meters. At most, it would take dozens of times swimming back and forth to search the whole area at the bottom of the pond.

Of course, when using this method, he had to pay attention to two points: eyes close tight and do not let the gasoline enter the lungs.

The first point is common sense. It can cause burns when the mucous membrane contacts with petrol. If it's just one or two drops, one should immediately wash and rinse it thoroughly with water. It will be alright when the gasoline evaporates, but if he purposely kept his eyes open in a petrol tank, it was absolutely a self-harm act. Moreover, when that large floor completely closed, there was no light in this space. Even if he opened his eyes, it was just a dark area.

The second point was extremely unfavorable to Feng Bujue, who didn't know how to swim. Just say that he could struggle enough to float up on the gasoline surface, which is lighter than water, but to a person who had never learned how to breathe underwater, it's easy to get choked. If he did get gasoline flow into his lungs, he could only wait for death in extreme pain.

Feng Bujue knew these situations already. He was thinking about the countermeasures while listening to the rules.

When the floor started to move, Feng Bujue, of course, threw his attention to the bottom of the pond. The light shining on the pond was just a narrow line at first, but it was gradually expanding. Since the light located in the middle of the ceiling, when the floor

hadn't opened completely, the whole pond had been illuminated. However... Looking from above, it seemed nothing was down there.

After Feng Bujue had confirmed those details, he determinedly jumped into the pond. The angle and direction he had jumped toward were based on the location of the chemical bottle he had guessed—it should be where the iron cage shadowed on the pond.

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The only place at the bottom of the pond where the light couldn't shine on was under the iron cage that kept the puppet. Since it was hung close to the ceiling, its shadow was quite big. However, when it reached the bottom of the pond, this shadow was just medium in size.

After Feng Bujue had aimed for the general direction, he jumped. The first feeling he had was the temperature of the liquid was quite low that made his spine shiver instinctively. Then came the discomforting buzzing noise of gasoline getting into his ears. He was using his hand to cover both of his nose and mouth tightly. Currently, he wouldn't need to worry about his mouth and respiratory system to get hurt. Anyway, even if he was keeping his eyes closed tightly, the narrow slit between his lids still had the burning feeling.

What he needed to do were just two things. The first one was also the thing he must complete; moreover, it was certainly tough: find the chemical bottle. Second, with the premise of finding the bottle, he had to ignore his survival instinct and made himself drown as quickly as possible. If he couldn't do the first thing, he couldn't take the chemical bottle.

Thus, this time he had to hold his breath and take action at the bottom of the pond within one minute, and he must not fail.

Soon, Feng Bujue sank to the bottom of the pond. He had jumped there vertically, however, during his sinking process, his body's center of gravity made his head slowly lean forward. Thus, his position looked like ORZ [1] when he reached the bottom of the pond. Fortunately, he still had one free arm to support himself; if not, his knees and head would all touch the ground.

[Main Quest's progress is updated.]

[Find chemical bottles (2/4)]

As his hand had just touched the bottom of the pond, Feng Bujue heard the notification from the system. And, the bottle appeared in his hand. This time he got the [Unidentified-ingredient Chemical Bottle (D)].

"What's going on? Am I a lucky bastard now?" Feng Bujue felt strange inside: with my moral standing, I could really be lucky enough to touch the FLAG where hides the item while sinking down to the bottom?

At the same time, inside the iron cage hung below the ceiling in the room, the face of Billy the Puppet crooked a little bit, as a vague, strange light flashed up in his eyes.

Splash—

Immediately, a splash arose while gasoline splattered everywhere.

A man covered in shimmering red light jumped out of the gasoline surface before the floor closed completely. Feng Bujue had activated his Body-Spirit Congregation Technique while he was in the pond, flexed his legs and leaped up. He simply pierced through the liquid resistance to get into the air, and the height he reached was fairly enough to grab the hand of the puppet inside the cage.

Feng Bujue used both hands and quickly climbed up to one side of the cage. With some simple moves, he secured his feet onto the cage.

"Now, it seems... I can save one medal and the time running from the 'Start' to here." Feng Bujue said while stroked his hair backward and wiped his face ruthlessly.

He tried to keep his eyes wide-open. As his eyes were now congested, it made his look more intimidating. He tilted his head to the left and then to the right a few times to let the gasoline in his ears flow out. "Dude, how to open your cage?"

In fact, it wasn't a matter as Feng Bujue had hauled out the

wrench from his bag while speaking. Anyway, he didn't dare to pound the cage. In case the metal impact created sparks, his body, which was soaked with petrol, would burst into flame. He then clamped the wrench on the lock and broke it.

This cage was hung by only one chain, not four. Thus, when Feng Bujue had mounted up there, it started to sway. At this moment, it was swinging back and forth in the air.

Under such circumstance, Feng Bujue was still calm enough to break the lock on the cage. He stretched one arm into the cage and dragged Billy the Puppet out of the cage as if it was just garbage.

During the whole process, this doll didn't make any attempt to resist. This made him think the fighting capacity of Billy was equivalent to... yeah, a puppet.

Apparently, Billy wasn't a machine-operated beast or a fighting puppet. He couldn't even make his nose grow longer! At most, he could play the recordings and pedal the tricycle. Perhaps he had some skills to create the deadly secret chamber, but things like beating people weren't in his field of profession.

"Really easy..." When Feng Bujue caught the puppet, he thought that he would hear the notification from the system, but nothing had happened. He then tried to put the puppet into his bag, but the system notified him,

[Storage failed. You don't have the complete control of the living being or the living being resists to enter the bag.]

Since he was holding a puppet that could fight against him at any time, Feng Bujue was careful, waiting until the floor closed completely then jumped down from the cage. Currently, the cage wasn't swinging so hard so Feng Bujue could land safely on the floor.

He had just activated the Body-Spirit Congregation Technique for a short while. When he clutched on the cage, he dismissed it; thus,

it didn't cost him much of his Survival Value. However, the damages from the gasoline weren't gone away yet. He now felt his eyes were burning painfully while his nostrils were filled with petrol smell. He was drenched as his clothes stuck to his skin together with the bloodstains. All brought him a considerable discomfort.

However, Feng Bujue was... well, it was already mentioned many times—he was a man with a strong endurance. This level of discomfort was insignificant to him. He rushed to the door nonchalantly as if nothing had happened, holding the puppet in one hand while running like crazy to the end of the passage.

The time he had spent playing the game finding the chemical bottle in the gasoline pond was shorter than he had imagined. No matter it was finding the bottle or catching Billy the Puppet, all were unexpectedly smooth. However, the remaining length of the fourth corridor was somehow deceptive. He had finished it in almost ten minutes.

However, it matched with the 80th minute that Rabbit had mentioned, as Feng Bujue had just spent eighteen minutes from the fourth corridor to the 'End' prison.

"Hey! I got the prisoner for you. Give me the stuff!" Feng Bujue got out of the hallway, yelling to Rabbit while still running.

Rabbit was sitting behind the desk, looking at him then at Billy. "Ah! Traveler from the other world, you've caught Billy! Ha, ha!" Rabbit laughed. "Great!"

"Don't be wordy. I'll hand you the puppet, you'll give me the stuff," Feng Bujue said then pressed Billy on the desk.

"Although I don't know why you've brought me the one I wanted to catch, anyway..." Rabbit shrugged then stroked his beard. He then pulled a drawer, took out the chemical bottle and brought it to Feng Bujue. "You've got him, as you said, give me—"

"Why did you know I wanted the chemical bottle?" When Feng Bujue asked the question, he snatched the item the Main Quest requested, shoved it into his bag as fast as lightning and also took out the [Kill In One Shot Pistol].

"Oops... You asked me to... " Rabbit's visage changed, stammering an answer.

"I asked you what? I didn't say 'chemical bottle,' I said 'stuff'..." A cold smile beamed out from the corner of his mouth as Feng Bujue aimed his pistol at the rabbit face of Rabbit and pulled the trigger.

Chapter 179: Despicable Me (11)

[Current Quest, accomplished. Main Quest, updated.]

When Feng Bujue got the third chemical bottle, the quest [Find and catch Billy the Puppet in the fourth corridor and hand him to Rabbit to exchange for a chemical bottle] had a check mark.

And, the Main Quest [Find the chemical bottles (3/4)] was also updated.

This shot from Feng Bujue was somehow like killing the donkey (rabbit) when the grinding is done.

Rabbit got a headshot, and its head exploded like a bursting watermelon. Plasma splashed everywhere, coloring the desk, the floor and the wall behind red... Of course, it had dyed Feng Bujue red, who was standing pretty close.

Rabbit's body as big as a kangaroo collapsed backward, bumped on the chair then heavily fell on the ground. The curled body of the rabbit still had its legs twitching.

"Now the time is..." It was unknown how many times Feng Bujue had wiped his face. "The 65th minute." His line of sight moved to the desk where Billy the Puppet lay. It was gone.

"But seems you guys can't play this funny drama anymore." Feng Bujue smiled.

The light in the first cell automatically lit up. Billy appeared inside the cell, still sitting on the same chair. The light shone down from above his head, illuminating the puppet's dark look. "Where were our flaws exposed? Perhaps it's because of Rabbit's one mistake..."

"Too many flaws," Feng Bujue answered. "Lately, it was just my last probe to confirm." He resolutely put the gun down on the table and poked both hands into his pockets, steadily walking to the cell. "And, since when I've had doubts... it should be right from the

start."

"Hmm... Even if you have seen it through, don't you think you're exaggerating a little bit?" said Billy.

"Don't believe it? You don't buy it, or you don't want to buy it?" Feng Bujue's tone was full of provocation. "I have twenty-seven minutes left before the poison burst out. We still have plenty of time, so just make it easy and listen to my explanation."

He walked back then dragged the chair next to Rabbit's body to the front of the cell, sitting down opposite to Billy. He cleared his throat and began, "I won't cite your foreword here. In short... I deemed it as a paragraph that you've carefully arranged, which was full of traps and inducement. Moreover, they were all aimed at me. As what you've said, it's true that you can 'measure people's heart precisely'. At least you know what method to use to intrigue and guide the direction of my thought and my progress." He smiled. "However, there's one thing you shouldn't say...'You will meet some people, or see something. What you see or hear can change your actions and interfere with your judgment'."

"These things... are to—" Billy wanted to say something, but Feng Bujue had directly interrupted him, saying, "... Just wanted to make use of the reverse psychology in me and make me distrust the hallucination I'd see and the lies I'd hear." He paused for one second. "But both you and I understand that it's the truth. All the things you've said in the introduction are true, at least from your point of view. You wouldn't lie right when you were giving the rules. I think it's your arrogance. A kind of persistence."

He extended his arm, pointing at Rabbit's body. "Even when it was necessary to tell lies, you still tried to not open your mouth. In many situations, you've always kept silent or just given something ambiguous, like you were trying to hide some mysteries in your words. And, those deceptive actions were conducted by a rabbit and..." Feng Bujue pictured Alden's appearance in his mind. "... And the thing I don't know what sort of monster he is."

Feng Bujue habitually put his index finger and middle finger on his forehead then slid them along the bridge of his nose. "Basically, there's no second timeline or something. The four corridors leading to twenty-three, forty-six and sixty-nine with the increasing or decreasing of time depended on the right or reverse ways entering the passage... All are just smoke bombs." He craned his neck forward and rubbed his temples with his fingers. "You've made good use of my hobby in reasoning and solving puzzles, creating a false set of rules to direct my thought and action.

"You're not bad, though. Indeed, you've considered my reasoning's order... The rooms, the arrangement of the chemical bottles, the lengths of those corridors, the time needed to cross the corridors... You got it clear which information you should or shouldn't give me.

"According to your guide, in fact, I have only one route to choose."

Feng Bujue held up one finger. "At the 'First' fan-shaped hall, the trick you arranged in the first corridor succeeded, indeed. That kept me suspicious for a long while. You also know that, with my train of thought, after I've seen that play, I'd definitely choose to explore the other corridors. And, the second, the third, the fourth..." His fingers changed accordingly. "Whichever I'd choose, it'd be the same, as you guys only need to adjust the rules a little bit.

"No matter which corridor I'd choose to go first, you'd probably arrange so as I'd meet Alden first. The requirement to tell a ghost story is like leaving a note at a murder scene, which is to mess up the investigation. You've used this method to bring me to the 'End.' Turns out it looked pretty normal. Because, the more inexplicable the situation is, the less persistent one will be to follow up with it.

"After I got to this place called 'Prison,' the real excellent play's started. What Rabbit and Alden said, together with your

cooperative presence in this cell, all were to make me believe in your corridor-time theory.

"Thus, to not cause time-space paradox and also to prevent the map time from running out at the 92nd minute, I had only one way to choose—start from the second corridor and return from the fourth corridor, and lastly, enter the first corridor. This is the only route you guys wanted to guide me through. It's also the path that all of Rabbit's theories pointed to."

Feng Bujue turned his head, looking at the first corridor. "Intuitively speaking, you hoped that I'd use some kind of usual thinking, grabbing the gun you gave me and entering the first corridor, killing 'someone' behind the door without thinking much." He shifted his look to Billy. "In your plan, I, at that time, should have had only one Contra Medal left, but not two pieces like right now. I have three chemical bottles, about to finish this scenario. With the contribution of the first murder scene, which is a time bomb planted in my head, at the very last moment, with my characteristic, I couldn't deny that even I know I'd die, I'd definitely try to reverse that scene..." He pointed to the pistol on the desk. "In short, according to the plot and as what you've thought, eventually, I'd enter the first corridor, open the door and kill anything I see."

Billy's attitude now was like the chipped jar got cracked. He was calm, but it looked strange. "As you've come this far, why don't you guess why I had to do so?"

"It's simple... You want to break out, right?" said Feng Bujue.

Indeed, when he said that, the puppet face of Billy slightly lifted up, but it was speechless.

"I think...The whole space here is a 'Prison.'" Feng Bujue swept his sight through the four cells in front of him. "These four cells are just decorations." He pointed to the bars of the cell. "As I've come to this, I'll tell you some obvious flaws I've found. When I

saw SCP-173, I was sure that what the rabbit said was nonsense. It said all the four prisoners were jailed here... But how could they use bars to make the container for SCP-173?" He joked, "Perhaps you puppet, who doesn't blink year round, is in charge of staring at SCP-173 through the bars?"

"Moreover, Alden and SCP-173 can teleport. So what does the length of the corridors mean?" Feng Bujue said, "And, you let Rabbit acclaimed itself as the one who's replaced Satsuma Diehl. It's absolutely a faulty stroke in calligraphy. In the same room, the feeling and pressure of your existence are double the rabbit's. How could it watch over you?"

Feng Bujue shook his head and sneered. "Well, I think the real jailer's guarding the gate leading to this space. And that gate's connected with the first corridor." He spread his arm, pointing at Billy. "I don't doubt your ability in manipulating space. I think... The lengths of the corridors and all rooms in this space came from your mind. How long I need to spend to run through a corridor or when would I meet a room, all are in your hand.

"However, you and your henchmen, or your inmate friends have prepared such a game with complicated rules and the psychological hints to control me in collecting clues. You were really patient in arranging your conspiracy... All of them are just to let me do something that easy?

"And, as for the pistol you gave me, Alden has fingers to pull the trigger and so does Rabbit. Why don't you guys do it yourself?"

Feng Bujue crossed one of his legs over the other. "At first, my reasoning was... You guys couldn't open that door or basically, you couldn't even touch or approach it." He smiled evilly. "However, when I thought deeper, I found that..."

Feng Bujue didn't tell them the root of his thought. In fact, he had based on the short introduction of the plot, which said [Time and space overlap. A deadly game. Endless horror. Nightmares

reincarnate.]

This was what the system itself prompted him directly right at the beginning, not through any NPC or BOSS. These four sentences were the key to unlock the mystery of this scenario.

The sentence 'Time and space overlap' was coincident with Billy's plan, and from a certain attitude, it had confused Feng Bujue. However, from the clues these four sentences provided, Feng Bujue gradually got it.

"You've done this countless times, right?" Feng Bujue smiled, "But after you guys killed the jailer, you couldn't escape, could you?"

"Is it funny?" answered Billy.

"Then tell me why it isn't funny?" asked Feng Bujue.

Billy answered, "Killing the jailer couldn't help us escape but lead to reincarnation. The power I, Rabbit and Alden had recovered, especially to control the space, would go back to the start point as if when time returns, only memory stays.

"The 173 you've mentioned, I actually don't know what it's called. It isn't my inmate friend but a part of the punishment. Every time we break out from the prison, we will be 'reincarnated,' and we'll meet a brand new monster, the kind of 173. We then got tortured to death numerous times... Until our powers could be recovered to the point we could control the prison again."

"So, you want to borrow my power to get rid of this reincarnation, right?" asked Feng Bujue.

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"It's true." Alden suddenly appeared behind Feng Bujue.

"As it's come this far, I'm not afraid to say," Billy continued, "if you don't cooperate with us, the poison will burst out leading to the failure of this scenario. I know, to travelers from the other world like you guys, this is not considered a big, painful price. But still, it's not what you want to see."

"How about Rabbit?" Feng Bujue asked. "I shot your partner dead, but you are still okay with me?"

"No need to worry. You didn't kill it. That gun is just an extension of my ability in controlling this space. When you pulled the trigger, I had already changed the nature of the bullet. Your shot didn't kill Rabbit," said Billy.

"But that hurts a lot," another voice continued.

Feng Bujue turned his head towards the source of the voice. It came from the second cell.

Although Rabbit got a headshot and its body was still on the ground, its unique voice arose in the darkness.

"Ah, it's so..." Feng Bujue determinedly turned his chair, putting both of his legs on the desk, leisurely said, "Let me see. You can also seize the chance and tell me something I find interesting."

"Your time is not..." said Billy.

Feng Bujue shook his head and smiled. "Is it your remaining time not much?" He checked his menu. "The fact that the poison in my body will burst out at the 92nd minute isn't designed by you guys. It's the setting created by something in 'eminent status'." He obviously implied the system. "In front of 'it', you guys aren't more than some random lives it could fabricate at any time with only one flicker of thought."

"So what? What you've mentioned, compared to the Lord of Time, would obey the rules more strictly and it wouldn't do such things without any causes," answered Alden.

"I didn't indicate that that existence would kill you guys, I was saying... even you guys can't stop that existence from killing me," Feng Bujue said. "At least, there's one thing you couldn't lie. You three, in fact, have only three chemical bottles."

"It's true. The fourth bottle is in Faster's hands," answered Billy.

"This Faster... Is he the jailer here?" said Feng Bujue.

"Yes."

"So you are talking nonsense!" Feng Bujue exposed him directly. "How do you know if he has the chemical bottle or not? Did he come himself and tell you that?"

Billy couldn't snap back because he actually didn't know whether or not the fourth chemical bottle was in Faster's hands. What he said was just to encourage Feng Bujue to kill the other.

"Anyway, we could say that your assumption is reasonable. Because, apparently, the fourth chemical bottle isn't in this space. If not, it would have soon fallen into your hands." Feng Bujue asked, "Hey, when did you guys have the chemical bottles?"

"Before you've entered this space, each of us received one bottle. Moreover, we got to know your situation and the functions of the chemical bottles," answered Alden.

Feng Bujue thought, "The system used the direct method to inculcate related data to them, didn't it... Besides, it's just ten seconds to me when the system generated the scenario, but it's actually a relatively long period to them. In the case of the absence of players, the speed of verifying calculations of these worlds of the scenario seems to be much faster..."

"Let me sort out the events from the beginning until now..." Feng Bujue lazily spread his body on the chair. Relaxing was the way he

used to align his thought. "Before I entered this prison, you guys had finished weaving the space, as you had already prepared the plot. When I appeared, Billy used the speaker to talk to me.

"When I got to the 'First' fan-shaped lobby, you guys let me see an excellent performance. This hallucination..." He paused at this part, throwing an inquiry look to Billy and Alden.

"I made it," Rabbit answered him from the second cell.

"Ha ha... good job," Feng Bujue complimented. "After that, I went to the third corridor, met Alden and then came to the 'End.' I met Rabbit there, and Billy was in the cell. You three then tried to be mysterious to set up my next route and gave me a feeling that I had thought about this route myself.

"Next, I entered the second corridor, met SCP-173 there. The one who had captured it was..."

"Me," Billy regarded him. "When you smashed him into pieces, I let the chemical bottle appear on the ground."

"Yeah...Seems you can manipulate the space continuously and you can also mobilize any objects here," Feng Bujue said. "There's a question here. Why didn't you kill 173 instead of confining it?"

"Whenever we kill such a creature, after twenty-four hours, another similar one would be brought here," Billy answered. "Moreover, it's different every time. Some of them are really scary." That puppet face with its voice was using a mournful manner spitting out the word 'Scary,' and this spoke up the fact that... It was actually difficult to deal with the creatures put here to be part of their punishment. "That 173 was relatively easy to control, and the containment condition wasn't too high. Shutting it up was less strenuous than killing it."

"It's true... There was a time an elderly man looked like a dried corpse came here. He was capable of creating pocket dimension to jump for short distance. Physical damage was no use to him. When

he hid inside his pocket dimension, we had no way to deal with him. Finally, Billy had to create a massive, complicated building to set up traps for him. Then we crossed him to catch Faster," Rabbit added.

"Sounds like 106..." Feng Bujue muttered. Anyway, he didn't continue with this topic, but his own narrative. "After I was done with the second corridor, in fact, I was suspicious of your explanation. However, at that time I didn't want to take risks and cause the time-space paradox. I also didn't want to expose my thought by acting strangely. Thus, I still followed your vision to enter the fourth corridor."

Feng Bujue looked at Billy. "And you, you left this cell to the fourth corridor and contacted me like nothing had happened. That game looked tough, but when I actually did it, you made me get the chemical bottle at ease."

"So it's my move that had drawn legs on a snake?" asked Billy. (Idiom: to ruin the effect by adding something superfluous – TL)

"In fact, it wasn't," Feng Bujue said. "If you know my character, it should be clear that your move is good for all of us." He paused, "By the way, can you please clean the gasoline, blood something on my body?"

As he hadn't finished, strange light sparked in Billy's eyes and the discomfort things on Feng Bujue disappeared. Even the gasoline on his skin was all dried up.

"Thanks," Feng Bujue regarded him with courtesy then continued, "In your original vision, you would let me find the chemical bottle in the gasoline pond and die there, which would consume one of my medals and teleport me to the 'First' lobby. That's how the difficulty during the process of the game would be revealed, and it could make the game more real. But what you'd never expected is that a man who doesn't know how to swim like me could get out of the pond before the floor closed. Thus, the time

I 'got' you were a few minutes earlier than what you'd estimated.

"To match up with the explanation on the time of the prison here, you had to momentarily lengthen the latter part of the fourth corridor, which took me the whole eighteen minutes to get to the 'End,'"

"And after you came to the 'End,' you didn't mention the words 'chemical bottle' on purpose. Moreover, you acted like you were rushing to trap me." When Rabbit was talking, the light in the second cell was on, shining on him intact there. And, the body on the ground was gone.

"I still have one thing I want to confirm," Feng Bujue said. "The reason why you gave me the medals... Is to prevent the case I got killed by 173?"

"In fact, unless you're not dead by the 'poison bursting out,' we can always resurrect you for many times. But it would make you doubt the nature of this game. Moreover, you would persistently chase after the reason behind this," said Billy.

"So, you then symbolized this resurrecting ability, also made it a limited number then directly gave to me." Feng Bujue slightly nodded, putting his index finger on his lower lip. "Alright, I basically got it all." He retreated his legs from the desk and sit upright. "I'm so sorry. The whole complicated and thoughtful guiding plan of yours is now declared failed. Anyway... I still can help you guys."

As the three prisoners heard that, their body froze. Although their facial appearance wasn't rich, if they had had the humanoid face, perhaps their eyes would have been lit up by now.

"I have two conditions. If you guys can do it..." Feng Bujue rose two fingers. "You'll help me, and I'll help you."

"Conditions?" Alden repeated. He seemed to be a bit surprised.

"It's obvious. Although I don't have any of the Lawful alignment

(in Dungeons and Dragons game – TL), once I decide to help you, it isn't different from picking the opposite side to the Lord of Time." Feng Bujue said with an honest face. "How dangerous it would be depends on how much it would be in return. If you guys don't want to negotiate with me, you should think about it more carefully. It's hard for you guys to accept the result of separation."

"You say it." Apparently, among these three, Billy was the one in charge of negotiation, as he was their sack of wisdom and also was the strongest. At the point where they needed to do negotiation, he resolutely opened his mouth.

"The first condition," Feng Bujue's eyes raked through them. "Please tell me in detail that the three of you, or... Well, no offense, the three monsters of you, why you got detained here? And, what the heck is the Lord of Time?"

"Why you need to know these things?" Billy asked. "Our existence and the past, don't they have no meaning to travelers from the other world like you guys?"

"Then you tell me more about these insignificant things," Feng Bujue answered. "Moreover, lucky you... The first condition is that simple."

Billy had hesitated for ten seconds. During this time, he had used some method Feng Bujue didn't know to communicate with Rabbit and Alden. Then he spoke up, "The Lord of time is one of the Four Divine Pillars. All the orders of space-time territory are under his rule."

"And the Four Divine Pillars are?" Feng Bujue really loved to guide NPC's lines.

"[The Lord of Time] is in charge of the Long River of Order; [The Lord of Demons] reigns the Chaotic Scorching Earth; [Dark Abyss Benighted King] rules the Kingdom of the Dead Souls; [The Court of Veracity] adjudges all realms of the good and the evil," Billy answered. "This paragraph is spread out in all the worlds.

Hobgoblins, Demogorgon, no one doesn't know this."

"Yeah... continue please." At this moment, Feng Bujue seemed to be like the other high-level bogeys and Demogorgon, engraving these four sentences deep into his brain.

Billy continued, "For a long time, the Four Divine Pillars control each other to maintain the balance. They consciously avoid conflicts and disputes between each other.

"War is something they don't want to see. Because none of them are sure which site the victory will tilt forward. If two of them engage in a fight, the standpoints of the third and the fourth sides are unknown.

"Although the Lord of Time controls this prison, the Court of Veracity has judged us.

"My core power is the ability to control space. Alden can manipulate fear and Rabbit can utilize hallucination. Alden and I got imprisoned here under the criminal charge of 'disseminating primal chaos.' Rabbit is here because... Well, another reason."

Having heard the other's reluctant pause, Feng Bujue asked immediately. "What happened?"

"Argh... He and his cousin used to be the members of the jury. But he got convicted because of contempt of court," answered Billy.

"Then where's your cousin? Jailed in another prison?" asked Feng Bujue.

"They couldn't catch my cousin at the court," said Rabbit.

"You are saying that... a rabbit, who didn't put an organization called 'the Court of Veracity' in his eyes, fled away?" Feng Bujue laughed.

Rabbit shrugged. "My cousin can flee away anywhere. He just needs to draw a black hole on the wall and get in it..."

"Ha... Ha ha..."The corner of Feng Bujue's mouth convulsed, as

he was trying to give some wry smiles.

It was Billy, who dragged the topic of their conversation back to its orbit. "Before Faster came here, our jailer was actually Satsuma Diehl. Before he had betrayed the Lord of Time, releasing us and run away, I've met you once during the time."

"Yeah... In fact, it happened just five or six days ago," answered Feng Bujue.

"It's only that short time to you," Billy said and continued his narrative. "The Lord of Time caught Satsuma Diehl not long after he had broken out. He soon gave out our whereabouts to lift up his death sentence. Afterwards, I heard that he's exiled to the Masticating Devil Island.

"And we got imprisoned again. The jailer this time is Faster, and our sentences are increased several times. Time in this prison is indeterminate. It's much longer than in anyplace. Perhaps you think that we met five or six days ago, to me the incarnating nightmare in this prison is already one year or even more."

Feng Bujue had digested the given information for a while, matching the events happened in Shadow of the Lost City and the Hunter's Island. He found that the time was matched. He was afraid that the fake general Sanger Rainsford in that scenario had had an adventure to the Masticating Island and Satsuma Diehl, who got detained somewhere in there, had enlightened him under his administration.

"Alright, I don't think you're lying to me," Feng Bujue licked his dry lips and started to talk about his second condition. "Then, my second condition is..." He patted his chest and pointed at the pistol on the desk. "After our affair is done, I want to take the remaining two Contra Medals and the Kill In One Shot Pistol with me and get out of this scenario."

Link to SCP-106.

Chapter 181: Despicable Me (13)

"Can't," Billy answered resolutely because he actually couldn't do that. Also, he didn't think lying could solve the problem.

Feng Bujue had guessed that he would receive a negative answer, so the request he made was just a skill in negotiation. In such a not too equal cooperation relationship, the favorable side can always raise their price higher right at the beginning and then gradually reduce. This can help them test the bottom line of the other.

"Why?" asked Feng Bujue.

"This pistol is the extension of my ability. When it's out of my 'control' range, it will disappear," Billy answered. "Since I've been in this reincarnation for quite a long time, the affinity between my power and this space is extremely high. That's why you can bring it anywhere within the prison. If it happens in a strange place, if the gun is kept farther than one hundred meters away from me, this item will disappear." He added, "Besides, what's called 'kill in one shot' is just me using my power in controlling space to adjust it. I can control any matter in this space precisely. Thus, the bullet's destructive power and the accuracy are all under my control."

"It's true that the guy called Faster is guarding the main gate of the prison. Although it's just a door away, it's considered outside." Feng Bujue said, "If I acted as you've planned, following a series of guides then eventually, I would get into the first corridor and meet that guy, wouldn't it be me holding an inoperative pistol—"

Billy intervened him, "Among the three of us, only my power's upper limit is higher than Faster's. Thus, it would be okay if you stepped out of that gate. As long as I'm standing near you, I can give this gun enough destructive power. Besides, what's called 'outside' is not actually outside. That area of Faster can only be considered the 'Gate.' And, the Lord of Time's spell is its secure lock."

"Ah... It's so. Anyway, that pistol's made by your power. If I just pull the trigger, could it be considered me killing him?" asked Feng Bujue.

"It's not important the ways, tools or where the power burst out to kill Faster. The important thing is...'Who' does that fatal hit," answered Billy. "The ones who use dark magic have borrowed the power of the Antiquity Devil King to cast spells. The people who use elements magic will acquire the power of nature... Thus, the descendants of those who got killed by magic should find the ones who cast the spell to take revenge. Do they really need to find the Antiquity Devil King or the whole earth and firmament to take revenge?"

"Yeah... Got it," Feng Bujue said. "In short, it will work if 'I' do that, right..." He lifted his head. "If you guys kill Faster on your own, you will fall into the reincarnation again, and Faster will resurrect out there, is it true?"

Alden continued, "Yes. The Lord of Time's spell's really malicious. If 'prisoners' kill the 'jailer,' everything will be reset to the original state. Faster will appear again outside, and our power will decline to the bottom. It takes a lot of time to recover to our current state.

"Previously, we couldn't totally control this space. We wouldn't find the gate or could change the surroundings or teleport. Moreover, at every time we got reincarnated, there will be a new monster comes to torture us. Before we can fully recover, we've already got killed many times. Sadly, we can't even die in prison. After we got killed, we will be resurrected with the weakest state."

As Feng Bujue heard that he turned around to see Rabbit.

Rabbit knew what he wanted to ask, said beforehand, "No need to check me out. Billy said it before. He'd adjusted the power of the bullet right at the very last moment. So, your shot didn't 'kill' me. Of course... The way I escaped looks embarrassing."

"In other words... even if I had killed you, it would have been alright?" asked Feng Bujue.

"How can it be alright! Alden just said that after we got killed, we'll be resurrected with the weakest conditions, and it'll take a lot of time to recover to the peak," answered Rabbit.

"Hey, have you ever tried using SCP-173 to kill Faster?" asked Feng Bujue.

"Of course, we have," Billy answered. "However, all those monsters were hard to control. And, when we're at the peak of our strength, we're able to threaten them and lure them to approach the gate of the prison. But those monsters disappeared after they'd crossed through the gate. Then, immediately, a new monster will be thrown into the jail."

"Oh..." Feng Bujue nodded and said, "Alright. Back to the conditions I've said... Yeah, I can't bring the pistol away, how about the Contra Medals?"

"Same reason. I say I have enough power to hold the absolute control to the space inside the prison. As long as you're not teleported away due to 'Poison burst out,' I can revive you many times as I please," Billy said. "But if you've got out of here..."

"Do we have anything else to negotiate?" Feng Bujue intervened him and said, "If I can't have any benefit, why should I cause grudge with a big man like the Lord of Time because of you guys? You're not my relatives, why do I need to help you break out?"

"Don't you want to finish the scenario..." Billy said rigidly.

Feng Bujue interrupted him once again, "I used to be keen on this purpose, but when I know the situation of this 'Prison'..." He made air quotes. "I think, cooperating with you guys isn't a good deal to me." He said deliberately, "I'd rather let the poison burst out and fail the game than playing some tricks to stand against the Lord of Time..." He paused then added, "Especially when there's no

reward."

"Alright..." Billy hesitated before speaking up again, "Hold on..."

Next, it was a period of silence. Billy, Alden, and Rabbit looked like they were having some sort of spirit communication because it was hard to find any traces on their faces. Feng Bujue then didn't care about it as if he was a dead pig that wouldn't be afraid of being boiled. It was like failing this scenario was actually fine to him, as he was sitting there, waiting for their answer.

"Hmm... Although it's tough, we can try to fabricate a Contra Medal that you can bring out of here and use later," Billy finally spoke up.

"Specifically, how does it work?" asked Feng Bujue.

"In fact, it's not complicated," Alden said. "The three of us can unify our strength and make a medal that works even when it's not in this space."

Feng Bujue contemplated for a while. "Is this the biggest benefit you guys are offering me?"

"Yes. Under the limited time circumstance, it's really hard to make an item like that. It even can shake the foundation of our powers," Billy continued. "If you won't accept it, we—"

"Good, I accept it," Feng Bujue determinedly interrupted him before the other said something unpleasant to hear. "Gimme that, and we'll go catch Faster."

"This seems not good..." Rabbit said, "What if you will run away when you got the item?"

"If I can have the medal and clear the scenario at the same time, why I should go when I just have the item?" Feng Bujue asked.

"Killing Faster is just the exertion of lifting my hand. I just need to grab the gun you guys fabricated, aim for the target and pull the trigger, right?" He looked at Billy. "In comparison, I should be

more wary of you guys. What if I help you guys kill Faster and free you from the reincarnation, then you won't pay me as promised or just kill me directly..." Feng Bujue held up three fingers. "Thus, first thing, I got nothing good from you. Second thing, I'll be dragged into the Lord of Time's blacklist without any real reasons. And the last one, in the end, I still can't finish the scenario." He shook his head. "Moreover, even if you give me the medal beforehand, I can't exclude the possibility that you guys will kill me to ease your anger after everything is done. Then, I still got nothing.

"The risk I'll bear is getting greater. So, if the thing I need is not in my hand, I will determinedly quit!"

Chapter 182: Despicable Me (14)

Sixteen minutes before the poison would burst out, Feng Bujue got the Contra Medal made by Billy, Alden, and Rabbit as he wished. The effect of this item didn't change but the option 'Being able to be brought out of the scenario' had been changed to 'Yes.' And, he got just one piece.

As he got a practical advantage, Feng Bujue expressed his satisfaction, grabbed the Kill In One Shot Pistol on the table. "I have one more thing I want to confirm. What if... I said what if... when I just step out of the door and Faster kills me instantly, this medal will work immediately to resurrect me, right?"

"Yes, as long as you bring this medal, no matter whether it's inside or outside the gate, in the prison or out there, even if you are in the territory of the other members of the Four Divine Pillars, when you die, you can be resurrected on the spot with a full state," answered Rabbit.

Billy added, "Don't worry. When you open the gate, we'll go with you. We'll shield you from Faster's attacks. You just need to aim for him and pull the trigger. I'll grant this pistol the greatest destructive power, which will help you solve him in just one shot."

"After you kill him, you'll take the chemical bottle and teleport away. We will escape the reincarnation and get rid of this prison," added Alden.

"Then we will separate here. Everyone minds their own business. We don't owe each other anything," said Billy.

"Yeah, suits me well." Feng Bujue smiled then said as if he was making the conclusion, "Although you guys have fooled me right at the beginning with the false settings and guidance, I think it came from the fact that we didn't know or trust each other at that time... But now, we are clear about our own purposes, and we have made a good win-win deal. From your words and deeds, I think you guys

are sincere, noble and decent people, so you won't do that kind of thing I've assumed, right?"

"We got the deal, and you're being wordy again!" Rabbit couldn't help but say, "Are you suffering from illusory illness? We don't have much time now. You got the payment, hurry up and do what you need to do!"

"No problem. We'll depart now." Feng Bujue turned around and astoundingly found that the four doors leading to the four corridors had disappeared. A wall now stood there with a big door installed in the middle.

"No need to be surprised. The appearance and size of the space are just a form," Billy's voice came along with the squeak of the iron door.

Feng Bujue turned around to see the puppet pedaling a tricycle towards him. Rabbit also walked out from the second cell. He and Alden were looking at Feng Bujue, waiting for this traveler from another world to open the door.

Feng Bujue studied the three of them, shrugged then walked straight forward.

...

The door was opened. One human and three monsters took turns to enter a monotonous gray space.

Faster was standing around ten meters away from the door. He appeared as a man wearing ancient Roman armor. His armor, skin, pupils and even his hair were all cement-gray. If he didn't turn his head to look at their general direction, he wouldn't be much different from a sculpture.

"Sure enough..." Faster said, "Traveler from another world, you've picked the prisoners' side?"

"Huh?" When Feng Bujue heard that, he immediately made a lot of guesses. "Well, you're like them. Before I've entered the prison,

you got the chemical bottle and the information of my conditions?"

"True," Faster answered. "I could also guess that you'd be on their side. With only your strength, it's impossible for you to force them to give you the chemical bottles and find the way out." He paused then continued, "Thus... No matter what you've undergone in the prison, when you come to my place, you must be on the opposite side to mine."

"It's good that you can understand it." Feng Bujue raised the pistol as murderous intention flared up in his eyes while his hands were holding the gun firmly with force.

BANG—— The gunshot resounded.

Rabbit got headshot once again.

Except for Feng Bujue, the others had their faces filled with fear. Even Faster had to wonder, What's going on?

After killing Rabbit within a short distance, Feng Bujue didn't stop there, aiming the gun's muzzle at Billy, shooting constantly. Even though Billy was shocked, his reflexes were still fast. He made the pistol Feng Bujue was holding disappear and deviated the trajectory of the bullets. However, since the distance between them was too short, and Billy's physical skills were almost nonexistent, not to mention Feng Bujue betrayed them without any prior indications all of a sudden, Billy got shot right at his tummy.

"You..." Billy fiercely said, "Alden! Kill him—"

He couldn't finish his words because a superior monstrous force was being emitted around Feng Bujue. This was enough to shut up the monsters at Billy's level.

"Hmm... Seems I've successfully activated it..." Feng Bujue beamed a cold smile. When his pistol was gone, he had activated the only killing skill he got – [Dragon of the Darkness Flame].

Feng Bujue's Spiritual Technique was graded E, and the success

rate of this skill was 40%. However, thanks to the assistance of [The Dedication of the Ice Warlock], the success rate of all of his skills could be increased by 10%... In simple words, success or failure, each took just half of the chance.

A dark flow of evil influence bloomed out from Feng Bujue's right arm, spreading rapidly to envelop his whole body. He was now surrounded by a rippling dark energy vortex. Waves of the Dark Dragon suddenly appeared.

This Demon King Flame Fist was his strongest attack. Even if the attack hadn't been struck out and the dragon hadn't moved yet, this place now looked like it had a storm coming. Not to mention the level of the user, the power of the skill itself was utterly invincible.

Feng Bujue's legs parted as if he was forming the horse stand position. His left hand pressed on his right arm as the right arm instantly stretched out with five fingers curled in a palm. They then heard a dragon's roar, and the peerless technique revealed a Dark Flame Dragon formed by energy bursting out. It opened its giant mouth, swallowing the puppet and his tricycle.

This strike was swift, powerful and close. Before it was struck out, Billy got locked by demonic force, unable escape. Even Alden standing next to him couldn't move an inch.

[Your item Contral Medal is consumed.]

This time, the medal was actually used. The Dragon of Darkness Flame had consumed '100% of Survival Value.' The cost to activate this skill was really astonishing. As Billy got hit before, under this strike, he had nothing remained, even a single bone.

After Feng Bujue had killed Billy and also had been devoured by the dark flame, he was resurrected on the spot with his best conditions. He then eyed Alden, the only one that remained, with a contented look. "Before you start to attack me with your impulsive indignance..." He slowly retreated until he could shamelessly stand

next to Faster. "You'd better consider the current situation a little bit..." He smiled. "I remember Billy used to say that among the three of you, only him can defeat Faster when he's in his best condition... Thus, if I were you, I wouldn't seek for death in vain. And, I would get back to the prison with my current status and prepare to welcome the monster who will arrive soon."

Faster seemed to understand the situation in front of his eyes. He then turned to Feng Bujue standing next to him and sincerely told him, "You're really insidious..."

"You've fooled, deceived and used us..." Alden said while gritting his teeth.

"Well, it's you who tricked me first, right?" Feng Bujue said. "However, you're not good enough. You failed. What I've done is the correct way."

"You've used the pistol and the medal we gave you to deal with us..."

"Yeah... You guys are the sincere and noble people with dignity. During the negotiation, you've almost disclosed everything I wanted to know... For example, your strength, the principles of these items, and the comparison between your powers and Faster's..." Feng Bujue continued, "And, you gave me these things and let me have a good grasp of the plan."

"You dirty, despicable, evil..." Alden had paid attention to finding the accurate and civilized words to curse people. It seemed this monster hadn't been designed with swearing ability.

"Enough, Alden," Faster intervened. "The grudge between you guys and this traveler from another world isn't related to me. However, I have my duty. Now, I order you to get back to your cell. If not, I have to do it myself and bring you back there."

The shimmering blue eyes of Alden dimmed. His line of sight gazed for a long while at Feng Bujue just like he wanted to engrave

the image of this guy into his eyes forever. More than ten seconds later, he bitterly withdrew into the prison's doorway, and the big door closed again...

"Phew..." Feng Bujue breathed a sigh of relief seeing Alden leave. When he took the second deep breath, he pragmatically spoke to Faster. "Excuse me, the unknown ingredient chemical bottle that you keep..."

"Understand... Understand..." Faster extended one arm, giving the bottle to Feng Bujue.

When Feng Bujue received the item, the system notified.

[Main Quest, updated]

[Find chemical bottles (4/4)]

[Current Quest, accomplished. Main Quest, updated.]

The new quest appeared in his menu was [Mix the unknown ingredient chemical bottles (A), (B), (C), (D) to make the antidote and remove the poison.]

The system's voice paused for two seconds then continued, [Do you want to combine the special items related to the Quest?]

Feng Bujue confirmed in the menu popped up in front of him. The other three chemical bottles in his bag disappeared altogether while the one in his hand turned into white halo. After the data had finished reorganizing, it turned into a new item called [Antidote].

Feng Bujue didn't take medicine right away but turned to Faster. "Hey... Da-Ge. I've helped you solve the breakout this time, don't you have anything to say?" He looked at Faster while speaking.

To his surprise, the jailer in front of Feng Bujue was motionless. With an attentive look, Faster had actually turned into a sculpture.

"You didn't help me in anything. In fact, you did help yourself." Faster's voice came from another direction.

Feng Bujue turned to the general direction of the voice and saw another Faster, who had silver light radiating from his entire body, walking towards him.

"No matter which side you'd picked, the result would be the same. They couldn't escape," Faster said. "They had just come here and simply killed the clay sculpture I've made."

"You..." Feng Bujue's face slightly changed as he mused. "I understand... There's no spell of the Lord of Time here. From the beginning until now, all are your mischief."

"Harrumph... Of course," Faster sneered. "How could Master leave a jailer, who is weaker than the prisoners, to watch over the prison." He walked to Feng Bujue and continued, "This clay sculpture is fabricated with special magic ingredient..." Faster patted the gray statue that looked exactly like him. "Naturally, my power is not weaker than Billy's. If we single out, they are not my matches. However, if the three of them join in, it will be relatively annoying..."

"That's why you've set up the trap..." Feng Bujue took several steps and cocked his head just like he was eyeing the gray sculpture of Faster. "Why did their powers disappear after 'killing' this clay sculpture?"

Faster's eyes were fixed on Feng Bujue. As the latter was moving, Faster also moved his body. Now, he had his back on the gate of the prison.

"In fact... it doesn't matter who kills the clay sculpture. As long as it gets destroyed, who are present in the 'Space Door' will lose their power," Faster said. "Thus, I always stay in this place and remotely manipulate the clay sculpture to play with them. They're so naïve that they still think that this clay statue is me.

"Ha, ha... Every time they kill the clay sculpture, their powers will decline to the weakest point. Then I, the real me, hiding in a secret place near here, can bring them back to the prison

effortlessly."

"After several times, of course, they will suspect this sort of phenomenon..." added Feng Bujue, following the other's flow.

"True. So, I've fabricated a theory called 'Reincarnation.' I told them that this is a spell from the Lord of Time. No matter how many times they've killed me, it's useless as they always fall into the reincarnation." He spread his arms. "I've used this method to deal with their breakout for many times. By the way, the other duties here are relatively easy. Sometimes, I just need to throw a monster in there to ensure that they have company," continued Faster.

"Yeah..." Feng Bujue licked his lips. "Seems... talking about insidious, you meet the standard, too."

"Are you mocking me?" Faster snorted coldly. "Harrumph... Talking about cheating, well, I'm a little bit not as good as you are."

"Ha ha...Ha ha ha ha..." Feng Bujue faced up the sky and laughed like crazy.

All of a sudden, the laughter silenced as a grin was held on his face. "No, not a little bit, buddy. It's way far behind."

In this blink of an eye, Faster looked stunned. He suddenly recognized that there was a chilling-to-the-bone coldness that appeared as many spots on his body. He lowered his head only to see many dark shadows wrapping around his neck, wrists, knees and other parts...

"You'd better not tamper with it. Your blood is moving inside my vessels." Alden's voice echoed in Faster's ears.

At the same time, the squeaky sounds from the tricycle also came from behind him...

Billy the Puppet was pedaling his tricycle, slowly approaching Faster. He lifted his dark face and asked the other, "Have you ever gotten kick by a fluffy animal's hind legs?"

"What the..." When Faster heard the question, he recognized something as he turned his face around...

At this time, the Rabbit was jumping over two meters in the air using its sturdy hind leg. It aimed for Faster's face, making a roundhouse kick while yelling, "F*CK YOU!"

Chapter 183: Despicable Me (End)

The sturdy hind leg of Rabbit trod on Faster's face. Silver liquid spewed out from Faster's nostrils and mouth. At the same time, two silver teeth also flew out.

Compared to the physical pain, Faster's doubt was growing bigger in his mind. "Why?"

"Cough... Pff..." Faster spit out watery blood in his mouth. His eyes opened wide in shock as he talked to Feng Bujue. "What... What's going on? You just...Them..."

"Of course, we were just acting," said Feng Bujue.

"No way... I... The Rabbit's phantom..." Faster could only say a few words.

Rabbit intervened him, "It's my real body." He spoke up while wiping his leg on the ground. "I know you can differentiate between the illusion and the real body, but haven't you seen me using a layer of illusion to cover my real body?"

Rabbit said then used his rabbit claw to cut his throat. They then saw an open wound on his throat with plasma and blood gushing out like a waterfall. "If you want to see me taking out my heart, I can show you, too." The illusion he created had disappeared even before he had finished talking. The wound and blood stains vanished into thin air altogether. "What you've seen... was just a powerless bullet shooting me, and I had instantly fabricated the headshot illusion. Billy's 'damage' is the same."

Feng Bujue said, "One of your mistakes is that you are too confident with your muddy sculpture trick. You always let them kill this clay sculpture; that's why you had just a shallow understanding of their powers. If you had paid more attention when remotely manipulating your muddy sculptures, instead of your careless deeds, you could have known more of the

information related to these three prisoners... especially the details of their powers and the changes they can make during the fight."

"This is all your faults that court calamity," Billy said. "After we've got tricked several times, you casually told us about the 'Spell of the Lord of Time.' Afterwards, you haven't even cared about our breakouts. Usually, you just do some simple moves to resist perfunctorily before getting killed." He paused for a while. "I used to have doubts. Why was the capacity of this new jailer so much different from Satsuma Diehl's. Unfortunately, I still got fooled by your false spell..."

"You... Have you planned everything carefully before you entered the door?" asked Faster.

"Not to mention the thorough plan or something," Feng Bujue said deliberately, "this isn't a complex performance. I just had the mood when I proposed this. In fact, I got it correct. Of course, even if I got it wrong, we wouldn't bear any loss, but it'll be just a show without any payment. It went exactly like you said. Later on, they would come here, give me the gun and I would shoot you to death."

...

Ten minutes ago...

Feng Bujue raked his eyes through the other three then shrugged, walking straight forward.

He just made several steps to reach the gate of the prison and put his hand on the knob. Right before he was about to push the door, he halted.

He stood there contemplating.

"Hey! What's the matter now? Are you done yet?" yelled Rabbit.

"No..." Something flared in Feng Bujue's eyes. "You guys got fooled!"

"What are you doing? Do you want to take the reward and—"

Rabbit's voice started to pitch up.

"Shut up," Billy shouted to stop the rabbit then continued with a probing manner, "he's implying something else."

Feng Bujue let go of the knob. He returned to the desk. "You've told me that the 'Reincarnation' will happen and it's triggered by 'killing' Faster. We have some problem here..."

"Having an infinite resurrection power is a common thing in a special space. You also can—" said Alden.

"I didn't say that his ability to resurrect people is the problem," Feng Bujue denied and interrupted him. "If it were actually the spell cast by the Lord of Time, why wouldn't he have set it up so the reincarnation would be triggered when anyone of you gets out from that doorway?" His look swept through the other three. "That way, he could even cause you guys a civil war." He pointed at the door on the other side. "Why he's set it like killing Faster to trigger the reincarnation?"

"When the jailer is alive, he will watch over the prisoners. When the jailer dies, it will cause the reincarnation. Isn't it reasonable?" asked Alden.

"Ha!" Feng Bujue beamed a smile. "If that jailer is stronger than you, it's reasonable, indeed." He turned to Billy. "However, as a matter of fact, Billy alone can kill Faster. If the two of you join in the fight together, I think it'll be a cinch..."

"You meant..." said Billy.

"Faster himself has told you about this reincarnation theory, right?" asked Feng Bujue.

"Yes, it's him," answered Billy.

"Did you know about Faster's competence before he had become your jailer?" Feng Bujue asked. "How is he compared to Satsuma Diehl?"

"Although we had never engaged in a fight in the past, everyone knows that Faster is a strong warrior, as excellent as 'The Twelve Hours Officers'." Billy contemplated then said, "Satsuma Diehl was ranked the tenth among the 'Twelve Hours Officers'. When he was in charge of this prison... there was no monster nor reincarnation, and the three of us were alone in the cells. It was impossible to resist even if we joined together to force or ambush him. We had no way to strike against Satsuma Diehl."

"Yeah..." Feng Bujue crossed both of his hands in front of his chest and nodded. "Then we can jump right into the conclusion... If the new jailer the Lord of Time had assigned here is not able to take care of this duty, why did he still send him over? Well, setting up the spell would do, right?" He lifted his head. "If Faster is appointed, it speaks up the fact that the Lord of Time has certified his competence to watch over you guys. However, the way Faster is taking care of you is not purely relying on his powers. He got his own way..."

Feng Bujue curled his lips. "Moreover.... Does the spell actually exist here? In the eyes of a traveler from another world like me, if it does, the Lord of Time just needs to place a pig with tremendous attack power at the gate. It would do, too. Why would he need a jailer?"

"Therefore!" Feng Bujue held up one finger. "I think, Faster has fabricated the spell thing."

"So then, why—" Rabbit wanted to ask further.

To save time, Feng Bujue said straight away, "I have a plan. You come listen."

...

Back to the current moment, there were only ten minutes before Feng Bujue's poison would burst out.

"Of course, I have a certain selfishness," Feng Bujue talked to

Faster. "Although I assumed that the last chemical bottle would be at your place, whether or not killing you would grant me the item, I wasn't so sure... Thus, I wanted a proper way to fool you and take the bottle.

"It's unlikely to negotiate with you. And, you also said that you would assume I should be on the opposite side when I got to this place through the prison gate. Your assumption isn't wrong. However, what I have known beforehand was useful to me.

"I got much information from Billy. I knew when you got the bottle, you also knew about my information, which you would use to predict my competence and what I would do. Since you have come to the standpoint that I would cooperate with the other three, I then played the betrayal role to topple your standpoint.

"Seeing with one's own eyes is more convincing than any verbal descriptions. Thus, after attacking with the pistol, I also used the high-level skill like the [Dragon of the Darkness Flame].

"At that time, Billy's gunshot wound was just fake. In fact, he was still intact. Moreover, as we have planned before, if I could successfully activate the skill, he would receive the attack. Then, he would use it together with the illusion to run away.

"What Alden had said was just to make you think that my betrayal was beyond their expectation. And it was real.

"Sure enough, this performance, which devoted all our energies, worked. Seeing Alden retreat, you couldn't help but believe that all were true.

"Turned out after Alden had withdrawn into the door, you removed your guard and gave me the chemical bottle. Moreover, you were so contented you used your real body to see me. Because, you couldn't wait to share your clever tricks and be on the same side with me, the one who would never have a chance to come here again to disclose your secrets. Anyway, you've used this set of tricks to fool them for a long time; if you couldn't boast about it to

anyone, wouldn't it be casting pearls before a swine?"

Faster wore a fierce face and said, "Cut it off... Aren't you doing the same thing now?"

"It's not the same. You wanted to show off," Feng Bujue smiled, "and this is my hospitality to prevent the case you would die without knowing the truth." He then immediately used the [Antidote]. The system instantly notified, [Current Quest, accomplished. Main Quest, accomplished.]

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

"He's right," Alden whispered in Faster's ear dolefully. "You must die, and I assure that before you die, you will experience what's called 'terror'."

Rabbit was near there, polishing his claws like he was going to practice some rabbit boxing drill.

Faster knew his life would end here. He stared at Feng Bujue with a bitter look. "Why did you want to help them? Do you know the price to pay when going against the Lord of Time?"

"I also have the same question." Billy turned to Feng Bujue. "Why didn't you change side just before acquiring the battle?" He lowered his voice to say, "Ten minutes ago, if you had chosen to push the door and got in directly without discussing with us... I thought you might have succeeded. The betrayal scene wouldn't be different from playing the drama with us. It also could help you finish the scenario and prevent the grudge between you and the Lord of Time."

"Ha ha..." Feng Bujue smiled. "Regarding making a grudge, I've considered... if you won't tell anyone and I won't disclose the details, who will know the breakout this time is related to me?" He spread his arms. "I'm just a traveler from the other world, a small character that's not worth mentioning. You guys slaughtered Faster and ran away. If no one divulges the secret, it will not be

related to me..."

Feng Bujue casually said, "And... What I've done? I didn't proactively catch Faster or kill him. This is none of my business." To their surprise, he had no sense of shame to separate himself succinctly from the event. "And why I wanted to help you guys, I've told you before..." A smile appeared on the corner of his mouth, and that smile revealed some sort of craziness. "Originally, I don't have any one of the Lawful alignments."

Chapter 184: Intermission (38)

[Scenario completed. Calculating for rewards...]

[Player receives:]

[EXP: 5000]

[Coins: 50000]

[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 has one bonus rewards, please select later.]

[Skill points received: 630]

[Bonus EXP based on skill points: 6300, Coins: 63000]

[Calculation completed. Please continue]

Feng Bujue read through the data on the screen and another notification rang by his ear: [Your title has been updated to – The Unpredictable Fanatic]

[You have levelled up to level 19, your stamina value increased, currently 1900/1900]

"This title doesn't sound like a good guy at all..." Feng Bujue muttered, opened up the game screen, and looked towards the title ability column. The previously [Planned Victory From a Thousand Miles Away] was replaced by a new skill. The new skill was an active ability, but its effect...

[Name: See My Move!]

[Special ability type: Active]

[Consumption: ???]

[Effect : Player can choose to select any available specialties and randomly activate an active ability in that specialty (Cooldown for ten minutes, the ability's consumption depends on the ability's effect. The randomized ability effect won't exceed the player's level and ability restriction)]

[Note: Being crazy is the shortcut for human's exploration of their potential!]

"Cutting the di*k off is the shortcut to mastering the most powerful martial arts! (1)" Feng Bujue stared at the note and roared, "Isn't this Togepi's (2) Metronome attack? The ability might even give the Death Ray ability! And this can't even surpass the level and ability!"

But to be frank, it was better than having nothing. After obtaining the [Planned Victory From a Thousand Miles Away], Feng Bujue didn't encounter any normal BOSS, either he couldn't see anything, or he saw something like Mr. You. The odd time where he saw the stats of something normal, he didn't encounter them at all. Now this ability could at least be used as an active battle ability to use. As long as he faced an enemy, choose "combat", and then [See My Move!], it would be at least somewhat useful.

The time was around 11:20. Feng Bujue checked the social menu and discovered that Like Rain and Dispirited both went offline, their name turning to grey. This time was considered the vacuum period where players connected to the non-sleep mode would all choose to complete their scenario and go online before switching into the sleep model channel.

Feng Bujue was planning to go offline after he obtained his

reward. He pressed the button of the elevator. When the door opened, he entered the storage room.

"Think about it... the last two scenarios made me lose a lot of equipment." He examined the game menu while walking to the glass pillar on the side. "I did make some gains in specialties, improved my Fighting Specialty to E in the scenario where I encountered derivatives. In the scenario I just finished, the Curing Specialty somehow levelled up too..."

[Please select your additional reward: ***]

"I won't level up even I choose the EXP reward, ahhh... give me equipment." Feng Bujue couldn't control his hand and chose the equipment.

Once the white light formed together, the shape of a gun appeared which made Jue-Ge ecstatic.

[Miss. Moxxi's Bad Touch] (3) [Particular effective against flesh]

[The temperature of the gun is hot not because of overheating. The continuous vibration is not because of mechanical issue... Please use with confidence.]

He came to the second glass pillar and obtained the reward for completing the scenario.

Item:

[Name: Goblin's Poisonous Mask]

[Type: Weapon]

[Quality: Excellent]

[Defensive power: Feeble]

[Attributes: Poisonous]

[Special Effects: Talking and breathing in close proximity could make the target poisoned (This effect is active and used without the facial equipment appearing in the first place).]

[Equipment Requirements: Weapon Specialty D, Level 17 and above.]

[Remarks: Everyone will die; the medical insurance will ensure you will die on your bed. But if your treatment is too expensive, then a stranger with a mask may visit you. Without a doubt, Goblin Insurance Company's employees have no sense of morale at all.]

"Ha... Haha..." Feng Bujue obtained two advanced equipment in a row but he wasn't necessarily happy. He carried the gun, wore the mask, and returned to the elevator. When he stared at the mirror wall while examining himself with the purple suit, the figure... was practically... a mixture between a lunatic anti-society individual and a psychotic serial killer.

"The Unpredictable Fanatic, how fitting..." He thought that the title looked fitting from the appearance.

After another completed Single Player Nightmare scenario, Feng Bujue's stats were as follows: Title: [The Unpredictable Madman].

EXP: 6737/19000

Skill Value: 3300

Game coins: 442000.

Specialties: Common D, Weapon D, Investigating E, Fighting D, Shooting D, Curing E, Spiritual Technique E and Summoning N/A Bag: 6/10, including Mario's Pipe Wrench, Flash Light, Foldable Chair, SCP-500 (19/20), Anti-gravity Launching Device, Miss Moxxi's Bad Touch.

Equipment: Dance of the Knight, The Death Poker (Spiritual Weapon), Echo Armor, Goblin's Poisonous Mask.

Storage: 3/10, including Jigsaw Puzzle Card: Monkey, Jigsaw Puzzle Card: Shades, Persephone's Vacuum Cleaner Skills: [Perfunctory Maintenance], [Body-Spirit Congregation Technique], [Determination of the Alchemist] and [See My Move!].

To be honest, the stats were extremely strong. Compared to other players in the game that have yet to reach level 20, his specialties and equipment was daunting. While his skills were somewhat lackluster, they were above average.

Of course, it was ability on paper and didn't represent the actual case. If Feng Bujue entered a 1V1 Slaughter Mode and fought with a Level 19 player, it was two different cases. Any of the blue collar players for a studio with fighting or shooting specialty could beat Feng Bujue.

To summarize a fight, a strong player will not necessarily win, but the player who wins will be the strong one.

Feng Bujue received his reward and chose to go offline. He still needed to prepare more, for example, purchase new ammo, visit the shop, and go to Box of Fear to see if the [One Hit Wonder Pistol] spawned out. But, he planned to do these in sleeping mode as it saved more time.

Chapter 185: Intermission (39)

Wild Trace Sword Shadow casually walked into the leader's conference room. Four people already sat around the table with one of them being his good mate, [Swordless Swordsman]. Three people sat on the other side of the table with the ID [One Sword to Conquer the City], [One Saber to Conquer the City], and [Not Afraid].

Martial World Studio was a top notch studio with great discipline. There was no attending members eating chips without any consideration, but they were not sitting around doing nothing. Everyone had a drink in their hand and took a swig once in a while.

The snacks and drinks in Thriller Paradise are purely for the purpose of satisfying craving without any BUFF effect, they didn't restore Survival or Stamina Value either, nor would it allow the players to eat one less meal in actual life. But the items sold surprisingly well in game. Whether it was the professional players, the RMB players that didn't lack money, or the casual players, they would all purchase some to have a taste.

Dream Inc.'s virtual food was really this attractive? The answer was definitely yes. They sold three types of product, one type was the most common or popular product in the market, chips, coke, and cigarette for example; the second was the luxurious products with a high price tag which included expensive medicines, chocolate, and alcohol; the third type was interesting non-existent products in real life, such as "alligator's jerky", "rainbow juice", as well as original snack with thrilling elements, like "eyeballs barbeque", "mummy-wrapped rice cake"...

Despite the short public beta period, not to mention most of the products were not expensive, but Thriller Paradise's profit in this area was approaching the profit from the consumables sold in store (ammunition, medicine, battery). The option became a major channel for the system to recover in game currency from players.

"Xiao-Ge is still not here?" Sword Shadow spoke while he sat down. He glanced across the faces that sat across the table, they were all members of the studio but not close with Sword Shadow. Out of courtesy, Sword Shadow smiled and nodded as part of introduction.

Swordless Swordsman replied, "Probably arranging the thing you talked about before."

"Is it that problematic?" Sword Shadow asked.

"Ha... you just left the stuff here and left for other people to take care of it." Swordless Swordsman laughed, "We spent a lot of effort on this, do you think Weapon Specialty is that easy to train? Other than Order Studio, which studio could have an abundant of players in each specialties?

Sword Shadow shrugged. "I never trained before so I don't know the difficulty."

While they spoke, the door to the conference room opened again. A man 1.85 meters tall with a calm and stern expression walked inside.

[Questioning the Heaven], one of the three owners of the studio, also acted as the studio leader inside the game.

If there were a group of people deserted on a desolate island, stranded deep inside mountains, or trapped inside an unknown dangerous space, at first, they would all be clueless, then, Questioning the Heaven would be the person that could be relied on out of the group—the person that could be depended on to make a decision.

Elegantly speaking, it was known as leadership charisma. Blatantly, he looked reliable.

In real life, Questioning the Heaven, Swordless Swordsman and Sword Shadow were considered young entrepreneurs; in the game, they were considered the elites of the professional gamers. But

Questioning the Heaven was undoubtedly the one that could represent Martial World the best.

In terms of skills, the trio were extremely close. In other virtual reality games before, they would often challenge each other with mixed results. Disregarding the influence

But in terms of managing the company, Swordless Swordsman and Sword Shadow were miles behind. The important decisions and future development plan of the studio was decided by Questioning the Heaven from the very start. As a company that started from grassroots, a wise decision-maker is fundamental to the success.

"Mhmm... everyone is here." Questioning the Heaven sat at the north most of the table and his sight scanned across Swordless Swordsman and Sword Shadow on the right. Then, he looked at the three people on his left and said, "Did you get to know each other?"

"Ah, we chatted for a bit," Swordless Swordsman replied, "but Sword Shadow just got here, why don't you make an introduction."

Questioning the Heaven raised his right arm and faced the three people on his left. "Wild Trace Sword Shadow."

"I have long respected the name!" One Sword and One Sabre finally met an elite. While they were ecstatic at heart, they acted reserved.

Not Afraid just scorned without any disagreement.

"Haha, no need to be so courteous," Sword Shadow replied with a grin.

Questioning the Heaven then told Sword Shadow, "While One Sword and One Sabre are not professional players, their online time is ample and consistent, and I see their potential..." He paused, "Weren't you complaining about the lack of teammate in Slaughter Game? Why don't they follow you?"

"Okay." Sword Shadow agreed without any hesitation. He understood how to treat people; in a situation like this, either decisively reject them or decisively agree to the decision. If he acted like a man picking out prostitutes and replying for a deliberate consideration, it would make One Sword and One Sabre feel awkward.

"We are all in the same studio and there is EXP amplification, I'm dying for teammates," Sword Shadow said.

"Haha, then we'll work with Sword Shadow in the future." One Sword and One Sabre was pleasantly happy about the decision. For them, it was great to be able to join a reputable studio like Martial World. The "potential" from the leader made them even more confident. Now that they were appointed to the same team with Sword Shadow, it was a heaven-sent opportunity. They were both players that used close range weapons, so it would easier for them to improve by watching an elite like Sword Shadow closely.

"Also, this is [Not Afraid]..." Questioning the Heaven continued to introduce, "This is an elite recommended by One Sword and One Sabre. She just joined the studio today, I want you to meet her..."

Swordless Swordsman and Shadow Sword's expression slightly changed when they heard this. They were all wondering in their heart the definition of "meeting her"? Is this your girlfriend or relative, so you want your brothers to meet her? But this doesn't feel like it with the introduction he gave, then could it be... while this beauty is not an employee of the studio, she is an elite casual player that we must meet?

"Hello," Not Afraid nonchalantly said. The cute gesture she put on whenever she encountered strangers in scenarios completely vanished, but rather she put on an audacious personality.

Because Swordless came early, he already met her. For Sword Shadow, however, it was the first time he spoke with her, "Hello," while debating in his mind: I have never seen her before and never

heard a professional player named [Not Afraid], but Questioning the Heaven-Ge seemed to place a great importance on her... interesting.

"Not Afraid can enter scenarios with Swordless in the future, try to maintain a consistent time online to improve the leveling speed. Once you get to level 30, I want to incorporate you into a special team to conquer the nightmare difficult multiplayer survival mode. Questioning the Heaven said, "Also, between level 30 to 39, there are a total of three "Ranked Frontier Battle" you can join, I hope you can go with teammates in the studio, I will arrange this."

...

At the same time, in the Hell's Front conference room.

Feng Bujue walked into the conference room and saw Like Rain with both hands carrying her cheek. She looked tired as she observed the rather boring scene around her. Dispirited across the table was throwing popcorns at Little Tan and attempting to stick more popcorns onto Little Tan's hair.

"Are you all waiting for me?" Feng Bujue asked. They were all in sleep mode.

"Only waited for ten minutes," said Like Rain.

Feng Bujue turned around to see the number of popcorns on Little Tan's head. "I'm really curious. If I come a bit later, what would throwing the popcorn as a way of killing them escalate into?"

"Perhaps she'll make me catch it with my mouth," Little Tan replied.

"I'm happy you finally found a friend with a mental age close to you," Feng Bujue laughed.

"Absolute nonsense! I'm much more mature than him!" Dispirited retorted.

"Of course, everyone who's been to elementary school knows that girls mature earlier than boys," Feng Bujue said while sitting down around the table.

Dispirited glared at the leader with evil remarks before she made a funny face at him.

"I heard you're going to be on TV soon?" Like Rains said.

"Ahh... you already promoted this..." Feng Bujue basically admitted it. He spoke to Little Tan, "Eh? Also, how's your left hand? You broke the bottle of [Slow Quicksand], is the effect obvious?"

Little Tan replied, "There is nothing wrong." He raised his hand, "There is nothing odd about it. I finished two scenarios after work and didn't feel anything odd. Perhaps after the Deadly Jeopardy scenario, the effect of the quicksand disappeared."

"The negative effect in the scenario will not be brought back into the login space." Dispirited continued, "Leader, didn't you say you read the game instruction? Why are you so persistent on this?"

"Because I feel that scenario has problems..." Feng Bujue muttered in his mind, but he didn't say it out.

"As long as it is okay." Like Rain was always the one that brought the conversation back onto the right track. Without her, who knew how long this group of people would dawdle. "Now that everyone experienced a few scenarios, let's share our level and status before we get prepared to leave."

Chapter 186: Canglin Tournament (1)

In the ten minutes Feng Bujue was late, he finished all the things he needed to finish before entering the scenario. He purchased five bottles of Survival Value Supplement (Large) and six clips of assault rifle bullets, spending a total of 40 thousand coins. He then visited the Box of Fear to search for the [One Hit Wonder Pistol] and [Emblem of Contra] he saw in the last nightmare scenario... They were actually there...

The [Emblem of Contra] in Box of Fear was the same as the one used by Feng Bujue with a cost of 20000 Skill Value. At this phase, only the players at the top of the ranks possessed the theoretical possibility of purchasing the item, most of the other players could only sigh at the price.

The effect of [One Hit Wonder Pistol] has been drastically modified by the system. Although the pistol was still a one hit kill, it lost the must hit effect and must be aimed. It lost its effect against the Final BOSS of the scenario and players. The bullets were still infinite, but the number of times that can be shot was limited to five shots per hour. Even then, the weapon was priced at 50000 Skill Value.

Although both were legendary items, they pale in comparison with another legendary weapon [Tessaiga (1) – Iron Crushing Fang]. In terms of the pricing, the combined price of the two was cheaper, goes to show Box of Fear priced items reasonably.

Feng Bujue didn't want his teammates to wait for long so he quickly completed his purchase and satisfied his curiosity before quickly coming to the conference room.

The conference room everyone entered was opened by Like Rain with her being the captain, but when Feng Bujue entered, she transferred the captain role.

The four's specific stats will not be mentioned here. Other than

Feng Bujue, their abilities and stats didn't change drastically.

Little Tan, Like Rain and Dispirited were all level 17 with the same title as before, and the weapons they used didn't change either. In terms of specialties, all three improved. Little Tan possessed the ability to study [Evil Bat Ghost Shadow], so Feng Bujue took out the ability from the studio's public warehouse and made him learn this.

While they were exchanging information, Feng Bujue used the opportunity to tell everyone Longao Min joined another studio, and he also mentioned about [Hard drive 2455-A-1] as well as his agreement with Sword Shadow. The gang at Hell's Frontline immediately realized that... Sword Shadow was tricked by Feng Bujue, and Feng Bujue was the true master of being a hands-off boss without caring for anything. He just waited for them to finish before sending the equipment cover.

Although it was a pity that Long-Ge didn't join, it was not a big deal, since Hell's Frontline was a casual group of players to begin with. Feng Bujue didn't plan on building a powerful six people team. He'll invite people that he got along in the future, he didn't want to put a strict number on the number of people.

The four all reported their information and prepared for departure.

They returned to their login space separately, when Feng Bujue established the team communication, they entered the queue.

[Feng Bujue, level 17]

[Wang Tanzhi, level 17]

[Like Rain, level 17]

[Dispirited, level 17]

[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: 5 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 sounded like a dreadful old witch, the tone was dark and close to what Feng Bujue heard during the new player training.

[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: 100000 Game Coins.]

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

The cinematic animation began to play...

Night, the pristine moon hung bright.

It was a small path and the sound of horseshoes approached, and not long after, a horse rapidly arrived.

It was a white horse, and the person riding the horse was also in white.

The man in white was dressed like an ancient swordsman, but he didn't wield any weapons on him. It was a big question for what reason did they travel so hastily at night.

[Ten years ago, a magnificent duel occurred on the peak of Purple Cloud Mountain, "No Name Sword" Xie San and "Sword Deity" Ye

Cheng fought for two days and two nights without a decisive victory.]

The subtitle appeared on the button along with the system's voice.

"What is going on..." Feng Bujue thought the start was similar to a Wuxia story, so he thought an absurd plot was about to unfold.

[Ten years later, the two could hardly meet a match in Jianghu, and a duel was inevitable.]

[This duel is for the name of greatest under the sky, and it is also for verifying the truth in their sword's path.]

[The location of the duel is set at a desolate piece of land in the southwest, in a long-abandoned village.]

The words stopped there and the man in white in the picture suddenly stopped the horse and gazed at the path in front of him. He scanned at the shadowy forest on the side. "I'm Jade Face Champion Bai Dian, which friend is in the front? Could I have the pleasure of meeting you?" His voice was not loud, but in the deep night, it could reverberate very far away.

"Go back," an elderly tone replied. The words were transmitted to Bai Dian's ear, but Bai Dian could not grasp the location where the words came from—it sounded like the voice was turning and spinning around him.

"... You must be here to watch the epic duel three days later?" Bai Dian scorned. "Just with your words and you want me to... ahh!" He didn't get to finish his sentence before he dropped to the ground and became a body.

The lens moved and zoomed in on Bai Dian. The still widened eyes were full of shock. Before he died, he only had the time to hold his specialty weapon in his hand—an odd-looking dart—but unfortunately, it was no use.

The lens once again moved and focused on the back neck of Bai

Dian. The players finally saw that there was a bamboo stick that stuck in there.

[Canglin Town, surrounded by mountains on three sides, was rumored to have a broken temple inside the forest to the east and haunted by malicious spirits, therefore there were ghosts that commit crimes when they wander down. Villagers in the town die a tragic but mysterious death, however, the officials couldn't do anything about. After many years, the local residents all moved to flee from this location and this place became an actual ghost town.]

[It was the 15th of August, the two great swordsmen agreed for a duel here.]

[The words were leaked and shocked the martial arts community with elites all gathering here because of the news. The hotel in the desolate town oddly opened again a few days ago and over one hundred renowned martial artists lived inside...]

[What's the result of the duel? What's the truth behind the ghost town? What's the hidden conspiracy behind everything?]

The plot introduction ended there. The four members of Hell's Frontline and another player that queued in appeared on the small path Bai Dian died on, but they were still one kilometer from the place of death.

[Primary Objective Activated]

[Enter Canglin Town.]

"This day and age, elites don't fight at the Forbidden City anymore (1) and instead came to a haunted village for trouble... this is..." Feng Bujue muttered while facepalming.

"Ahhh! You!" A familiar voice rang in his ear.

Feng Bujue raised his head and saw a face he didn't want to see, so he instinctively said, "Are you kidding me..."

"This should be my script!" Young Master Ji Bu roared.

"Where are your other three teammates?" Feng Bujue asked.

"Uhh..." Ji Bu replied, "they went to 3 vs. 3."

"You are definitely extraneous..." Feng Bujue was straightforward.

"What are you saying!" Ji Bu was not happy, but he didn't have anything to rebute.

"A friend?" Like Rain looked at Feng Bujue and asked in concise words.

Feng Bujue hesitated for a moment. "Yeah... you could consider him that..." He turned around and told Little Tan and Dispirited, "Let me introduce, this is the leader of Ice Emperor, Male Prostitute Ji Bu, Little Tan do you still remember, one of the two guys killed in the Blood Wolf Zombie scenario."

"Oh... right, it is this name." Little Tan only saw the ID of [Young Master Ji Bu] and [Naming is Difficult] but never saw them in person.

"Who are you saying is a male prostitute! Look at your anti-social lunatic appearance... combined with your gothic name, you dare to insult me?" Young Master Ji Bu had already noticed that the two males and females beside him all had the "Hell's Frontline" emblem. He asked, "Eh? You're a studio?"

"That's right, I'm a leader now... although not authoritative at all, but with how sad you are as an example, I suddenly feel great..." Feng Bujue said.

Ji Bu felt that he would be in a never-ending cycle of mockery. He was not on the same level as Feng Bujue in terms of badmouthing. What could he do, he could only withstand him... He changed the conversation, "Umm, what's the buff to your studio?"

"Oh... that..." Feng Bujue felt it was not a big deal to release the information since the studio's BUFF will be changed based on the ranking of the week, "The first is [All Stamina cost inside the

scenario is reduced by 3%], the second is [Extending the forced log out duration of Fear Value reaching the peak by three seconds.]"

Ji Bu said while thinking, "Mhmm... it is close to what I imagined, our studio's BUFF is a tiny Survival Value regen increase and an increase in Game Coin reward in the end." He paused, "Looks like the BUFFS of studios after rank one hundred are pretty negligible."

"You can see this on the forum," Feng Bujue said.

"Ah? You... can?" Ji Bu took a moment to process.

"When is the last time you went offline?" Feng Bujue checked in the team status and noticed that Ji Bu's level was already 20 with a title [High Profile Sneak Attack]. "In the permitted game time, other than sleeping and eating, you've been playing nonstop, right?"

"I'm a pro player!" Ji Bu said with seriousness.

"Okay..." Feng Bujue shrugged.

Because only Ji Bu was an outsider, the five didn't need to spend a long time introducing. They chatted for a brief moment before Feng Bujue cleared his throat and began to sell his first strategy...

Chapter 187: Canglin Tournament (2)

[Your appearance has been adjusted to the appropriate state by the system from the NPC's perspective.]

When Feng Bujue walked alone to the place where Bai Dian was killed in the cinematics, the system voice played. Jue-Ge obviously knew that he entered the sight of an NPC and the system voice was the indirect proof.

"Mhmm..." Feng Bujue looked at Bai Dian's body with head lowered, the moonlight's brightness making the scary face even more horrific.

"Senior, if I pretend that I don't know you're hiding close, could you let me pass by?" Feng Bujue suddenly said, his voice was not high, but he didn't sound like he was muttering. His tone was not superior or inferior, but sounded respectful nonetheless.

"Since you already spoke with me, then it proves that not only you know you know that I'm nearby, you also know the answer to the question." The elder's reply was transmitted back in the wind. It was so scattered, and its source was hard to locate.

Feng Bujue mockingly said, "Could I not have been tricking you?"

The voice was silent, and there was no reply.

"I came here and discovered a body lying on the ground. The dead was wounded by a hidden weapon and wounded at the back of the neck. From the severity, the wound alone is fatal and most likely a sneak attack. The killer only used a bamboo stick and clearly with a deep cultivation force." Feng Bujue continued, "Therefore, my question of asking whether the killer is nearby, is it reasonable?"

The elder's voice was transmitted again, "Then how do you know this old man is your senior?"

"It's simple, I'm still young, and most of the people in Jianghu are

my seniors." Feng Bujue smiled. "Especially with your technique of killing people with bamboo stick, that is not something used by the young people. Without a profound cultivation force, normal people can't use the technique."

Feng Bujue has been bullsh*tting till now, only using the information he obtained from the cinematics to deal with the NPC.

"Whatever.... regardless if you are tricking me or not... it doesn't change anything." The old man said, "Go back." He said the same sentence as the one he told Jade Face Champion heard before the latter died.

"Could I ask what kind of people have the qualification to pass?" Feng Bujue asked.

The response was one word: "Elite."

"The dead person beside me is not an elite?"

"Yes, but he is from the palace." The elder man paused, "Therefore, not only can he not pass, he must also die."

"I'm not from the palace and I'm elite." Feng Bujue said, "Therefore, I should be able to pass right?"

"Hahaha... hahaha..." The elder laughed out loud and the laughter reverberated nearby.

Suddenly, a figure flashed out from the forest and an old man in blue robe stood meters in front of Feng Bujue.

The old man looked like he was in his seventies with hair all white, but his back was straight. His appearance didn't look too kind but not evil looking either. "Little buddy, get your friends to come out too."

Feng Bujue tried to play dumb. "What friends?"

"I don't have your wittiness and don't have the interest to trick you." The old man continued, "I know you have four companions, they are searching for my whereabouts in the dark and you're here

to attract my attention..."

"Fine, fine..." Feng Bujue saw that his plan was seen through; he decisively turned around and yelled, "Come out, we've been discovered."

Little Tan and the group walked out the forest one by one. Dispirited was holding on an MP5 with the muzzle aimed at the old man, ready to fire at any moment. Because the old man didn't know what it was, the old man didn't seem to mind.

"I also want to say, they are all elites as well." Feng Bujue's tone didn't sound like he was lying.

"Ha... I'm old, but my eyes are not blurry yet. With the footsteps, posture, and breathing..." The old man shook his head. "You little devils... don't know cultivation at all?" He was confident with what he determined, therefore he dared to appear. "Go back, the current Canglin Town is not where you should go. Even the masters that spent decades in Jianghu could hardly guarantee that they could stay alive until the night of the duel."

"Senior, we are here to watch the duel, not join the duel, the 'masters' enjoy doing warmup matches are their problem. They can fight in a cage all they want, but as long as we don't join..." Feng Bujue said.

The elder didn't understand half of what Feng Bujue said. He took a few seconds to process. "Hehe, you don't know anything about Jianghu at all. The things in Jianghu is not as simple and naïve as you imagine them to be." He walked up a few steps, came in front of Feng Bujue, and stared at Jue-Ge growing thinner by the day, "Also, with your physique, you probably can't beat the people walking on the street. Even if you watched the duel of the sword deities, what could you get out of it?"

"I already said I'm elite, senior, why don't you believe in?"

The old man's expression seemed to be saying, 'you are such an

unreasonable child'. He shook his head and said, "Then tell me your title." He pointed at the body on the ground. "If your title is not as renowned as the Jade Face Champion, you better go back right away and stop embarrassing yourself."

A curvature appeared on Feng Bujue's mouth, he scorned. "Hmm..." It was his specialty, "I am the Break Sword Village Leader that punched the two Guang provinces, kicked the Suhang Provinces, sliced the three Qin mountains, stuffed the far north, and slaughtered the foreign land without any competition on this piece of land, known as the Unpredictable Madman... Feng Bujue." After he shamelessly said all this, he was still not thrilled, so he shouted his poem title, "My Jianghu colleagues recognize me for my greatness and gifted me a poem: Laughing at hell, breakthrough myriads of soldiers; strategize the knowns and unknowns, calculate the consequences. Unafraid and unfearful, look down on death; not god, not ghost, close to a fanatic demon."

The old man was stunned. First, he didn't hear Sword Breaking Village before; second, while he didn't hear the name Feng Bujue before, the long title didn't sound like it was made up on the spot. At least, he couldn't make it up himself.

"You..." The old man was short of words. He previously was certain that the five had poor cultivation and even none, but with Feng Bujue's bullsh*tting, he was no longer certain.

Young Master Ji Bu was equally as shocked. He thought Feng Bujue would randomly make up a title common in Wuxia novels, but this guy did an entire paragraph and the content broke through the heaven—the name "Jade Face Champion" paled in comparison with this title.

"Oh, right, I haven't asked senior's title?" Feng Bujue said while putting his fists together.

"Old man is just a servant with a title not worth mentioning at all," the elder replied and he began to realize something. "Little

buddy, you're indeed smart and great with words. But elite is not something bluffed."

"I understand, if senior doesn't trust me. I will show you a few moves." But what he thought in his mind was: Old man... if it was not for the fact that you're related to the main plotline, I won't be wasting my effort on you. If you insist to stop me here, I will have to invite you to eat some bullets...

Feng Bujue took a step back. "Senior, take one of my moves?"

"Even if I have to take ten, hundreds of moves..." The old man didn't finish.

Feng Bujue activated the title ability [See my move] and selected a fighting ability.

Feng Bujue knew he could at least use a move, but he didn't know what move he would use...

The old man saw that Feng Bujue was about to attack him and didn't dare to act overconfident—no one could guarantee if the young man hid his cultivation and wanted to eat a tiger while pretending to be a pig...

The old man used 70% of his cultivation force and met his palm.

With a bang, Feng Bujue met his palm and backed away five to six steps. Only he knew that one hit alone cost him 30% of his Survival Value. The good thing was that the old man used his force for just defense without pushing the force forward, or else Feng Bujue would be in danger.

"This..." Although the old man didn't move a step, he had a shocked expression. His fist was already scorching red and burning in pain as if it was being ironed.

"Activated an ability with fire element... quite lucky." Feng Bujue thought, but his expression looked calm. "Sorry for making a fool of myself."

The old man put his hands behind his back. "Mhmm... I can't believe this old man is wrong today." He stepped aside. "Young elites, please."

"Eh? Senior, aren't you going to test the cultivation of my companions?" Feng Bujue pointed at Ji Bu. "Look at this girl, he looks weak."

"Hello!" Ji Bu was extremely displeased with Feng Bujue selling his teammate.

The old man just pretended that he didn't hear Feng Bujue's latter half of the sentence as he calmly replied, "There is no need, the four must not be underestimated. Leader Feng, please." He even changed the way he called him.

"The old man seemed to be stunned by me, looks like that ability is super strong..." Feng Bujue thought, "No wonder it used three hundred Stamina value and thirty ability points."

"Thank you senior," Feng Bujue said while eyeing his teammate, signaling they could leave.

When the five went far on the road, the old man put his palm in front of his face. "Sword Breaking Village Leader, humph... this kid is full of bullsh*t but indeed powerful." He adjusted his breathing in an attempt to suppress the pain on his palm. "If he is a forty years old man, that palm move is nothing, it was just thirty years of hard training as a virgin. But this kid is only twenty something and could hit produce a powerful palm force. Other than Natural Yang Cultivation Force, there is no other explanation... Ha... when did so many dominant characters appear on Jianghu again? Looks like the masters and elites drawn by the duel of master are far more in number and far more powerful than expected..."

Chapter 188: Canglin Tournament (3)

Although Canglin Town was surrounded by mountains on three sides, there were two paths to enter the town.

One major road extended from the nearest city "Copper Fort".

The small path was where Feng Bujue and the gang appeared when they entered the scenario.

The major road should be discussed first since the situation at the other end of the road was quite tense.

Copper Fort today was filled with thousands of people from major cultivation factions and elites from all over Jianghu, so much that even the palace mobilized its army. The group naturally wouldn't all head to Canglin since if they did, the small town would be flattened.

Therefore, there was a certain requirement to enter Canglin through the major road.

After all the leaders of the cultivation factions discussed, they set two rules. Since everyone had a lot of adepts in their gate, naturally, it would be impossible to bring everyone along. As such, the first rule was that each leader could at most choose twenty adepts to head into the town, while all the other adepts must remain in Copper Fort and stay out of trouble. Next, "the evil way" cultivators were not permitted to pass. Of course, who were the evil people? It was determined by the "lawful" people.

Other than the serial killers and rapists wanted both by the officials and Jianghu, the rogue martial artists were included as part of the evil and kept in Copper Fort. Although they didn't have a righteous name, they were not evil and immoral people. Most of them just preferred to act alone or were timid in nature, therefore, they rarely befriended the lawful. Now they finally learned how casting the different worked.

It was worth mentioning here that within the setting of this scenario, the palace typically wouldn't care about killings on Jianghu, unless the incidents affected civilians. Jianghu people never bothered with the palace either. Whoever was the emperor or was he doing a good job had nothing to do with the martial artists. There was an invisible boundary between the two that couldn't be crossed.

At least on the surface, the palace's army was there to maintain order. If Jianghu people disturbed the public, they would be captured and prosecuted—they didn't care about anything else.

Now about the small road... People on this path... naturally was blocked on the major route or absolutely shouldn't appear in Copper Fort.

The adepts of the cultivation factions watched Copper Fort day and night. People who dared to sneak or force their way through were asking for their own death. People with poor martial arts were shot by arrows into beehives, and people with powerful cultivation force... were surrounded by hundreds of people continuously attacking them, eventually draining their energy.

Therefore... the only way these people could enter Canglin Town was through the small path. As long as there was a few of them and they disguised well, after they sneaked out of Copper Fort, with one daytime on foot, they would arrive at the small path.

But here, a demonic killer was guarding.

The identity of the blue-robed elder was the butler of "Sword Deity" Ye Chen. His name was Ye Hai. His story didn't exist on Jianghu nor did a lot of people heard of his name, because he never conquered in Jianghu before.

Ye Hai became a servant of the Ye Manor at the age of twelve, and since then, sixty years have passed. When he became the Ye Manor's butler at the age of thirty-two, the Ye family changed three owners already, but his position as the butler remained firm.

Ye Hai's powerful martial art was rewarded by Ye Chen's great-grandfather. His talent level was not high, and he clearly knew that. Moreover, because he was just a servant, even if he had talent, he had no qualification to become a part of the Ye Family. The old master at that time, however, secretly taught him. When the young master was practicing sword, he made Ye Hai sweep the ground near him. He purposely read some of the internal technique out; Ye Hai secretly trained at night, the entire manor pretending not to see it.

The Ye Family's martial art was of the superior class, especially given that work ethics could make up for the discrepancy in talent. Despite Ye Hai's mediocre talent, by thirty years of age, he improved a lot and could be considered a quasi-elite on Jianghu. Two years later, he became the butler of the Ye Manor, married, and had children. For Ye Hai, it was the happiest time of his life.

A few years later, old master Ye passed away and Ye Chen's father inherited the family asset. He permitted Ye Hai's son to join the Ye Gate and become an official adept. But the kid was too aggressive, and before he learned the essence of martial art, he died an unsuspected death when he dueled with other people. Ye Hai's wife soon passed away not long after.

After Ye Hai lost his family, his allegiance to the Ye Family became his spiritual belonging and pursuit in life. He has always been grateful and loyal all his life.

Ye Hai's current cultivation level in the present day, even the leaders of the factions were no match for him. There were only two types of people that could win against Ye Hai, the first type being the extraordinary elite, the one out of a million type of people—Xie San and Ye Chen that remained out of the Jianghu—the second type was natural born elites that trained for many years, and this type of people must have talent above Ye Hai's. In addition, they shouldn't lose out in technique, and their cultivation level must be 60% or more better than him. Only

people that met these conditions could win against him.

With a character like this on the road, the result was clear.

...

In just half a month, a lot of evil people with or without a title was extinguished by Ye Hai. It was doing a good deed for the people at the same time.

The people between lawful and evil without the martial arts essence were "sent" away by him. Only the true "elites", the people qualified to watch the duel, could go through the small path to Canglin Town.

For the people like Jade-faced Champion Bai Dian that appeared to be part of Jianghu but in actuality with a palace background, there were a lot of them that died. Palace ws the palace, and they never acted the way they said they would act. On the surface, they pretend not to interfere with Jianhbu, but in the dark, they constantly intervened, except they would never admit. Therefore, in situations similar to this, people in the Jianghu would eliminate the people from the palace without any mercy. Since the palace would never admit that they sent people here, they had to swallow it without being able to say anything.

...

The same night in the forest to the north of Canglin Town, not far from the rumored haunted abandoned temple.

Grass grew to the knee here and there was absolute silence. Gazing deep into the forest, the place looked eerie, branches covered the sky, and thorns blanketed the ground.

Suddenly, a figure soared from the distance without making a sound.

It was a gorgeous woman in black, her figure slim and graceful.

Her expression, however, was solemn with a hint of fright in her

eyes.

"Nice airborne technique," a cold voice emerged.

As the words echoed out, another black shadow suddenly appeared. From his appearance, not only did he not carry any weapon, but his hands were also behind his back. He looked like he could win without using his hands at all.

The girl, without saying anything, used her life used her life energy to sweep her sword forward that carried a gust of wind.

The black shadow used an incredible move to dodge the sword and stepped onto the sword with his right foot. The dominant cultivation force suppressed the sword, and despite how bloated the girl's face was and how much force she used, she couldn't retract her sword.

"Unfortunately, your greatest airborne technique is just a trick in front of me." The black shadow blandly said, "Lu Adept, you can only blame your bad luck. You discovered my secret... so you must die."

Lu Qingning didn't respond but an unexpected change suddenly occurred.

Suddenly, a bell with a peculiar sound began to ring in the darkness. At the same time, the two were surrounded by an indescribable chillness...

Chapter 189: Canglin Tournament (4)

On the other hand, the Hell's Frontline group passed the Ye Hai obstacle and continued forward on the path. They walked for half an hour before they arrived at the entrance of Canglin Town.

Feng Bujue had been analyzing the situation of the scenario during the entire walk while discussing with his teammate how to handle it.

In terms of NPC ability... extrapolating from the force of the blue-robed elder, the elites in this scenario must be quite powerful. The players would die way too many times if they compared cultivation. But players have their own advantage, such as abilities and equipment which are considered supernatural in this world. Even elites like Ye Chen or Xie San will suffer an inevitable death when shot by guns.

But Feng Bujue thought that technically speaking, it would be unwise to be involved in a conflict with the NPCs, and it was even more unwise to expose the only advantage of being a player. Since the scenario was generated under sleep mode, it was already a established fact that the scenario might be extended, and this meant that the players must stay for a long time in the scenario.

Without a doubt, the key to the scenario was the "duel" event. It was unlikely that the scenario would end before the duel. Bai Dian mentioned something about the "duel three days later", and it was an obvious hint in the starting cinematics. Players who noticed the sentence would naturally keep that in their mind.

In a few more hours, it would be day time with the "first day" officially starting, but the day of the duel would be on the third day. In theory, if Ye Chen and Xie San planned to find a place to enjoy the moonlight and drink northwestern wind at around seven to eight at night, then there were sixty-five hours until the duel.

Feng Bujue exited from non-sleep mode at night and slept inside

the game chamber, setting the login time at 12:10. The preparation before entering the scenario was negligible, and around two minutes in time were converted to real life time.

Based on the current situation of the scenario, if they want to complete this, the ending time should be around seven in the morning. Without any surprise, they could at most play one scenario tonight.

"Therefore... let's agree on this. I'm the leader of the Sword Breaking Village, and you're all my villagers." Feng Bujue walked in front of the town and confirmed with the crew. "Try to avoid starting a conflict with other people. When involved in a conflict, don't bring out your gun unless it is pivotal. Modernized weapon is our trump card; we can only use it once. If other people see it, then in the future, it will be hard to see such a pleasant situation of other people running to our muzzle."

While he spoke, shambles made out of wooden poles and bricks appeared before the group of five. The village looked extremely crude and simple with one side built against the wall of the mountain. Two words were engraved into the wall—"Canglin Town."

The two words were written from top to bottom, with the highest point ten meters from the ground, and the lowest point parallel with people's eyesight. The letters were massive and were as broad as shoulders. It was evident that the words were not chiseled in nor engraved by weapons; it was written with a finger by releasing the cultivation force.

The shapes of the two words were commanding, firm, and ever changing; the spirit was overwhelming, simple yet dominating. The senior that wrote the words had cultivation beyond people's imagination. Even the two otherworldly swordsmen dueling here were far no match with this person.

Of course, the words were written when Canglin Town was first

built and the senior has long left the world. Only, his feat was left here for the future generations to envy.

"Oh, we are here then." Little Tan used the moonlight to read the name on the wall of the mountain. "This is so odd. Didn't the description say that it is only a small town? But the town's name is so powerful and daunting."

"Do you think only illegal militant Huaguo Mountain Waterfall Hole [2] could engrave the name on the mountain?" Feng Bujue joked.

Young Master Ji Bu interrupted, "Although I don't really understand this... but the words don't look like they are chiseled in? Could it be an elite had used the sword's cultivation force to engrave it?"

"Eh! That's possible." Little Tan said immediately, "Perhaps it is someone who came to watch the duel purposely showing off to leave an impression on the Jianghu people coming into the village."

"No," Like Rain calmly rejected the idea. She still treasured her words.

Little Tan and Ji Bu all looked at her, but she didn't plan to explain at all. She just turned around and used the back of her hand to gently touch Feng Bujue on the shoulder.

"What? Do you have a barrier to socializing?" Feng Bujue looked over.

Like Rain used her chilling eyes to stare at Feng Bujue. There was no emotional fluctuation on her face at all, but it still gave people an invisible suppressive feeling. "No."

Dispirited seemed to have seen something, so she suddenly burst out laughing.

"Fine, I will explain this." Feng Bujue shrugged and turned to Little Tan. "The words on the mountain are clearly not created in

the current age. If you look at the moss and cracks on the mountain, it is evident that the words have been engraved for some time. As for the intention of the person that engraved the words, perhaps that person named the place." He paused as he seemed to have thought about something. "Mhmm... interesting, perhaps... it is not because of the duel that Canglin Town became so incredible. Instead, it's because of the secret hidden in the town when the duel occured."

"Hello, look at that guy, he seemed to have noticed us," Dispirited suddenly said, pointing to the direction of the entrance.

The group zoomed to that direction. Thirty meters away from them, they discovered a figure sitting on the ground.

It was Feng Bujue that led and took charge. Since he was skillful with language and had a fast reaction, he was the most efficient in communicating with an NPC.

After stepping over the ancient stepping block, the five officially entered into Canglin town, and the system notification came:

[Current objective changed, main quest is updated]

In the menu, [Enter Canglin Town] was check marked.

The new objective appeared: [Investigate the truth behind the duel]

When Feng Bujue read the content of the objective, the word "fu*k" immediately popped up in his mind.

For him, this objective was more problematic compared to missions like "head to the abandoned temple to the north of the village to investigate the truth of the haunted ghost", since the "truth behind the duel" could be anything. It could be related to the palace, it could be related to the village being haunted, perhaps Ye Chen was an alien, perhaps Xie San and Ye Chen were homo...

Anyone knew some form of conspiracy hid behind the scenario, but the main objective suddenly changing from an extremely

specific action to an event without any direction, was it making the players freely express themselves?

When Feng Bujue was deliberating, he walked in front of the figure sitting on the ground. At this distance, he could see quite clearly.

It was an old beggar with age similar to Ye Hai. His face was covered in mud and worn torn clothes. There was a piece of rib in his hand and a gourd filled with alcohol. He was drinking and eating at the same time while observing Feng Bujue and the group. When Jue-Ge approached him, he said, "These days, there are more people from the small path, but the old beggar recognizes those people." He chewed and swallowed down the meat. "Today is so weird, there are a few strange faces. Haha... that old hag Ye Hai, how could he let a bunch of kiddos sneak in?"

"I'm his bastard son," Feng Bujue replied with a stern expression.

"Puff!" The old beggar almost choked on the alcohol and tears even came out of his eyes before he could finally calm down. His eyes widened as he said, "What did you say?"

"Haha... I'm only making a joke with the senior." Feng Bujue put his fists together. "Junior is the leader of Sword Breaking Village, Feng Bujue. These are my friends and we normally stay in the village..."

"I haven't heard of you before." The old beggar interrupted him by raising his hand. "I see that you're quite courteous. My word of advice, go back now and don't get into the mess."

There was no way Feng Bujue would leave. With a smile on his face, he said politely, "I haven't asked senior's name yet?"

"Oh?" The old beggar had a puzzled expression. "You don't know who I am?" He waved the hand holding the gourd in front of Feng Bujue. It was a gourd painted in red. Looking closely, the pinky on the right hand of the old beggar was cut off.

Feng Bujue thought, "Hong Qigong? (2) That's impossible... Hong Qigong has a bigger gourd, and his index finger is cut off...

"Uh... sorry for my foolishness, senior is an otherworldly elite, please excuse me..." Feng Bujue was interrupted once again.

"Hahahahaha..." The old beggar started to laugh, "You actually don't recognize me! Hahahah!"

The old man was naturally not Hong Qigong but rather the leader of the Bagger Clan. People refer to him as Beggar King with a name Meng Jiu. Seven years ago, Meng Jiu lost to Xie San's word, and one his fingers was cut off. This was widespread on Jianghu. There were people gloating that Meng Jiu's life was cursed by the number nine (3) and corresponded to a cursed fate. The odder thing was... it became widely accepted by the public. People didn't seem to use their brain that following this logic, Xie San should have had seven of his fingers cut off.

Meng Jiu, the leader of the biggest clan, along with a simple name to remember, added with the fact of the finger incident, it was nearly impossible to find someone one Jianghu that didn't recognize him. There were even old beggars that chopped off their own finger pretending to be him for free food and drink. Through this, his fame was evident.

"If you're not pretending to be dumb, then..." Meng Jiu stopped grinning as he immediately grabbed Feng Bujue's wrist and held onto his vein. The old beggar's cloudy eyes flashed with a piercing light, "Humph... you don't have any cultivation force at all, how could you trick Ye Hai? Say it... how did you get here? Did you find a secretive path?"

Before he finished, a cold blade was already placed on Meng Jiu's shoulder.

The moment Meng Jiu suddenly made a move, Like Rain who was closest to the two immediately made a reaction. She originally thought Feng Bujue triggered a FLAG and was attacked, so she

immediately took out the "The Dominating Deity".

"Let go." Her words were concise, but it was authoritative.

Meng Jiu was unbothered on the surface but he was secretively shocked—he didn't expect the opponent to make a sudden move. If he was on guard, he wouldn't be taken hostage by the sword near his neck.

Meng Jiu thought: The girl is so young but her movement is so swift, she is probably superior even compared to the renowned airborne technique user "Plum Falling Sword" Lu Qingning. But... this group of people doesn't seem like they possess cultivation force at all. Their breathing is no different than ordinary people. Even the lowest level adepts in the Beggar Clan that practiced a few years of fist styles are not like this.

Of course, he wouldn't know nor understand the existence of "players". Like Rain didn't need to master the cultivation force or airborne technique, since she could just rely on her physical condition to achieve such a speed. Therefore, her age or cultivation was irrelevant.

Feng Bujue captured something from Meng Jiu's expression and already had a plan in his mind. "Senior."

He still had a grin and a friendly expression on his face. "We can talk this out, just let me go first." As he spoke, he eyed Like Rain, and the latter hesitated for two seconds before moving the sword away.

"Humph... interesting." The way Meng Jiu looked at Feng Bujue changed. Feng Bujue's smile in the Beggar King's eyes turned into mischief. "Looks like the old beggar has mistaken you..." Meng Jiu let go of Feng Bujue's hand and sat up straight, seemingly nonchalant, then he said, "It's not that you don't have cultivation force, you just hid it well."

Feng Bujue was talented in observation and memorization; any

acute movements of the opponent would not escape his eyes. "We can talk it out, senior, although I don't know you..." He said while his sight consciously moved down.

Meng Jiu changed from originally sitting down with legs extended to sitting down with legs crossed. Feng Bujue purposely used his sight to point this out. "I heard that in the Beggar Clan's martial arts techniques, the lower body technique is especially powerful by combining the strength of all other techniques." He then looked at Meng Jiu's face. "Senior refers to yourself as 'old beggar', yet your tone doesn't sound ashamed but rather proud. Furthermore, combined with your flowy hair style and free-spirited clothing choice... with junior's poor understanding, even if you're not the leader of the Beggar Clan, you must be a chief within the clan."

Although Meng Jiu didn't completely understand what Feng Bujue said, he still used the "I don't understand, but it sounds pretty convincing" expression to look at Jue-Ge. He slowly put down the meat and alcohol in his hands and put his fists together to greet the young man in front of him. "Village... leader. I'm Beggar King Meng Jiu, the current leader of the Beggar Clan."

"Oh! I have long respected you! Sorry for my disrespect!" Feng Bujue responded shamelessly. Even fools knew that he hadn't heard the title before or he would have recognized him already. Just where did the long respected came from?

Meng Jiu couldn't make a commotion out of it since he did look down on them, disrespecting them at first. Especially when Feng Bujue's words sounded courteous on the surface, at most, it counted as mocking him without swearing.

Meng Jiu already treated them as elites based on two observations: first, the kid before him could see from him changing his sitting posture that he was in a guarded position—that meant the latter must be a martial adept, and a master of superior techniques.

Second, while the swordwoman's skill could barely be considered mastery, she had already reached this stage at such a young age... If she was not a natural born, then she must have at least practiced some profound and rare internal technique. But she listened to the village leader's words, therefore, this guy named Feng Bujue was either an elite or her husband.

"I apologize for my previous error..." Meng Jiu spoke out.

It was Feng Bujue that interrupted him this time, "Eh, what kind of words is this?" He waved his hand to dismiss it. "It is junior's lack of knowledge, how could I blame the senior?"

Dispirited a few meters out moved closer to Little Tan and whispered into his ear, "Our village leader's skin is so thick. From the start to finish, not a single word came from his heart, his expression is always so natural..."

Little Tan's mouth twitched. "Ha... You could only see his thick skin just through this? You don't know Jue-Ge at all..."

Chapter 190: Canglin Tournament (5)

The teammates watched Feng Bujue's mouth run wild as he continued to bullsh*t with the Beggar Clan leader.

Based on what Meng Jiu said, he waited at the entrance to point direction for his friends in Jianghu, also an opportunity to get some information on the people. As part of the Beggar Clan, he could naturally talk with most of the people in Jianghu. Regardless of background, they all had to give some respect to the old beggar.

Meng Jiu told the roles of the major road and small path to Feng Bujue and the gang. Feng Bujue's first reaction was, "Based on this, then in Canglin Town, there absolutely is no people on the evil path, everyone is lawful and renowned?"

The old beggar immediately started laughing, "Are lawful people always good people?" He asked rhetorically, "The people with renowned name, are they really righteous people even behind people's back?"

Feng Bujue had a smile on his face. "Junior sure learned..." He really just wanted Meng Jiu to be clear with things. With Feng Bujue's personality, how could he believe that all those people are good people? Even Meng Jiu in front of him, he could not completely trust him.

The other key point in their discussion was Meng Jue provided a detailed description of the current situation in Canglin Town. On the surface, it was already tense, and in the darkness, everyone was in an alerted state.

After conversing with the NPC providing plot description for twenty minutes, Feng Bujue almost obtained all the information he could possibly obtain. After he listened to the description, he thanked the senior before leading his teammates into the town.

Once they left the old beggar's sight, Little Tan got closer. "Jue-

Ge, did you hear him? The situation is not looking so good!"

"What are you referring to?" Feng Bujue asked.

"Obviously, the 'people are going missing every night' part!" Little Tan sighed.

"Although Meng Jiu spoke with a stern expression that it was caused by ghosts..." Feng Bujue laughed, "But in my view... you're probably the only one that believes in that."

Dispirited also said to Little Tan while laughing, "Even the other NPCs in the scenario won't believe in this. The old beggar is clearly trying to scary us, he probably doesn't even believe what he said."

"Why?" Little Tan was confused.

Dispirited responded, "Isn't this obvious? If Meng Jiu really believed ghosts existed, would he dare to stay on the street at night? At least, he will need to find a place with a roof to hide?"

Feng Bujue added, "Meng Jiu said people have gone missing every night with seven or eight people at the minimum, and ten something people on the higher scale... I think that the people missing are most likely killed by people, or died because of fighting." He paused, "Perhaps only one or two people have really encountered some sort of a haunted ghost."

Dispirited continued, "And the people in Jianghu know this point well. It's just that, no one will point out the haunted rumor."

Little Tan nodded and seemed to have understood. "Therefore, they could use the rumor to kill people in later days?"

Feng Bujue snapped his finger. "Bingo!"

Ji Bu then said, "But why would these people do this kind of thing? They are already here at Canglin Town, are they doing this so they can get a better seat in the front? So they'll use the next few days to take out any audiences secretively at all cost?"

"Sigh... you don't understand the conflict of Jianghu," Feng Bujue

said in a deep voice, as if he really understood. "Fame and interest are people's desire, grudge and love all spur from this. Jianghu is just a giant mixing pot that perfectly demonstrates these behaviors. If you make a bunch of people stay in a special and appropriate environment, human nature will be exposed."

He observed that the town seemed to be in peace because of the darkness. "Normally, there are always people you don't like. Perhaps you are jealous of them, perhaps they offended you, perhaps you know the scandalous things they are doing in the dark, or perhaps they know the scandalous things you are doing in the dark. But because of the constraint of your or their identity, due to the roles of Jianghu, morality and other stuff... it is not possible to plot something on the outside." He smiled. "Isn't Canglin a perfect place? No one cares... not the heaven, not the earth, and not the officials. In the darkness, you could sneak out to kill the person you have been putting up with for so long, and you can blame their deaths on the ghost that may or may not exist. Everyone is doing this. Everyone knows, but no one will point this out, isn't this great?"

"I think... you think about people too negatively..." Ji Bu listened to Feng Bujue's vivid description and uncontrollably shrunk his neck.

"You come from a good family background, right?" Feng Bujue smiled at him.

"How did you know?' Ji Bu retorted.

"Hehe..." Feng Bujue scratched his chin, "Naming Is Difficult, It's Difficult to Name, and The Name Is Difficult To Choose are those type of people... While they openly bully you, during an actual encounter, they would stand in front of you. Hmm, let me guess, friends you made in school."

"Hello... you could even see this?" Young Master Ji Bu was shocked.

Feng Bujue patted Ji Bu on the shoulder and let out a long sigh. "You... you don't know how malicious people could be." He then turned around to look at Little Tan.

Little Tan smiled without saying a word. He seemed to be experienced in this.

"Once you work under someone some day and get to know the people in the society, you will know how many scandalous people are out there and how scandalous people could be."

As they spoke, an unexpected event happened.

In the alley in front of them, a figure flashed out. He was a man wearing a robe, thirty in age, and extremely handsome. The girls that just stepped into Jianghu would have passion in their mind and a blush on their face by pure sight.

But then, the handsome man was not in the most collected state. He was clearly wounded and quite severely too. His left shoulder was stained red by blood. Not only did he tumble while running, his breathing was also out of rhythm. Under the moonlight, his pale face and frightened expression looked particularly tragic.

When he arrived onto the street, just as he looked up to Feng Bujue and the crew, before he could make a sound, his waist twisted to the side as if he was hit by a truck and cannoned away into a wall. In a few breaths, he died.

Feng Bujue raised his hand, signalling his teammates to stay put. He himself walked up in brisk steps to examine the body.

It was evident that the strange move of the person flying out was because the side of his body was hit by ten nail-like hidden weapons. He looked like he was hit by a shotgun, and the force of the weapon cannoned him out.

Almost simultaneously, just as Feng Bujue was about to look in the direction where the hidden weapon came from, he was also attacked...

Chapter 191: Canglin Tournament (6)

The person who threw out the hidden weapons was named Shi Yanran, the wife of the leader of the renowned Thousand Ray House, Gongsun Qian. And the man she just killed was both her secret lover and the adept of Thousand Ray House.

Shi Yanran was known for her unique nail throwing technique at the age of twenty. By twenty-three, she met and married the leader of Thousand Ray House who was over fifty in age.

Ten years passed by, and what happened during these ten years... was not worth going into detail. "A pear flower on top of begonia" would suffice.

The man who died was named Wang Ao, twenty-four in age, and became an adept in Thousand Ray three years ago. Because of his handsome face, he was "selected" by the female master to become a "closed door" adept; hence began an inappropriate relationship.

But Wang Ao was not just handsome—he had his own ambitions. When he first came into Thousand Ray House, he was plotting for Thousand Ray House's special technique, Thousand Ray Holy Technique, and hence started the relationship with the female master to have more opportunities.

About a year ago, Wang Ao felt the timing was right and started to hint Shi Yanran in an attempt to ask her to steal the Thousand Ray Holy Technique or copy it for him.

Shi Yanran was not a fool. Although Gongsun Ran didn't know anything about her cheating, he was not muddled enough to not know that the most important technique should not be touched by anyone, therefore, she didn't dare to steal it. On the other hand, Wang Ao continued to mention this to her and even came to a point where his requests became threats.

Therefore, Shi Yanran had the desire to kill...

With the two greatest swordsmen verifying the truth to their sword at Canglin Town, Thousand Ray, as one of the most powerful factions, obviously wouldn't miss this great show, and the cheating couple of the master's wife and closed door adept followed the leader here.

That's how the previous scene occurred.

Just like what Feng Bujue said, presently in the town, no one cared if someone killed someone at night. They just needed to take care of the body to prevent people from determining the killer from the wound, then everything would be settled.

Shi Yanran planned to do that. She pretended to ask Wang Ao for a date at night, but in actuality, she planned to kill him. But as devious as Wang Ao, he already sensed something odd and prepared for this. Just as she was about to take action, he immediately ran away.

But Shi Yanran's cultivation was far superior than Wang Ao, so the latter didn't manage to escape. Just before he died, he happened to appear in front of Feng Bujue and the team.

When Feng Bujue was examining the body, Shi Yanran said "ah" in her mind. There were plenty of people in Jianghu that recognized her nails weapon. Now with witness, the weapon, and body... her crime people would be leaked, and once the crime was leaked, her cheating could no longer be kept a secret.

In that instant, Shi Yanran thought... If I started this, I might as well finish the job! Since these people didn't look like they had cultivation force at all, why not just kill all of them? It's just that you all are unlucky.

Buzz... A few odd sounds began to rang around Feng Bujue.

The nail that was suddenly aimed at him midair was about to hit his body, but it was blocked by an invisible barrier. If one approached closer, they could notice the transparent ripples

formed by the piercing hidden weapons around him.

It was [Echo Armor]'s "buffer" effect once again being effective. It was mentioned that echo barrier against fast speed with multiple projectiles offer significant defensive capability... Even K3's close range piercing fist was blocked by the echo barrier, so the far range scattered projectiles were not a problem at all.

Shi Yanran didn't expect this to happen, and she didn't understand how Feng Bujue managed to block the nails she had thrown.

Feng Bujue was screaming in mind, "Thank god!" If the enemy used close combat technique to attack him, his Survival Value might have suffered tragically. He was fortunate that she used hidden weapons to attack him which caused him no harm.

In one attack and defensive move, the situation took a drastic turn.

Shi Yanran previously thought that someone like Feng Bujue was without any cultivation force at all—a nail thrown meant an inevitable death. She was planning to kill them, therefore, she was throwing the nails while already dashing out from the alley planning to deal with the four people further away. But the little guy stood there unharmed after being attacked by her own nails, and he magically took out a unique weapon she had never seen before, which forced her to stay on guard—the Pipe Wrench.

On Feng Bujue's side, he just instinctively took out his weapon. When he raised his head, a girl came into sight. She was in a white combat suit with grey furs around her shoulder. There was a silver ribbon wrapped around her waist. While the woman was not stunning, her face and her figure could be considered a top tier beauty. Her thirty years of age added more taste to her.

"We can talk it out..." Feng Bujue mostly understood the reason why she attacked him in the few seconds. He cunningly said, "I don't know you..." He then pointed at the body on the ground. "I

don't know him either." He cautiously maintained a certain distance between him and Shi Yanran. "What just happened has nothing to do with me as well." He saw that the opponent had stopped her movements, and it seemed she didn't dare to act rashly.

Feng Bujue felt calmer as he said,, "My friends and I... could pretend we saw nothing, quietly leave here, and let you take care of the body."

Shi Yanran already had the desire to kill, so how could she be shaken by just a few words. She sneered, "Humph... don't you think it is too late now? You have already seen my face." Her sight moved to Wang Ao's body. "You have seen his face as well, that's enough." Her idea was not wrong. She had no reason to believe a few strangers would keep what just happened a secret. If they really kept a secret, that meant... the secret would become a chip to threaten her.

"Then we don't have any other solutions..." While Feng Bujue was speaking, he slightly turned his body and raised his voice, it was obvious that he was signaling his teammates to prepare to fight.

But a red ray suddenly erupted. Feng Bujue's surrounding suddenly exploded, which proceeded to form a powerful energy. He was quite fearful of the ability of the NPCs in the scenario, so he didn't dare to let his guard down at all. Therefore, he used [Body-Spirit Congregation Technique] from the start.

Shi Yanran was more nervous compared to Feng Bujue. While she originally thought he didn't have any cultivation force, the invisible force that parried her nails was like a technique that could only be used by an elite with rich cultivation force. And the red shaped force was a technique she had never seen before.

Shi Yanran didn't dare to think more now; she just wanted to kill him. Since the kid in front of her possessed some tricks, then she

will use all her force and see if he or she would die!

She secretly mobilized her cultivation force. With knees slightly bent, her wrist pushed out to deliver out explosiveness. This time, only a single nail flew towards Feng Bujue, but the force was unstoppable—the nail piercing the wind sounded like screaming and was directly aimed at Feng Bujue's throat.

A pear flower on top of begonia is a famous sentence in poem that refers to old people marrying young. Pear flower is white which represents the man's white hair; begonia is red which symbolizes the vitality of the young girl.

Chapter 192: Canglin Tournament (7)

Shi Yanran, from a young age, learned the unique hidden weapon of internal technique passed down from her ancestor. She was born from a family with the wealth of knowledge. Ten years ago, she married Gongsun Qian who was old enough to be her dad, one for status in Jianghu, two for prosperity, three... she naturally was keen on the powerful unique techniques in Thousand Ray House untaught to the public.

In the ten years, not only did Shi Yanran practice her hidden weapon technique passed down to a superb mastery, she perfectly internalized the internal technique of the Thousand Ray House with her previously learned internal technique. Her current cultivation, while not comparable with the leader of the commanding factions, when compared to the second and third tier factions, was by far stronger.

Without a doubt, she was among the top tier elites.

And Feng Bujue under [Body-Spirit Congregation Technique] status, just in terms of speed, absolutely was at the top tier elite level. Of course, he didn't depend on cultivation force or airborne technique, but on the stats the game gave him. While he could match Shi Yanran in visual reaction and execution, they were still day and night in terms of skills and experiences.

Facing the attack soaring towards him, if he was an actual elite, he could have easily dodged the nail while simultaneously preparing for a counterstrike and even take command of the situation. But Feng Bujue could only dodge without being able to do anything else. He needed to test her more before deciding the next strategy.

This was the magical part about the cultivation setting... an opponent like K3 – Red Iron, while powerful, was all obvious—it was the combination of strength, speed, energy, special trait,

ability, and other factors.

But in the world of oriental martial arts, the standard to judge an elite was vague and uncertain. The "top-tier", "quasi top-tier", "natural born", and "otherworldly" are generalized. The ranking on the weapon's list are also relative; no one could be certain that the person ranked in the front is better than the person in the back.

A cunning move could make a person with inferior cultivation win against a much powerful foe. Deep cultivation force could make a seemingly feeble elder split rocks with bare hands. Li Xunhuan's flying knife (1), Lu Xiaofeng's finger (2), and Liu Chuxiang's airborne technique (3), no one bothered with the questions "Who has more strength?" or "Who is faster?"

The reserved and romantic attributes unique to the oriental is the attractive aspect of the martial arts world.

Feng Bujue didn't duel with an NPC with "martial arts" before, so he could not predict what Shi Yanran would do, or could do. Therefore, he must be cautious and seek to strike after.

His idea was not wrong. Shi Yanran's move was one move with two changes—whether the opponent blocked or dodged, there would be changes to follow. If Feng Bujue advanced forward, it would be more dangerous.

But when the white shadow flashed with the nail between her fingers, the subsequent move already arrived. While she was just a woman and used a tiny weapon, her external technique was mixed with fierceness and toughness; the move sounded like a thunderous roar.

Three powerful nails shot out and aimed at Feng Bujue at a straight line down from his throat. It pointed at the three major human temples on his chest, Tiantu, Zigong, and Tanzhong. (4)

Shi Yanran's after-move was surprising, and with her hand posture, it was impossible to guess where she aimed at. If it was

something that she trained for many years, after they dodged the first nail, based on their experience and calculation, they would guess that Shi Yanran's after-move was either aimed below their waist or limbs. If they really thought that... they would have fallen for her trap. If they moved even an inch, it would be impossible to avoid the three subsequent nails.

But Feng Bujue didn't think so much.

If elites' duel was compared to playing chess, right now, Shi Yanran's half was placed with Chinese Chess pieces, but Feng Bujue's chess was placed with Jungle pieces (5).

You use the cannon, I'll let the animal bite you. You use the rook, I'll still make the animal bite you, you use the horse, you're giving food to me...

If the problem is how many moves you can make, that doesn't have the concept of chess at all.

Because of this, Feng Bujue once again did something that was hard for the enemy hard to determine. His expression looked focused, but he didn't make any preemptive move at all. It was not until the nails completely left Shi Yanran's hand did he finally start to react to dodge again. Although it looked extremely dangerous, he didn't get wounded at all.

Shi Yanran started to grow more shocked at Feng Bujue's ability. It was the first time she met someone that could react to her move like this. Out of all the martial artists she met, all would move preemptive against the after the move. Just that some people were more skillful. Even if they were caught in the trap, they could still save themselves. But Feng Bujue's move was closer to someone who doesn't know martial arts at all, but he also possessed the speed to dodge the ability at the very last moment.

When the heart grows suspicious, the movement would no longer be fluid. Shi Yanran's attack didn't stop, but her decisiveness already vanished. She was thinking: If this kid could

manage to duel with me for twenty moves, the victor will be hard to say... his companions all look like irrelevant characters, but what if they are the same as this kid...

Of course, thinking was one thing, and she still had to fight. Shi Yanran threw out the nails and approached closer in front of Feng Bujue. With the opponent still yet to gain footing, she used her cultivation force and pushed her palm out.

The move "Soft Wind Bleeding Ray" was no different than ordinary palm techniques on the appearance, but there was secrecy hidden inside the move. A thick amount of cultivation force was gathered in the palm. As long as the opponent used their cultivation force to meet the fist, Shi Yanran's hidden force could infiltrate the opponent's body and aim for the core. Now it would be impossible for the opponent to escape and back away. If the person meeting the palm had poor cultivation force, their palm would be sucked in, and their core would be boiling like hot water. The less serious consequence would be completely losing the cultivation force, while the severe result was immediate death.

Shi Yanran used the move because she couldn't see any sign of cultivation force on Feng Bujue, so she wanted to test him. If all the moves made by the kid were because he got lucky, he would without a doubt die by the palm move; but if this kid used a special technique to hide his cultivation force, this palm could determine his cultivation level.

But the story progressed like this... in that instant, a golden shadow appeared and Shi Yanran's palm smashed onto a door-sized invisible barrier. The defense was without a doubt [The Death Poker]'s special effect – shield.

When Shi Yanran was closing in on him, Feng Bujue already sensed the seriousness of the situation, he muttered in his mind... I could dodge or block the ranged attack, but the elite's close range skills are no joke. Before, the old hag Ye Hai took a skill with his pure hand and I lost 30% of my Survival Value, but now this chick

is attacking me, how do I dare to take it with my body?

Feng Bujue instantly summoned his spiritual weapon and used the special effect without any hesitation.

The attacks and defenses between Shi Yanran and himself were as fast as lightning which took at most ten seconds of time. By this time, his teammates were here to help.

The first to be here was neither Little Tan known for his speed nor Like Rain with the swiftest move. Instead, it was Young Master Ji Bu. He saw that there was a scenario battle and immediately became energized. At least he was the highest level in the team and a "pro player", so how could he let Feng Bujue keep ridiculing him? He must display his skill and let them see his power.

Ji Bu used the strongest ability of his title "High-profile Strike"—Lighting Rush.

[Name: Lightning Rush]

[Special Ability Category: Active]

[Consumption: 300 Stamina Value.]

[Effect: Become a lightning and strike a target at high speed to deliver a powerful slash. After the end of the ability, will appear two meters behind the target with the back facing the target (Cooldown five minutes, must be equipped with cold weapons. Could be activated two to twenty meters within the target's range, but cannot pass through visible terrains)]

[Remarks: If you encounter a foe that's much weaker than you, and you want to use a stylish and concise way to wipe them out, this is the move you need.]

It was worth mentioning that Ji Bu's weapon was a giant foldable fan sixty-five centimeters in length. The fan was made of metal skeletons and extremely sharp along the edge when expanded. There won't be a lot of people capable of using this weapon in this scenario.

This weapon combined with Ji Bu's title ability was complimenting. Typically speaking, with his weapon, he could not match their speed. But with the rush effect of the ability, anything he could swing, he could be able to approach the target at high speed.

Shi Yanran was just puzzled by Feng Bujue's peculiar defense move before the corner of her eyes caught a glare of light as a human light shadow soared at her. Her expression completely changed as she chose to jump up to dodge.

Who knew that her instinctive reaction was the best move against the rush-type ability. Lightning Rush's weakness was the target just needed to jump two seconds before, and the attack had a high chance of missing.

Of course, Ji Bu rushed to where Shi Yanran was standing, and when the ability's effect disappeared, he didn't hit anything as he stopped himself. At the same time, he heard a gust of wind behind his back and two nails arrived.

Shi Yanran's rhythm was completely messed by the players. She didn't know how to fight the battle, and with the mentality of doing what she could, while she flew up, she twisted her body and threw two nails at Ji Bu's temple on his back. It didn't hurt to try, and there was no downside to missing.

She didn't think... Bang! Bang! They would actually hit...

Because Ji Bu was between Feng Bujue and Shi Yanran when he dashed over, the former couldn't block for him even if he wanted to.

But fortunately, Ji Bu as a "pro player' had decent defense equipment. The two bangs were not the sound of nails piercing into his spine, but the sound of hitting his armor...

The two nails dropped on the ground and Ji Bu tumbled back a few steps and almost fell down. Although the hidden weapon could

not pierce the armor, he didn't wear the Echo Armor that created an echo barrier to defend, therefore, the force of the impact was still transmitted to his body and caused 16% in Survival Value damage.

When Shi Yanran stepped onto the ground, she grew more confused. In her eyes, the players were all young adepts in appearance with the standard robe; it didn't look like they wore any armors. But the sound that the nails just made as well as how the nails deflected, it seemed like it struck something hard...

"The highest level of Golden Bell Shield... Iron Force Guarding Body?" Shi Yanran muttered, "How could this be possible... with how feeble this guy looks, how powerful could his external technique be? Even if he really did train Golden Bell Shield, with the impact of my two mails, at least he needs to calm his force with both feet on the ground, but he didn't even do that. The nails can't pierce into his body?"

When Shi Yanran thought about this, she already had the idea of retreating. If the five people in front of her all came from the same gate, regardless of what kind of odd techniques they used, her most effective hidden weapon was probably useless. If it was a close-range battle, how could she win one against five?

The problem was... with how the situation evolved, even if she claimed defeat, the enemy might not let her go. She was the only one to blame for underestimating the enemy and being too certain with her words. Now that she couldn't kill them... and she would probably die if she fought, if she escaped, he killing Wang Ao would be exposed, and she would eventually die. To simply put, her name would be tarnished in the end.

The more Shi Yanran thought about it, the more despair she felt. With a depressed expression, an abnormal emotion popped up. She gently bit her red lips and had the idea of fighting with her life.

At the same moment, a figure just happened to strike here at the

right moment—it was no one other than Wang Tanzhi wielding the assassin's short sword.

Little Tan didn't think too much and decided to first rush to the enemy first before attacking in the distance. He didn't think that Shi Yanran completely lost her cool. Without caring for anything, she used all her cultivation force and punched at the closest enemy.

The fist smashed toward sLittle Tan. Before making contact, light explosive sound formed in the air. The fist might not be wiser than the other moves used by Shi Yanran, but in terms of power, it was enough to send a player back into the login space.

Little Tan was quite unlucky this time, but he still had force.

In the crucial moment, his eyes were filled with suffocating calmness, [Devil Bat's Ghostly Shadow] activated, and Little Tan's figure split in two as two shadows soared by Shi Yanran's two sides.

Shi Yanran's full-blown attack whiffed, and the power of the fist caused dust to fly and rocks to shake in front of her. But she stood there, dumbfounded. She slowly turned her head to watch Little Tan who appeared a few meters behind her back as she exclaimed in her mind, "What is it this time... is it the lost "Heavenly Web Dive?"

Just as she was stunned, Like Rain's "Dominating Deity" arrived in silence and slashed towards Shi Yanran's neck.

"Slow!" The roar was like a thunder blown from the dark alley.

At the same time, the blade of Like Rain was hit by a small rock. Although the hit didn't make her lose Survival Value, it did make her arm numb and slowed her move down.

When Shi Yanran reacted, she immediately jumped back. Her eyes were lighted up with the flames of hope. Although she didn't know who helped her in the dark, but the situation at hand now

had new variables.

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