The five people signed up simultaneously, and six people appeared in the secret chamber. The chamber itself was simple, spacious, and bright. About a hundred meters ahead stood two adult-sized statues, both facing away from the players, with conspicuous red buttons on their backs. Between the players and the statues were two rows of ten squares, one row leading toward the statue on the left and the other toward the statue on the right. At first glance, it resembled an advanced version of Red Light, Green Light. However, there were no rules or hints explaining how the game worked. Therefore, nobody dared to move rashly. Everyone instinctively looked toward Hua Changsheng, but she had no intention of explaining anything, so the atmosphere immediately froze. Logically, at this point someone should have been used as cannon fodder to test the mechanism, but everyone present was at least a Three-Star Player, meaning nobody was foolish enough to volunteer for an unknown mechanism.

Therefore, everyone could only begin deducing from the plot of the dungeon. Chen Ran first connected the current secret chamber with the previous two secret chambers. Since Hua Changsheng's dungeon was constructed from the plot of the Hell Instance, the mechanism of the current game should also be hidden within that plot. The first secret chamber had already established the basic story: the Little Girl's father wanted to kill The Third Person, so he deliberately arranged a situation in which The Third Person would enter the house and attack him. During the struggle, the two fell from the window. The Third Person died from the fall, while the Adult survived because a rope had been prepared beforehand. Afterward, the Little Girl edited or left a message on the phone in an attempt to make the police believe that her father had committed a premeditated murder. However, this story itself contained several contradictions. First, if The Third Person had broken into the house intending to kill someone and was carrying a weapon, then killing him in self-defense would have been legally reasonable. The Adult therefore had no obvious reason to construct such a complicated murder plan. Second, the Adult was a psychiatric patient, as shown by the medication discovered in the first secret chamber. Even if the Little Girl successfully framed him for murder, a mentally ill person would not simply be sentenced to death. At most, he would be sent to a psychiatric hospital. Therefore, from a purely logical perspective, the simplest method would have been for the Adult to lure The Third Person into the house, ambush him, and kill him directly. The Little Girl would then have had no opportunity to frame him at all. If the Little Girl wanted to frame the Adult, she would first have to establish that he was not mentally ill, which was extremely difficult.

⇒ Therefore, the first story could not be accepted literally. The Adult was likely physically unable to kill The Third Person directly.

The players then connected this with the second secret chamber. That chamber had presented a completely different perspective of the same incident: someone saw the Adult drinking, someone cursed at another person in the hallway, someone pulled the circuit breaker, someone became involved in a fight, and eventually the murder occurred. The problem was that this story also contained logical contradictions. The first was the supernatural phenomenon in which the mouse became a ghost after being caught by the cat, which clearly did not fit ordinary physical logic. The second was more important: in the memory-loss simulation, Murderer A and Killer B ultimately possessed essentially the same killing mechanism. As long as the number of people

present did not exceed three, they could kill people freely. After Killer C died, Killer B would therefore become functionally equivalent to Murderer A.

From these two stories, Chen Ran could infer that The Adult and The Third Person were not simply two ordinary people. One of them was physical under certain circumstances and non-physical under others, while the other possessed a more universally aggressive nature. Big Gold Tooth immediately connected the two pieces of information: when the mouse had not been caught by the cat, it remained physical; after being caught, it became non-physical. Likewise, while the Little Girl was alive, the Adult only possessed killing intent toward The Third Person, but if the Little Girl died, the Adult would become universally aggressive.

⇒ The Little Girl was the variable factor in both stories.

⇒ The Little Girl was the cat that caught the mouse.

At this point, Chen Ran had already reconstructed most of the relationship between the three characters, but another contradiction appeared. The plot of the current dungeon seemed to require the Little Girl to backstab both the Adult and The Third Person. Yet according to the first secret chamber, The Third Person had already died from the fall. Therefore, the Little Girl could only directly backstab the Adult. There was no way for her to literally stab two separate people at the same time.

⇒ The Little Girl backstabbing the Adult must be equivalent to backstabbing The Third Person.

Chen Ran deliberately used words such as "possible" when stating these conclusions. The reason was important: inside Hua Changsheng's self-created dungeon, an incorrect deduction could potentially be judged as a Lie. Therefore, he could not simply state a hypothesis as an absolute fact unless he was certain. By framing his reasoning as a possible conclusion, he could continue the deduction without unnecessarily exposing himself to the judgment mechanism.

Combining the three deductions produced the most important conclusion so far: The Adult and The Third Person were the same person under certain circumstances, but were not the same person under other circumstances. Chen Ran deliberately did not describe The Third Person as a personality or mental state. In the memory-loss simulation, Murderer A and the other killers had separate rooms, meaning The Third Person was being treated as an actual person within the game's framework rather than merely another personality occupying the Adult's mind.

The answer immediately flashed through the minds of the other players.

Chimera.

Normally, a chimera refers to a situation in which one twin absorbs another during embryonic development, resulting in a single body possessing two sets of DNA. But the current situation was clearly more complicated. Lin Xuan immediately asked whether Chen Ran meant that the absorbed twin still possessed an Ego, meaning that the Adult and The Third Person were actually two lives existing within the same body.

Chen Ran nodded.

This finally explained why the plot appeared contradictory in so many different ways. The Adult and The Third Person could simultaneously be one body while functioning as two distinct people. Their physical relationship was therefore not simply "two people living together," but something closer to two independent existences sharing one physical body. The different descriptions of their behavior in the first two secret chambers were not necessarily contradictory; they could represent different states of that same body.

At this point, the players had essentially solved the hidden story behind the first two secret chambers, and this allowed them to understand what the two statues in front of them represented. The statues were facing away from them, meaning that the red buttons were located on their backs. If the current game represented the Little Girl ultimately backstabbing the Adult and The Third Person, then the buttons on the statues' backs naturally represented the act of backstabbing. More importantly, because the Adult and The Third Person were two lives sharing one body, stabbing the Adult was equivalent to stabbing The Third Person.

This explained why there were two rows leading toward two statues and why the buttons had to be pressed simultaneously.

The current clearance condition could therefore be reconstructed as follows: players needed to form three pairs, with each pair occupying corresponding positions and simultaneously pressing the buttons on the backs of the two statues. The apparent Red Light, Green Light structure was therefore only the physical interface of the puzzle; the actual solution depended on understanding the relationship between the Adult and The Third Person.

Everyone's attention then shifted to the most dangerous uncertainty: Hua Changsheng herself.

Because this small dungeon was connected to the main Hell Instance, Hua Changsheng had been forced to participate. However, being forced to participate did not necessarily mean that she was participating as a player. She could also be an NPC generated by the small dungeon. Therefore, nobody could determine whether the Hua Changsheng standing before them was the real Hua Changsheng or merely a character generated by the game.

This distinction was extremely important because the clearance mechanism required six people to form three pairs. There were currently six people, but if the Hua Changsheng in front of them were merely an NPC, the identity of the person who partnered with her could become extremely dangerous.

Hua Changsheng had already moved behind Shu Renjun, while Lin Xuan had quietly positioned himself behind Hua Changsheng. This left Qiu Yinong and Big Gold Tooth with only the position behind Chen Ran. In other words, the six people had naturally formed three groups: Chen Ran with one person, Shu Renjun with Hua Changsheng, and Lin Xuan with another person. Yet the identities of those partners remained uncertain.

The problem became even more serious because Big Gold Tooth had already had his mission deduced by Chen Ran: he came from the Underworld and was tasked with protecting Qiu Yinong. Therefore, if someone had to stand behind Chen Ran, Big Gold Tooth was naturally the most suitable person. However, Big Gold Tooth would not blindly sacrifice himself without first determining whether the person he was partnering with was actually safe.

He first walked toward Hua Changsheng and reached out to touch her.

He was immediately repelled.

Everyone frowned.

Big Gold Tooth then turned toward Qiu Yinong. She cooperated by discarding her Liar Killer, removing the possibility that the repulsion was caused by Liar Killer protection. Big Gold Tooth slowly approached her and reached out again.

He was repelled a second time.

This result was extremely important. Being repelled when touching Hua Changsheng could be explained by Liar Killer protection. But Qiu Yinong had already discarded her Liar Killer, meaning the second repulsion could not be explained that way.

⇒ Players were prohibited from touching one another in this small dungeon.

Therefore, the first experiment could no longer prove that Hua Changsheng possessed Liar Killer protection. She might simply have been repelled by the same rule that prevented Big Gold Tooth from touching Qiu Yinong.

Big Gold Tooth began thinking from the fundamental principle of dungeon design.

[First of all, since this is a dungeon, it must adhere to the principle of puzzle-solving.]

[A secret chamber where death is inevitable cannot exist.]

[This game clearly requires players to cooperate in pairs to clear the dungeon.]

[However, excluding Hua Changsheng, we only have five people, meaning one person has no partner.]

[At this point, either the real Hua Changsheng cooperates with the fifth person, or Hua Changsheng creates someone to cooperate with the fifth person.]

[Only then can the principle of puzzle-solving be followed.]

If the first possibility was correct, then it did not matter who partnered with the real Hua Changsheng. Both people would either succeed or fail together. But if the second possibility was

correct, then the Hua Changsheng currently standing before them had been created by the real Hua Changsheng.

⇒ If this Hua Changsheng was a creation, then the real Hua Changsheng must be hiding somewhere.

And if the real Hua Changsheng was hiding somewhere, she would only need to kill the Hua Changsheng she had created to cause that group to fail. The person paired with the fake Hua Changsheng would then die as well.

This meant that partnering with Hua Changsheng was potentially much more dangerous than partnering with another player. The person would have to solve the puzzle while simultaneously protecting Hua Changsheng from another Hua Changsheng. The difficulty therefore increased dramatically.

Big Gold Tooth looked at the situation and realized that he might actually have reached the point where he needed to leave a will.

His cigarette had burned out without him noticing. He pulled out another one, but when he tried to light it, the lighter failed repeatedly. He smiled bitterly, almost treating it as a bad omen. At that moment, Chen Ran handed him a lit lighter.

From Chen Ran's perspective, the situation was already extremely clear. The dungeon had reached the point where everyone except perhaps the eventual winner would likely die, and Big Gold Tooth's role as Qiu Yinong's protector meant that his sacrifice could still have strategic value.

Big Gold Tooth took a deep drag and looked at Qiu Yinong. He then began speaking about his beliefs. He described himself as a man of faith and repeated the Underworld's belief that those sacrificed would eventually return as Yin Soldiers, leading to a future war across the Eighteenth Layer. His expression became increasingly fanatical as he described fighting for freedom, peace, and the future, believing that the achievements of those who sacrificed themselves would eventually be remembered.

He then turned toward Chen Ran.

Big Gold Tooth began talking about his life as Cui Yu, describing himself as a heinous criminal who had once lived a meaningless life. His parents had disowned him, his wife had left with their child, and he had once regarded his entire existence as a failure. Yet after dying and entering Hell, he felt that his failed life had finally gained meaning.

By the time he finished speaking, he had already walked directly in front of Chen Ran. Everyone understood what he intended to do. Shu Renjun's body trembled because he knew exactly where Big Gold Tooth's gaze would eventually land.

Chen Ran frowned, but then deliberately stepped backward two paces, giving up the position.

Big Gold Tooth moved into the foremost position on the right side.

Then he turned toward Shu Renjun, shouting with a voice as if it had come from the nine nethers : "Cui Yu of the Underworld requests Shu Renjun to die!"

The secret chamber became completely silent.

Everyone had expected Big Gold Tooth to choose Hua Changsheng and sacrifice himself in Qiu Yinong's place. Instead, he had directly targeted Shu Renjun, the strongest opponent in the secret chamber.

Chen Ran had previously cultivated Highest Good is Like Water and had even achieved enlightenment through No Distance, yet even he was not confident that he could kill Shu Renjun, a Five-Star Player who had already approached the level of a humanoid BOSS.

But Cui Yu was now attacking Shu Renjun with the determination to die.

⇒ If Cui Yu truly intended to die together with Shu Renjun, then Shu Renjun was in an extremely dangerous position.

Shu Renjun lit a cigarette, but his slightly trembling hand exposed how serious the situation was. In Hell, Reserve Teammates were extremely common precisely because situations like this were not unusual. Their first purpose was to maintain dominance, but their second purpose was to guard against situations in which a sudden sacrifice or suicide would cause the main player to die as well.

For example, if an eight-star player entered a dungeon alongside an Alliance Leader and the dungeon required two people to cooperate, the sudden suicide of the eight-star player could leave the Alliance Leader completely helpless. If skills were unavailable, there would be no opportunity to recover from the situation.

Therefore, Alliance Leaders and Floor Masters would normally bring Reserve Teammates with them to prevent exactly this kind of forced death.

Shu Renjun, however, had no Reserve Teammate.

His skills were prohibited, the dungeon required cooperation, and Cui Yu was determined to pair with him. The other four players certainly had no reason to exchange places with him. In fact, they would probably actively prevent him from escaping.

If Shu Renjun killed himself halfway through, Cui Yu would also die, meaning Shu Renjun himself would be finished.

His only remaining hope was that perhaps one person could clear the dungeon alone. But the mechanism required two people to press two buttons simultaneously, making that possibility extremely unlikely. Hua Changsheng would not simply design a cooperative game where one person could die while the remaining person could independently clear the stage.

Shu Renjun therefore tried another possibility. Perhaps the Hua Changsheng in front of them was merely an NPC. If he died, perhaps Qiu Yinong could still be paired with the real Hua Changsheng and continue the dungeon.

He asked Cui Yu whether this was possible.

Cui Yu did not answer.

Shu Renjun then pointed out the obvious problem: if Hua Changsheng was real, then Cui Yu might have sacrificed himself for nothing.

Cui Yu still did not answer.

His eyes remained fixed on Shu Renjun.

At this point, the logic behind Cui Yu's decision could already be reconstructed. Cui Yu was destined to die regardless. If Shu Renjun won, Cui Yu would not survive. If Chen Ran won, Cui Yu would also not survive. Therefore, dying together with Shu Renjun now was actually more valuable than waiting until the final moment.

If Cui Yu sacrificed himself alongside Shu Renjun now, he would at least have fulfilled his mission by protecting Qiu Yinong and creating value for the Underworld. If he waited until death became unavoidable and then died alone, he would have contributed far less and his chances of future resurrection would be lower.

⇒ From Cui Yu's perspective, dying now was not meaningless suicide. It was a strategic sacrifice.

Shu Renjun finally became irritated and turned toward Hua Changsheng.

"Tell us the rules."

Hua Changsheng smiled and gave him an even more dangerous condition.

She required Shu Renjun to establish a Future Lie stating that he would kill Chen Ran in this dungeon, and this was obviously unacceptable.

If Chen Ran died, Hua Changsheng could potentially use her Skill to modify the game's score, leaving Shu Renjun in an even worse position. If Chen Ran survived, then Shu Renjun would have established a Future Lie that turned out to be false.

Either outcome was terrible.

Therefore, Shu Renjun refused to participate and suggested simply waiting.

Hua Changsheng immediately countered that her dungeon allowed independent clearance.

This meant that once one pair completed the clearance condition, that pair would be teleported out, while the remaining players would continue the game. Shu Renjun immediately understood the implication. The existence of three groups meant there was no reason for the dungeon to require all three groups to remain until the end.

Therefore, if he simply refused to participate, the other four could clear their groups first, leaving him and Cui Yu behind.

Shu Renjun was then forced to choose between dignity and survival.

If he wanted dignity, he could calmly face death by pairing with Cui Yu.

If he did not, he could step aside and allow the other four to continue, and he ended up choosing the latter.

Shu Renjun stepped backward twice and gestured toward Chen Ran and the other three, effectively telling them to go first.

Cui Yu also stepped backward twice, and Shu Renjun immediately realized what had happened.

He had just pushed the problem onto the other four people.

Now Chen Ran, Qiu Yinong, Lin Xuan, and Hua Changsheng had to decide how to form their two pairs while Cui Yu remained fixed on Shu Renjun.

Cui Yu then deliberately established another Future Lie:

"I will only be paired with Shu Renjun."

The strategic meaning was obvious. He was locking himself to Shu Renjun, making it impossible for the others to solve the problem by simply assigning him to another partner.

At almost the same moment, Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong understood the consequence and moved first, each occupying the first square of one of the two rows.

Lin Xuan was left standing there.

He could only pair with Hua Changsheng.

This small movement demonstrated the importance of what the novel describes as the precognitive advantage of deduction. In Hell, sufficiently advanced players could use reasoning to predict what another player would do before they actually acted. Once Shu Renjun stepped backward, the remaining players could already infer that Cui Yu would probably establish the Future Lie restricting himself to Shu Renjun. Therefore, the others had to seize the safe positions before that happened.

Shu Renjun himself had already anticipated Chen Ran's reaction when he stepped backward. If Chen Ran cleared his group first, then after the Eternal Kingdom effect ended, Shu Renjun might regain access to his skills and potentially turn the situation around.

This was why Shu Renjun could make the first move despite being placed in the worst position.

Lin Xuan, however, had previously relied too heavily on his Skills to obtain this kind of foresight. His previous predictions often came from seeing results through spaces with abnormal time flow rather than from independently calculating the future. Once his Skills were prohibited, his deduction was naturally half a beat slower.

Therefore, when Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong occupied their positions, Lin Xuan was already too late.

The other players looked at him strangely, essentially wondering how he could fail to seize such an obvious opportunity.

Chen Ran also began to question whether Lin Xuan would become a liability later. His requirements for Lin Xuan were actually not high; Lin Xuan only needed to demonstrate normal Three-Star strength. They were not true teammates, so Chen Ran had no need to build trust or friendship with him. But precisely because Lin Xuan relied so heavily on his Skills, cooperating with him could easily become unsafe.

At this point, the initial confrontation had already established the basic structure of the third secret chamber: Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong had taken the two safer positions, Lin Xuan had been forced into partnership with Hua Changsheng, and Cui Yu had locked himself together with Shu Renjun.

The scene changed, and Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong were separated into the two rows of the Wooden Man game. Each row led toward one of the two wooden statues, while the other three people remained outside and could only observe the situation from the secret chamber. The rules appeared straightforward, but the third rule immediately eliminated one of the simplest possible solutions: the red button could only be pressed directly by hand, meaning they could not use the Liar Killer, a rope, or another object to trigger it from a safe distance. More importantly, if either member of a pair died, the other person would also trigger the Wooden Dummy's killing mechanism. Therefore, the two people in each group were not merely cooperating to advance; they were effectively sharing the same life-and-death condition.

The first square immediately separated Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong from the others. Their individual scenes became the road puzzle, while the people outside could only wait. The road was approximately 3.5 meters wide, with no central markings or road signs, and both sides were endless desert. Chen Ran first attempted to leave the road and enter the desert, but an invisible barrier prevented him from doing so. This established that the game gave him only two possible directions: forward or backward. Since the road appeared to be an ordinary two-way single-lane road, common sense suggested that he should remain on the right side and walk forward. However, the environment deliberately removed every normal method of recording his position.

His bag had disappeared, objects thrown onto the ground vanished almost immediately, and even the second hand of his watch had stopped moving.

Chen Ran therefore improvised a method of measuring time. He pulled out the crown of his mechanical watch so that he could manually adjust the hour and minute hands, set both to 12 o'clock, and then began walking while moving the minute hand forward one notch every minute. After approximately 83 seconds, he encountered the first billboard. It contained no text and displayed only a skull. Chen Ran initially interpreted it as a simple distance marker. An adult walking at approximately 1.2–1.4 meters per second would cover roughly 100 meters in 83 seconds, so the billboard could simply indicate that he had walked 100 meters. There was no evidence yet proving that the skull itself had any significance. He continued walking. Another 83 seconds later, he encountered a second billboard, this time displaying a Little Girl. Another 83 seconds later, he encountered the skull again.

At this point, the meaning of the billboards changed. If Chen Ran had genuinely continued walking forward the entire time, the three billboards represented approximately 100, 200, and 300 meters. If the road were somehow looping, however, the third skull could represent the same 100-meter location he had encountered earlier. Chen Ran therefore checked his manually recorded time. The watch showed 12:04, and his mental count indicated that approximately 249 seconds had passed, exactly three intervals of 83 seconds. He had remained conscious throughout the entire journey and had not lost his memory, meaning he had genuinely walked approximately 300 meters rather than returning to the 100-meter point. ⇒ The skull appeared at odd-numbered hundreds of meters, while the Little Girl appeared at even-numbered hundreds of meters.

Chen Ran continued walking for another half hour, but nothing changed. The only things he encountered were skull and Little Girl billboards. More importantly, there was still no indication of where the endpoint was. Continuing forward indefinitely would eventually exhaust him, so he changed his strategy. Since the road was two-way, moving to the opposite lane and continuing to walk according to the right-hand traffic rule meant he was now traveling in the opposite direction. He adjusted his watch backward one minute for every minute he walked. Eventually, his watch returned to 12:00, suggesting that he had traveled the same distance backward as he had originally traveled forward and should therefore have returned to his starting point. Yet the billboard encountered at the corresponding 100-meter position was now a Little Girl rather than the original skull. ⇒ He had not actually returned to the same location.

This immediately produced two possibilities. The first was that the billboards themselves could change between a skull and a Little Girl. The second was that Chen Ran's body was being controlled without his knowledge, causing him to walk forward and backward while his own consciousness remained unaware of the change. For example, he might personally walk 200 meters forward, after which another consciousness could take over and walk him 100 meters backward. In that case, his subjective walking distance would not match his body's actual displacement. Chen Ran could eliminate the first possibility experimentally. If the billboard could change, then after spending a sufficient amount of time observing a Little Girl billboard, it should eventually become a skull. Therefore, he deliberately walked to a Little Girl billboard and

waited. His round trip had already taken approximately 68 minutes, so if the billboard were capable of changing, there should have been more than enough time for the change to occur.

Meanwhile, Qiu Yinong was conducting essentially the same investigation from her own perspective. She also initially determined that she should walk forward, based on the road's apparent structure and the common-sense rule of keeping right on a two-way road. She used her watch to measure time, manually counting the seconds in order to estimate distance. After approximately 83 seconds, she encountered her first billboard, but hers displayed a Little Girl rather than a skull. Another 83 seconds later, she encountered another Little Girl. This immediately made the repeated billboards suspicious. If they were merely distance markers, then the game could have simply written "100 meters" instead of displaying a specific character. Furthermore, because the road clearly had to contain an endpoint, repeatedly encountering the same character without making meaningful progress suggested that the distance between two identical billboards might not represent the distance she herself had walked.

After approximately twenty minutes of walking, Qiu Yinong considered the possibility that the road was only 100 meters long and that she was repeatedly looping through the same section. However, she could test this without relying on the environment. She stopped at approximately the 82-second mark and threw a crumpled piece of chewing-gum wrapper forward. If the road were a normal loop, the paper should disappear or cross into the next loop after approximately the distance she herself would travel in the remaining second. Instead, it landed roughly five meters away. It did not disappear or reappear elsewhere. Therefore, a normal loop could be eliminated. Reverse looping could also be eliminated because the object did not appear on the opposite side. ⇒ The road was not simply repeating the same 100-meter segment.

Only the second possibility remained: Qiu Yinong was not necessarily walking the entire distance represented by the space between two Little Girl billboards. She could be walking one section, losing consciousness, and then having someone else control the same body through another section before she regained consciousness. To visualize this, the distance between two identical Little Girl billboards could be divided into three segments: A→B, B→C, and C→D. Qiu Yinong might personally walk A→B, another consciousness could walk B→C, and Qiu Yinong could then regain control and walk C→D. From her perspective, she would only remember walking A→B and C→D, yet the physical distance between the two Little Girl billboards would be much greater than the distance she personally traveled.

The crucial question therefore became: who was controlling the body during the missing section?

Qiu Yinong considered two possibilities: Hua Changsheng or Chen Ran. However, from the perspective of solving the puzzle, the identity of the person controlling the body was initially less important than the fact that there had to be another consciousness sharing it. The road puzzle was therefore not actually asking two independent people to walk toward the endpoint. It was asking two consciousnesses sharing one body to cooperate without being able to communicate directly.

Chen Ran eventually reached the same problem from another direction. He noticed something abnormal about his walking speed. He was an adult male and was taller than Qiu Yinong, yet his measured speed was approximately 1.2 meters per second. Although 1.2–1.4 meters per second was a reasonable general range for adult walking speed, 1.2 meters per second was more characteristic of an adult woman in this context. Since Chen Ran was taller and physically different from Qiu Yinong, there was no obvious reason why his body should move at precisely her expected speed. ⇒ Unless the body he was currently controlling was actually Qiu Yinong's body, or the two of them were sharing a single female body.

This allowed Chen Ran to connect the physical abnormality of the road with the plot of the dungeon. The Adult and The Third Person had already been deduced to be chimeras: one twin had absorbed the other during embryonic development, but the absorbed person's consciousness had remained. Therefore, the central question was no longer whether Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong shared a body. They clearly did. The question was which of them represented the Adult and which represented The Third Person.

The first secret chamber already provided the answer indirectly. The Third Person entered the Adult's room carrying a weapon. If The Third Person knew that they physically shared a body with the Adult and therefore could not kill the Adult through ordinary physical means, bringing a weapon into the room would make little sense. The Adult, meanwhile, had deliberately designed the entire situation that lured The Third Person into the house. This meant the Adult knew that The Third Person existed and understood their relationship. The Third Person did not possess the same information. ⇒ The Adult knew they shared a body with The Third Person, while The Third Person did not know.

The struggle during the original murder supplied another important clue. The Adult and The Third Person could both appear during the same period and struggle over control of the body. Therefore, the Adult's consciousness did not simply disappear whenever The Third Person took control. Instead, the Adult remained conscious and could observe the entire process. The Third Person, however, did not possess this full perspective. ⇒ If sleep was disregarded, the Adult's consciousness existed continuously for the full twenty-four hours, while The Third Person's consciousness only became active during their allotted period and was otherwise dormant.

This distinction solved the road puzzle.

Qiu Yinong suddenly realized that if Chen Ran were the Adult, then he would have the full-day perspective and therefore would be the consciousness capable of observing the entire journey. She would correspond to The Third Person, meaning that her consciousness would disappear whenever Chen Ran took over. In that case, Chen Ran's walking the entire road would automatically count as Qiu Yinong's progress as well.

But a deduction was not enough. Qiu Yinong needed physical evidence proving where her consciousness stopped and Chen Ran's began. The road deliberately prevented ordinary marking methods, so she needed an object that could reveal a discontinuity in movement. She looked down at her clothes and discovered that she had no shoelaces or belt. She therefore tore strips from the bottom of her T-shirt, tied one end to the Liar Killer's gunstock, and held the

other end in her hand. She then began walking, stopping after each step and throwing the Liar Killer forward to observe whether its trajectory remained continuous.

After approximately forty-nine steps, the experiment finally produced the result she wanted. The Liar Killer disappeared in mid-air and then reappeared on the road. This was a Fault Line. The object had not physically traveled through the missing section because the consciousness controlling the body had changed during that period. ⇒ From this point onward, Qiu Yinong would lose consciousness and Chen Ran would take control of the body. More importantly, Qiu Yinong could now identify herself as The Third Person and Chen Ran as the Adult.

The conclusion was therefore extremely simple once the underlying plot had been understood: Chen Ran was the Adult, and Qiu Yinong was The Third Person. The Adult had a full-day perspective, so Chen Ran could continue walking even while Qiu Yinong remained unconscious. Therefore, Chen Ran reaching the end of the road would be equivalent to Qiu Yinong clearing the dungeon. Qiu Yinong only needed to stop moving and allow Chen Ran to complete the entire journey.

⇒ The road puzzle did not require the two players to physically cooperate at the same time.

⇒ It required one consciousness to walk while the other remained stationary, allowing the same body to accumulate progress across the entire road.

However, there was still a major problem: Qiu Yinong had no way of communicating with Chen Ran. She could deduce that she should stop, but she could not know when Chen Ran had reached the endpoint. Likewise, Chen Ran could deduce that Qiu Yinong needed to stop, but he could not directly tell whether she had already reached the same conclusion.

Qiu Yinong therefore began considering how to determine the correct order of movement. Her first instinct was that Chen Ran should walk while she remained stationary, because Chen Ran was the Adult and could therefore walk continuously. But there was no guarantee that he would reach the endpoint within a reasonable amount of time. If she stopped for an hour and Chen Ran still had not finished, she would not know whether she had chosen correctly. If she waited for ten hours, she might eventually be certain, but such a strategy could simply exhaust them to death.

This appeared to create a dead end.

According to the principle of puzzle-solving, a dungeon should not be designed so that the correct solution depended entirely on two players guessing the other's intentions. Therefore, if the apparent solution required Chen Ran to walk first and Qiu Yinong to wait indefinitely, then there had to be another layer of information that determined the timing.

Qiu Yinong used Wheel of Time to return to an earlier point and reassess the deduction. She began from the fundamental structure of the dungeon. First, Hua Changsheng's dungeon was closely connected to the plot of the Hell Instance, meaning the road puzzle must correspond to some element of the Adult and The Third Person's story. Second, the Red Light, Green Light

game explicitly required two players to cooperate, so the road puzzle should likewise have a cooperative solution. Third, the chimera relationship established that Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong were sharing one body.

The remaining problem was therefore not "what is the solution?" but "how do two people who cannot communicate coordinate that solution?"

Qiu Yinong realized that Chen Ran should already have reached the same deduction. If he understood that they were sharing one body and understood that he was the Adult, he would naturally know that Qiu Yinong's best move was to stop. Therefore, the only remaining variable was whether Chen Ran would trust that she had deduced the same thing.

At the same time, Chen Ran was thinking along a parallel line. He realized that he could exploit a weakness in Heart Cultivation itself. Normally, during a dungeon, he acted as the person drawing attention while Qiu Yinong remained hidden and prepared a surprise attack. Therefore, he could predict that Qiu Yinong would expect him to move first. If he walked first while she stayed still, and she had independently deduced the same strategy, the puzzle would solve itself.

But this prediction had another problem: Qiu Yinong needed to know that Chen Ran would choose to move first, and Chen Ran needed to know that she would correctly predict him. This created a circular problem of prediction. If he simply continued walking indefinitely, eventually Qiu Yinong might decide that he had reached the end and begin walking herself. Conversely, if Qiu Yinong waited for many hours, she could eventually conclude that Chen Ran had probably reached the endpoint. Neither side could safely determine the exact moment without communication.

⇒ The two were trapped in a mutual prediction game.

Chen Ran wiped the sweat from his forehead. The simplest solution theoretically existed, but implementing it required one player to trust the other's deduction completely.

Meanwhile, Hua Changsheng had been observing the entire process from the Wooden Man chamber. She understood that the road puzzle would consume an enormous amount of mental energy even after the answer was discovered. More importantly, she had deliberately designed the road so that the person walking would encounter misleading or irritating details. The combination of mental exhaustion and accumulated frustration could potentially cause a player to make an emotional mistake.

This was the purpose of the road's seemingly pointless details. The puzzle itself was already difficult, but Hua Changsheng wanted to add another layer: after exhausting the players mentally, she could exploit the resulting emotional instability to induce a Lie. A player who was exhausted could no longer easily Suppress their State of Mind, meaning even a relatively simple emotional provocation could become dangerous.

However, Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong had anticipated another part of the game. Before beginning the Wooden Man stage, both deliberately kept their heads raised and their eyes fixed on the two

Wooden Men. This detail would become important later because clearing the road did not necessarily mean that the Wooden Men would remain facing away from them.

Eventually, both Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong completed the road puzzle simultaneously. Because they had already been looking directly at the Wooden Men, they did not need to raise their heads after clearing the stage. The two Wooden Men had already turned around at some unknown point and were staring directly at them.

This was another layer of Hua Changsheng's design. If Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong had been looking down when they cleared the road, they would have needed to look up afterward to determine whether the Wooden Men had turned around. But looking upward at that moment would mean moving their heads while the Wooden Men were facing them, triggering the killing mechanism.

⇒ The road puzzle therefore tested not only deduction, but also whether the players could anticipate the next trap after solving the current one.

From Lin Xuan's perspective, this was enough to make him reconsider the relative intelligence of both sides. He could not determine whether Hua Changsheng was more cunning or whether Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong were simply more cautious. In a game filled with deception, the most dangerous players were not necessarily the ones who created the most complicated traps, but the ones who could recognize the existence of a trap before stepping into it.

At this point, Lin Xuan himself became the focus.

He had entered the dungeon believing himself to be a genius. His previous dungeon experiences had been too smooth, allowing him to rely heavily on his Space Skill and the information obtained from other spaces. He had therefore developed the habit of treating his own deductions as superior because his Skills could often show him future results directly, but this dungeon had completely overturned that confidence.

Lin Xuan had repeatedly been mocked by Chen Ran, particularly after Chen Ran emerged from Shu Renjun's dungeon. Previously, Chen Ran had appeared like a refined gentleman. Now, he behaved more like a refined scoundrel, deliberately using emotional attacks against both Shu Renjun and Hua Changsheng. Lin Xuan could not understand why Chen Ran would waste effort provoking him when ordinary emotional attacks should have no effect on someone at his level.

But then Lin Xuan realized that Chen Ran's behavior toward him was different, finally understanding that Chen Ran was not trying to provoke him, but was trying to make him think.

Lin Xuan stared at Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong, who remained beneath the gaze of the Wooden Men. An inexplicable sense of danger began rising inside him. His intuition told him that Chen Ran possessed killing intent toward him, and the feeling was unusually strong, but he initially dismissed it.

Chen Ran was currently trapped by the Wooden Man game. Why would he still be thinking about killing Lin Xuan?

But the more Lin Xuan considered it, the more uncomfortable he became.

⇒ His previous confidence had been based on Skills showing him results from other spaces.

⇒ Now that his Skills were restricted, he was being forced to rely on deduction alone.

⇒ Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong had survived through deduction and execution from the beginning.

Therefore, the gap between them was becoming increasingly obvious.

Lin Xuan had thought he was a genius because his Skills allowed him to see things other people could not. Now, without those Skills, he was discovering that genuine high-level players could achieve a form of precognition simply by reconstructing the opponent's reasoning.

Lin Xuan finally realizing that the situation is much more dangerous than it first appeared. He had been observing the people around him, and through a brief intuitive impression he noticed that Shu Renjun seemed to be trembling while Hua Changsheng appeared excited. The strange part was that when he looked carefully, neither person's expression had actually changed. This suggested that what Lin Xuan had perceived was not ordinary observation but another form of intuition or foresight. That realization was important because Lin Xuan had previously relied heavily on his skills and had been repeatedly suppressed by Chen Ran and Shu Renjun, but he now understood that his own reasoning ability was much stronger than he had assumed. The information he had picked up was therefore not meaningless: Chen Ran's killing intent, Shu Renjun's apparent fear, and Hua Changsheng's excitement all pointed toward the same conclusion ⇒ the three people were responding differently because they understood different parts of the situation.

Lin Xuan then returned to the test question Chen Ran had effectively given him: how could he protect himself? The existence of that question itself was evidence that Lin Xuan was already in extreme danger. There were five relevant people remaining in the secret chamber, but most of them could be eliminated as possible sources of immediate danger. Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong were immobilized by the Wooden Figures, so neither could currently act normally. Cui Yu had already decided that he would perish together with Shu Renjun, meaning his target was fixed. Shu Renjun himself was trapped in a situation where he could barely protect his own life. That left Hua Changsheng. Once Lin Xuan considered Hua Changsheng, the scattered clues suddenly began connecting. The second secret chamber of her dungeon resembled Shu Renjun's ability to such an extent that it was unlikely to be coincidence. The third secret chamber, in which the players themselves created dungeons, provided even stronger evidence that Hua Changsheng's ability could alter the way the dungeon's puzzles operated. She was also a Weird Speaker, meaning that from her perspective, the dungeon itself was essentially her weapon.

The important distinction was that Hua Changsheng normally had an overwhelming advantage because she was a top-tier Three-Star Super-Self Player. Without a True Self Player present, her

ability could make her effectively invincible. However, Chen Ran was a True Self Player, and Eternal Kingdom could suppress skills. Therefore, Chen Ran was the single variable preventing Hua Changsheng from simply controlling the entire situation. If she could not eliminate Chen Ran directly, there was another solution: prevent him from using his skill. Lin Xuan immediately connected this to the Wooden Figures. Chen Ran was currently frozen by one of them, and the effect of Eternal Kingdom had less than five minutes remaining. Once Eternal Kingdom disappeared, Chen Ran would remain immobilized and therefore unable to use his skill. From Hua Changsheng's perspective, this would accomplish almost the same thing as directly suppressing Eternal Kingdom. Chen Ran's own deduction could therefore be reconstructed as follows :

⇒Hua Changsheng's dungeon must contain a mechanism capable of immobilizing him for long enough that Eternal Kingdom expires
⇒ the Wooden Figures provide exactly such a mechanism
⇒ therefore Chen Ran had probably anticipated this from the beginning.

This also explained why the Red Light, Green Light-style game was so dangerous. Regardless of which group Chen Ran belonged to, the Wooden Man could freeze him for an hour. Whether Chen Ran activated Eternal Kingdom before entering the dungeon or immediately before playing the Wooden Figures Game made little difference. If the Wooden Man's immobilization lasted an hour, Eternal Kingdom would inevitably end during that period. Lin Xuan then considered whether Hua Changsheng could go even further by exploiting the virtual nature of the dungeon. Since the players had entered while wearing gaming helmets, it was possible that the entire Hell dungeon itself was a virtual environment. If so, Hua Changsheng's ability might be capable of directly modifying the data of that virtual world. The implications were enormous. If she could change everyone's scores to zero while changing her own score to four, she would become the absolute highest scorer and could force a settlement before the remaining dungeons were even completed. The others could gain at most two additional points from the remaining two dungeons, which would still leave them below her score. Under that hypothesis, Hua Changsheng's ability would not merely give her an advantage; it would guarantee everyone's elimination.

However, there was an obvious problem with that interpretation. If Hua Changsheng could manipulate the virtual world so freely, why did she need to bother with the Wooden Figures at all? She could simply trap Chen Ran inside a deeper virtual world and make him spend an effectively unlimited amount of time solving a puzzle. The possibility of nested virtual worlds even suggested that the deepest level could experience extremely slow time, similar to the concept of Inception. But Lin Xuan realized that Shu Renjun's behavior made this interpretation incomplete. If such an obvious loophole existed, Shu Renjun should have noticed it. Yet Shu Renjun could not meaningfully interfere because he was already trapped between several methods of death. His choices were effectively being reduced to different forms of inevitable defeat.

There was another variable that made the situation even more complicated: Qiu Yinong. Even if the Wooden Man immobilized her body, Wheel of Time could still allow her to act. Therefore, if

Lin Xuan used his skill to manipulate the situation, Qiu Yinong could immediately respond with her own skill. The result was a three-way interaction between Hua Changsheng's ability, Lin Xuan's ability, and Qiu Yinong's Wheel of Time, while Shu Renjun's life and Chen Ran's killing plan were simultaneously being decided. Lin Xuan therefore understood that he could not simply search for a single strongest move, but instead had to determine how the skills interacted in sequence.

Then he remembered Chen Ran's possible killing move. Qiu Yinong's Wheel of Time could return an object to a position it occupied five minutes earlier. The Wooden Man had already turned its head, meaning that if Qiu Yinong used Wheel of Time within the relevant period, she could return the Wooden Man to the moment when it had turned its head. More importantly, she could use that opportunity to communicate with Chen Ran and tell him to activate Eternal Kingdom again. Lin Xuan therefore realized that Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong had almost certainly already communicated secretly through No Distance. When Lin Xuan moved around to observe them from the other side, he noticed that both of their right hands were hanging beside their bodies in an unusually deliberate position, resembling cowboys preparing for a duel. That was another indication that the two had coordinated their next actions in advance. What appeared to be inactivity was therefore actually preparation.

Lin Xuan began organizing the entire situation into three possible levels of success. The inferior solution was simply to preserve himself. The average solution was to preserve himself while also saving Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong. The superior solution was to preserve himself, save Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong, and simultaneously kill Shu Renjun and Hua Changsheng. These were not merely different tactical options; they represented different grades of performance in Chen Ran's test. Barely surviving would only be a barely passable answer. Saving Chen Ran and Qiu would constitute a passing answer. Saving them while eliminating the two major enemies would constitute an honor-student-level solution.

The first problem was Shu Renjun. Lin Xuan concluded that Shu Renjun's death had essentially already been predetermined. There were three possible ways he could die. First, Cui Yu could fulfill his own determination to die together with Shu Renjun. Second, Hua Changsheng could kill him through her dungeon mechanism. Third, Chen Ran and Hua Changsheng could cooperate indirectly to eliminate him. Therefore, even though Shu Renjun was one of the strongest players present, his survival probability was extraordinarily low. His strength could not compensate for the fact that the dungeon's rules had already placed him into a series of losing conditions. This was the fundamental difference between personal strength and game-state advantage: Shu Renjun could be overwhelmingly powerful and still have no viable move.

Hua Changsheng was more difficult. Since this was her own dungeon, she understood its mechanisms better than anyone. Killing her directly would therefore be extremely difficult. Lin Xuan concluded that her most likely weakness was not physical death but the dungeon's Lie mechanics. If Hua Changsheng could be tricked into revealing a Lie, that would provide a route to killing her. Yet this was far from guaranteed. She was an exceptionally experienced Three-Star Super-Self Player and had previously worked under Du Hongnian, so tricking her would require

an unusually sophisticated setup. The fact that Chen Ran had specifically presented Lin Xuan with this test question therefore suggested that Chen Ran had already accounted for that difficulty. If Lin Xuan was expected to produce an honor-student answer, there had to be a way to kill both Shu Renjun and Hua Changsheng within the existing mechanics.

Lin Xuan then noticed the structure of the players. His side effectively consisted of himself and Cui Yu, while the enemy side consisted of Shu Renjun and Hua Changsheng. Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong were immobilized and could temporarily be treated as external pieces. This reminded him of Tian Ji's Horse Racing Strategy, in which weaker and stronger pieces are deliberately matched against the opponent's pieces to maximize the overall result. Cui Yu was the superior piece on Lin Xuan's side because he possessed a special mechanism guaranteeing that Shu Renjun would die. Shu Renjun was the strongest opposing piece. Therefore, the optimal arrangement would be for Lin Xuan, the inferior piece, to confront Shu Renjun, while Cui Yu, the superior piece, confronted Hua Changsheng.

This produced an apparently perfect sequence. Lin Xuan would kill Shu Renjun through his skill. Chen Ran would then use Eternal Kingdom immediately after Shu Renjun's death, neutralizing the relevant skills and allowing the dungeon to progress. Cui Yu would then target Hua Changsheng through the dungeon's conventional mechanics rather than relying on a skill. That would potentially create a triple kill involving Shu Renjun, Hua Changsheng, and the remaining objective. However, Lin Xuan immediately encountered a problem: Chen Ran could not possibly know the exact mechanism of Hua Changsheng's dungeon in advance. Therefore, perhaps Chen Ran had not actually designed the test around killing Hua Changsheng. Instead, Chen Ran probably expected Lin Xuan to produce the merely passing answer: protect himself and save Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong while killing Shu Renjun. Lin Xuan's solution was therefore actually above the level Chen Ran had anticipated. He had reached what could be considered an exceptional performance.

The next question was how to actually kill Shu Renjun without compromising Lin Xuan's own survival. Lin Xuan considered transferring Shu Renjun into a different space where time moved faster. At first this seemed ideal because Chen Ran would then be unable to use Eternal Kingdom in time. Hua Changsheng could win in that space, while Shu Renjun would logically die. But the plan immediately failed under the psychological rules of the game. If Shu Renjun explained the situation to Hua Changsheng, she would understand that she had already won in that space. Her psychological defense line meant she would not willingly kill him after achieving a guaranteed victory. If Chen Ran then used Eternal Kingdom, the real Shu Renjun could return, leaving Hua Changsheng alive. If Chen Ran did not use Eternal Kingdom, Hua Changsheng would simply win. Therefore, Lin Xuan could not guarantee Shu Renjun's death by merely relocating him.

This left Lin Xuan increasingly frustrated. He knew that above exceptional performance was a perfect-score solution: kill everyone. But he could not execute it because Qiu Yinong's Wheel of Time made Chen Ran extraordinarily difficult to kill. If Hua Changsheng used her ability, Qiu Yinong could reverse her action and then warn Chen Ran, allowing Eternal Kingdom to neutralize the threat. Thus, even though Lin Xuan had identified the perfect solution

conceptually, the presence of Qiu Yinong prevented him from carrying it out. He even began questioning whether Wheel of Time was truly a Superego Skill or whether it belonged to the True Self category, because its ability to reverse the effects of another player's skill made it functionally similar to Eternal Kingdom.

Time was running out. Lin Xuan therefore returned to the gambling mentality he had once possessed at the poker table. Once a gambler had lost all their obvious options, the mind began searching for something else that could still be wagered. The same principle applied here. He had already calculated the obvious solutions and found them impossible. Therefore, instead of trying to improve one of the existing plans, he needed to find another mechanism entirely that could still produce the exceptional-performance result.

Time then returns to the moment when Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong had just cleared the Highway Game. Eternal Kingdom had approximately five minutes remaining, and Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong were still immobilized by the Wooden Figures. The other four players ; Hua Changsheng, Lin Xuan, Shu Renjun, and Cui Yu, were all thinking independently, but they gradually realized that something was wrong. Their attention turned toward Hua Changsheng because the remaining time meant that her plan was approaching its decisive stage.

Lin Xuan immediately asked Hua Changsheng for a Future Lie. He proposed a countermeasure based on his Space Skill: if he could take all six versions of Hua Changsheng from the six different spaces and transfer them into one space, then her strategy would collapse. Even if the six Hua Changshengs could all use their skills and force a settlement in that one space, the other five spaces would remain. Furthermore, once the real Chen Ran cleared the Wooden Figures Game in another space, he could return to the third secret chamber and activate Eternal Kingdom, potentially nullifying Hua Changsheng's forced settlement as well as Lin Xuan's spatial manipulation. In other words, Lin Xuan's proposed countermeasure attacked Hua Changsheng's plan at the level of its global structure rather than trying to defeat her ability directly.

Hua Changsheng acknowledged that Chen Ran, Qiu Yinong, and Lin Xuan were the three abilities capable of interfering with her. However, she had already prepared for Lin Xuan. Her dungeon possessed a mechanic called Independent Clearance. If two Chen Rans existed in the same space and one of them completed the Wooden Figures Game, the second Chen Ran could not participate in that game afterward. More importantly, the consciousness of the first Chen Ran who cleared the game would not immediately return to the third secret chamber. It would remain in a chaotic state until every other surviving player in that space had participated in the Wooden Figures Game, or until only one surviving non-clearing player remained and was singled out.

This meant that simply duplicating players was actively harmful. If Lin Xuan placed multiple versions of the same player into a space, the first copy might clear the game, but the second copy would become permanently incapable of participating in the same game. The cleared consciousness could therefore become trapped. Hua Changsheng had even added a Mandatory Participation Mechanic to prevent players from exploiting this loophole by simply refusing to participate forever. Within two hours, if enough surviving players remained, two of them would

be forced to participate in the next round. The result was extremely specific: duplicate individuals in the same space prevented a true clearance.

Lin Xuan then attempted another loophole. If he transferred only Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong into the same space, there would be only two players, and perhaps their successful completion would count as a genuine clearance. Hua Changsheng had already anticipated this as well. She revealed another condition: if the total number of corpses and living players in that space was less than six, even a player who cleared the game would remain in a chaotic state. Therefore, Lin Xuan's ability had been specifically countered at multiple levels. Hua Changsheng had not merely designed a difficult dungeon; she had designed it after studying the abilities of the players likely to enter it. Every apparently natural loophole had a corresponding mechanic preventing it.

Hua Changsheng then turned her attention toward Shu Renjun. By this point, everyone understood that Shu Renjun was effectively a dead man. If Hua Changsheng successfully used her skill, the forced settlement would kill him. If she failed, Cui Yu would still drag him into death. Shu Renjun was therefore in an unusual position: he possessed enormous strength but almost no meaningful strategic freedom. He attempted one final move by activating No Distance and targeting Hua Changsheng, hoping to force some form of counterplay. Hua Changsheng immediately escaped. Having learned from the previous encounter, she refused to maintain eye contact with Shu Renjun, preventing him from exploiting No Distance again. This demonstrated another important principle of the dungeon: information itself could become a weapon, and once a player revealed the existence of a particular attack, opponents could simply alter their behavior to remove the opening.

Cui Yu was also running out of time. He realized that the exact timing was extremely unfavorable. When Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong cleared the first Square, the Wooden Figures turned their heads, and Eternal Kingdom had approximately five minutes and ten seconds remaining. That ten-second difference mattered. If Eternal Kingdom ended before Qiu Yinong used Wheel of Time, the Wooden Figures could still be staring directly at Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong, preventing Chen Ran from safely activating Eternal Kingdom again. Even worse, the interaction between Hua Changsheng and Qiu Yinong could theoretically continue across multiple timelines. If Qiu Yinong repeatedly rewound Hua Changsheng's ability, Hua Changsheng could potentially keep using it again after each reversal, producing an endless stalemate.

Then Cui Yu identified an even more frightening possibility. Hua Changsheng's ability was likely a Mechanic Alteration Type skill. If so, she did not necessarily have to fight Qiu Yinong directly. She could alter the dungeon's structure so that Qiu Yinong was thrown back into Shu Renjun's previous dungeon. From the god's-eye perspective, that dungeon contained a Three-Layer Simulation in which players did not possess Liar Killers. Therefore, if Hua Changsheng sent Qiu Yinong into that simulation, Qiu Yinong would lose access to Wheel of Time. Once that countermeasure disappeared, Hua Changsheng could force the settlement without opposition. The entire situation therefore seemed to have reached a point where every apparent escape route had already been sealed.

Hua Changsheng mentally reviewed every player and concluded that each had already been dealt with. Shu Renjun had to die. Qiu Yinong could be thrown into the third level of Shu Renjun's simulation. Lin Xuan could not stop the mechanism because his Space Skill had already been countered. Chen Ran remained frozen. Cui Yu could not meaningfully interfere. The only remaining uncertainty was whether the mysterious 21st Person would appear.

Hua Changsheng had noticed that the dungeon's time occasionally experienced frame drops. That suggested the possible presence of an extremely powerful time-related ability. If the 21st Person possessed a True Self time skill capable of separating Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong across different moments, then Hua Changsheng's entire plan could collapse. Therefore, despite her apparent victory, she still feared this unknown variable. With approximately one minute remaining before Eternal Kingdom ended, she prepared her gun in advance. Qiu Yinong was immobilized and therefore could not prepare a countermeasure. Hua Changsheng intended to activate her skill the instant Eternal Kingdom expired, throwing Qiu Yinong into the third-level simulation and ending the final obstacle.

Before the end, Lin Xuan asked about the true story behind Hua Changsheng's dungeon. Hua Changsheng first appeared reluctant, but when Lin Xuan narrowed the question down to the fuse that caused the entire tragedy, she answered: a paternity test. This revealed the critical connection between the Adult and the Third Person. They were conjoined twins with two separate sets of DNA. The Adult knew that the Third Person existed, but the person who took the Little Girl for a paternity test could not have been the Adult. It therefore had to be the Third Person. This meant that the Third Person was the Little Girl's adoptive father and believed her to be his biological child. The paternity test revealed that this belief was false.

The implication was that the Third Person discovered that the Adult , the drunkard next door was actually the Little Girl's biological father. From his perspective, he had been betrayed and humiliated. This explained why he went to the Adult's house carrying a weapon. The Adult therefore needed a way to reveal the truth to the Third Person, knowing that the revelation would provoke exactly this confrontation. Once the Third Person arrived, the spiritual conflict between the two halves could occur.

But Hua Changsheng then revealed an even darker part of the story. The Adult had not actually killed the Third Person through a spiritual attack. Instead, both men were hanging outside the building, one displaying a half-mad expression and the other appearing violently murderous, both begging the Little Girl to pull them back up. The situation therefore created the perfect opportunity for the Little Girl. Her adoptive father had tormented her, while her biological father was also a dangerous and mentally unstable person. Both were hanging helplessly from the building, and the only thing preventing their deaths was the ropes.

From the Little Girl's perspective, she could simply release the ropes and both men would die. Legally, it would be extraordinarily difficult to prove that she had deliberately untied them, especially because her father suffered from mental illness and there was no obvious evidence linking her to the deaths. More importantly, she had spent her entire childhood being abused and controlled. When a person who has suffered under such conditions suddenly sees an opportunity to obtain freedom and a future, the desire for that future can overwhelm the fear

that would normally prevent murder. Therefore, the Little Girl ultimately chose to untie the ropes and kill both men.

Hua Changsheng then explained the significance of her own name. She had named herself Hua Changsheng because she wanted to live a long life. Unlike Shu Renjun, who had memories of happiness that potentially restrained his actions, Hua Changsheng had no comparable beautiful memories anchoring her to the past. When she finally saw a path toward freedom, she took it immediately. Shu Renjun understood the comparison: the same kind of choice could produce completely different results depending on the person's psychological history. His own happy memories might have prevented him from making the ruthless decision that Hua Changsheng made. Yet both of them ultimately died young and entered Hell, meaning that the price of their choices could not simply be judged by whether they survived in the moment.

The secret chamber then fell into silence as everyone waited for the inevitable conclusion. Eternal Kingdom counted down its final seconds. Forty seconds remained, then thirty, twenty, and finally ten. When the effect ended, a gunshot rang out. Hua Changsheng immediately activated Super Energy Modeling. The chamber went dark, and when the light returned, Qiu Yinong had disappeared. She had been transferred into Shu Renjun's dungeon, specifically into the third-level simulation, where she appeared on a bed inside the mental hospital. When she realized that her Liar Killer was no longer at her waist, she understood that she had been completely cut off from her normal abilities.

Back in Hua Changsheng's dungeon, only Shu Renjun, Chen Ran, Lin Xuan, and Cui Yu remained. Hua Changsheng herself had disappeared from that space because she had initiated the forced settlement mechanism. Everyone understood what was happening. Hua Changsheng then triggered Super Energy Modeling again, and the settlement results appeared. Hua Changsheng had four points. Chen Ran, Shu Renjun, Lin Xuan, Qiu Yinong, and Big Gold Tooth all had zero. According to the rules, Hua Changsheng possessed the highest score and therefore survived, while the others were annihilated. The five helmets exploded, killing their occupants, and their headless bodies fell from their chairs.

Hua Changsheng nevertheless remained cautious. She carefully watched the bodies for any sign of a time-related anomaly. There was no frame drop. That meant the 21st Person had not appeared. She then checked the bodies and confirmed that all five Liar Killers had disappeared. Only after seeing that did she finally accept that the five players were genuinely dead.

It then switches Shu Renjun's perspective. He explains that he died and became a dungeon BOSS. Hell had transformed the evil he committed during his lifetime into the rules of his dungeon. The first two secret chambers involved his mother becoming a ghost and forcing players to obey her rules, while the third chamber was connected to his philosophy of Unity of Heaven and Man and the corresponding Heart Cultivation. However, Shu Renjun is not interested in reviewing his dungeon itself. His attention remains fixed on his unfinished confrontation with Chen Ran.

Shu Renjun initially believed that he had died purely because of the dungeon's mechanism, a Plot Kill. But after becoming a dungeon BOSS, he realized that this interpretation was

incomplete. He should have deduced much earlier that Hua Changsheng's dungeon would be capable of killing him. Instead, Chen Ran's Heart Attack had caused him to concentrate on the possibility of being deceived through his Lie. After Chen Ran escaped from No Distance, Shu Renjun became focused on predicting how Chen Ran would trick him. That fixation caused him to overlook the larger mechanism of Hua Changsheng's dungeon.

He eventually realized that Chen Ran had secretly used the essence of Killing through Deception, the same fundamental method that Lin Ou and Cui Yu had previously demonstrated. Chen Ran had not needed to overpower Shu Renjun directly. He only needed to construct a situation in which Shu Renjun's own decisions would lead him into an unavoidable death. By the time Shu Renjun understood this, it was too late. Yet becoming a dungeon BOSS meant that the confrontation was not finished. His death had merely changed the battlefield.

Chen Ran likewise found himself in a strange state. He knew that he had not truly died, but he also knew that Shu Renjun was dead. Their confrontation had therefore transcended the ordinary distinction between living player and dead dungeon BOSS. They were now effectively facing each other across different spaces and states of existence. When Chen Ran saw Shu Renjun sitting opposite him, he understood that this was the continuation of their Battle of Minds.

A chessboard appeared between them. Chen Ran took the black pieces, Shu Renjun took the white pieces, and both placed their cigarette packs and lighters in front of the board. The chess game was not simply decoration. Each move represented a deduction about what had happened in Hua Changsheng's dungeon. Shu Renjun allowed Chen Ran to move first.

Chen Ran's first statement was that Eternal Kingdom's effect on Qiu Yinong had ended during the Highway Decryption. Shu Renjun immediately blocked the corresponding chess move, explaining that he had already deduced this. Chen Ran then stated that Lin Xuan had been his chess piece and had already used Space Skill. Shu Renjun again anticipated the move. He explained that Lin Xuan had transferred the five other players into a Slow Time Flow Space while transferring himself into another space. The significance was that all six players had been moved after Lin Xuan activated his skill, creating a separation that Hua Changsheng did not initially recognize.

Chen Ran demanded that Shu Renjun elaborate. Shu Renjun explained that the five players placed into the Slow Time Flow Space included Qiu Yinong, and Qiu Yinong later used Wheel of Time to pull them back to the original space. Because Lin Xuan was in a different space, Qiu Yinong's ability could not affect him. Lin Xuan therefore remained outside the reversal. Furthermore, Wheel of Time caused the affected players to temporarily lose five minutes of memory. If Lin Xuan simultaneously transferred the version of himself from the other space into the original space at the moment Qiu Yinong used her ability, then the five players would have no memory of the entire sequence. They would remember nothing about Lin Xuan using Space Skill, being transferred, Qiu Yinong activating Wheel of Time, or being transferred back. From their perspective, nothing unusual would have happened.

Chen Ran then placed another black piece and revealed that the real Lin Xuan in the Slow Time Flow Space had used another skill. Shu Renjun confirmed this as well. Lin Xuan had swapped Qiu Yinong, Chen Ran, Cui Yu, and the copies of Chen Ran from one space with corresponding people in another space whose time flow matched the original. Because Lin Xuan performed the transfer while operating from the Slow Time Flow Space, Hua Changsheng and Shu Renjun did not realize that the four people in front of them were no longer the original versions.

The consequence was decisive. After the sequence of transfers, only Shu Renjun and Hua Changsheng were actually the original players remaining in the original space. Chen Ran, Qiu Yinong, Cui Yu, and the others present were copies originating from different spaces. This explained how Hua Changsheng's forced settlement could appear to kill the intended targets while actually killing Shu Renjun and four copies instead. The spatial substitution had effectively hidden the true identities of the players from Hua Changsheng.

Shu Renjun praised the test and Lin Xuan's answer as an above-average solution. But both players understood that these chess moves were merely reconstructing the past. The actual battle concerned the final piece. Chen Ran placed a piece in the center of the board and asked whether Shu Renjun had deliberately told Hua Changsheng everything he had deduced through No Distance, despite knowing that she might kill him for it.

Shu Renjun knocked the black piece away and placed his own piece on the same position. His answer was that he knew he was going to die regardless. Hua Changsheng already suspected him, and under the principle of killing the wrong person rather than allowing a dangerous person to escape, she would kill him anyway. Therefore, begging for mercy or asking for cooperation had no value. During No Distance, Shu Renjun had instead given Hua Changsheng all the information he possessed and then deliberately framed that information as a weapon Chen Ran could use to deceive her or use Killing through Deception against her.

This was the final layer of Shu Renjun's plan. He had already accepted his own death. Once survival became impossible, his objective changed from preserving himself to maximizing the damage he could inflict after death. By telling Hua Changsheng everything, he ensured that the information she received would become part of the future battle between her and Chen Ran. In other words, Shu Renjun's death was not the end of his role. He deliberately transformed himself into another piece on the board.

That was why he rejected the idea that he had simply been defeated. His body had died, but his deductions remained active through Hua Changsheng's decisions and through the continuation of his dungeon, making his stance clear : even after becoming a dungeon BOSS, he intended to continue fighting Chen Ran.

Shu Renjun begins from the position that his death has already happened. He has become the Dungeon Boss of his own dungeon, and Hell has converted the evil he committed during his lifetime into the rules of that dungeon. The first two secret chambers are relatively straightforward: his mother becomes a ghost and the Players must follow her rules to clear them. The third secret chamber is more complicated because it incorporates his philosophy of Unity of Heaven and Man together with Unity of Heaven and Man Heart Cultivation. However,

Shu Renjun is not interested in explaining his own dungeon in detail. His attention is still fixed on the unfinished confrontation with Chen Ran.

He knows that he truly died, and that his death was essentially a Plot Kill caused by the mechanism of Hua Changsheng's dungeon. More importantly, he eventually realizes that Chen Ran had secretly learned the essence of Killing through Deception from Lin Ou and Cui Yu's previous method. Chen Ran's Heart Attack had caused Shu Renjun to concentrate almost entirely on how Chen Ran would deceive his Lie, causing him to overlook the much simpler possibility that Hua Changsheng's dungeon itself would kill him. By the time he understood that, there was no longer any opportunity to reverse the situation. However, becoming a Dungeon Boss meant that death did not necessarily end his ability to interfere. His life had always been defined by resistance, so even after death, his objective remained the same: continue fighting Chen Ran.

Chen Ran likewise understands that Shu Renjun is dead, but he also understands that the confrontation has not ended. The two appear to each other in a strange state between life and death, sitting across from one another as though they are about to conduct another Battle of Minds. A chessboard appears between them.

Chen Ran takes the black pieces, Shu Renjun takes the white pieces, and both place cigarettes and lighters beside the board before beginning the remote reconstruction of what happened. The first several moves are not the actual contest yet. They are a review of the spatial-transfer scheme. Chen Ran first states that Eternal Kingdom's effect on Qiu Yinong ended during the Highway Decryption. Shu Renjun immediately confirms that he had already deduced this. Chen Ran then states that Lin Xuan was his chess piece and had already used Space Skill. Again, Shu Renjun knows this. The important point is that Lin Xuan had divided the six Players between different spaces, placing five into a Slow Time Flow Space while sending himself into another space with a slower flow of time. This was the foundation of the entire substitution scheme.

Shu Renjun continues reconstructing the sequence. In the space containing the other five Players, Qiu Yinong used Wheel of Time and pulled those five people back to the Original Space. However, Lin Xuan was not in that same space, so Qiu Yinong's Wheel of Time could not affect him. This created an extremely important asymmetry: the five Players were sent back and lost five minutes of memory, whereas Lin Xuan remained outside the reversal and retained his memory of what had happened.

Therefore, if Lin Xuan transferred the version of himself from the other space into the Original Space at exactly the moment Qiu Yinong activated Wheel of Time, the five Players would have no memory of Lin Xuan using his skill, being transferred away, Qiu Yinong activating Wheel of Time, or being returned. From their perspective, the entire sequence would simply disappear from their memories. The deduction therefore becomes observation ⇒ Lin Xuan is outside the affected space ⇒ Qiu Yinong cannot rewind him ⇒ the other five lose five minutes of memory ⇒ Lin Xuan can insert another version of himself into the Original Space without the others remembering the substitution.

The next step was even more important. The real Lin Xuan in the Slow Time Flow Space then used his skill to swap Qiu Yinong, Chen Ran, Cui Yu, and the copies of Chen Ran with corresponding people from another space whose time flow matched the Original Space. Because Lin Xuan carried out this operation while operating from the Slow Time Flow Space, Hua Changsheng and Shu Renjun did not realize that the four people standing in front of them were no longer the originals. This meant that after the entire chain of transfers, the only genuine Players remaining in the Original Space were Shu Renjun and Hua Changsheng.

Chen Ran, Qiu Yinong, Cui Yu, and Lin Xuan were all Players originating from other spaces. Hua Changsheng therefore activated Forced Settlement under the assumption that she was killing the five genuine Players around her, but she was actually killing Shu Renjun and four fake Players. Lin Xuan's scheme had therefore accomplished the important part of his objective: protect the real Chen Ran, Qiu Yinong, Cui Yu, and himself while allowing Shu Renjun to die. Shu Renjun himself acknowledged that the test was well designed and that Lin Xuan's solution was elegant, calling it an above-average answer rather than dismissing it as simple trickery.

However, the chessboard then reaches the real issue. Chen Ran places a piece on the central Tengen position and asks Shu Renjun whether, before his death, he deliberately told Hua Changsheng everything he had deduced through No Distance, despite knowing that she would probably kill him. Shu Renjun knocks Chen Ran's piece away and places his own piece on the same position. His answer is straightforward: he already knew that he was going to die. Hua Changsheng had doubts about the information he gave her, and according to her principle of preferring to kill the wrong person rather than allow a dangerous person to escape, she would kill him regardless. Therefore, Shu Renjun had no reason to beg for mercy or request cooperation. Once he accepted that his own survival was impossible, his objective changed. He used No Distance to explain the situation to Hua Changsheng, but after the review, he deliberately framed the information as something Chen Ran could potentially use to deceive her or kill her through Killing through Deception. This was not an attempt to save himself. It was a final attempt to make his death useful. If he could not survive, then he would at least leave behind a problem that Chen Ran and Hua Changsheng would have to solve.

The spatial arrangement is then reviewed again from the beginning. Lin Xuan's six spaces are arranged as follows: Space 1 and Space 2 have slow time flow, Space 3 has normal time flow, Space 4 is the Original Space, and Space 5 and Space 6 have fast time flow. When Eternal Kingdom is about to end, Lin Xuan begins his next operation. At the moment the effect expires, he uses Cube World and separates the six Players. Five are sent to Space 1, where time moves slowly, while Lin Xuan sends himself to Space 2, which also has slow time flow. Hua Changsheng is therefore immediately disadvantaged by the time difference. In Space 1, she has not yet had enough subjective time to point her gun at the ceiling and activate her skill. When she realizes what is happening and attempts to raise her arm, Lin Xuan transfers her to Space 2. Her movement is delayed again. She attempts to raise the gun again, and Lin Xuan transfers her again. This process is repeated several times. The purpose is not to defeat Hua Changsheng directly. It is to consume enough real-world time while keeping her from successfully activating her skill.

Eventually Hua Changsheng is transferred back into Space 1. At that point Qiu Yinong is able to point her gun at the ceiling and activate Wheel of Time. The five Players are pulled back five minutes, which means they return to the Original Space, Space 4. Lin Xuan remains in Space 2 because he was never inside Space 1 when Wheel of Time was activated, so the reversal cannot affect him. He immediately uses Magic Cube Universe to teleport the Lin Xuan from Space 3 into Space 4. At this moment the Original Space contains the true Hua Changsheng, true Shu Renjun, true Chen Ran, true Cui Yu, true Qiu Yinong, and a fake Lin Xuan. The first four true Players have been affected by Wheel of Time and therefore remember nothing about the spatial transfers or Lin Xuan's previous skill usage. Lin Xuan then continues the substitution. From Space 2, he swaps the true Chen Ran, true Qiu Yinong, and true Cui Yu in Space 4 with their corresponding versions from Space 3. The result is that the four genuine PlayersChen Ran, Qiu Yinong, Cui Yu, and Lin Xuanare all placed in Space 3, while the Original Space contains true Hua Changsheng and true Shu Renjun together with fake Chen Ran, fake Qiu Yinong, fake Cui Yu, and fake Lin Xuan. Thus the final composition is two genuine Players and four false Players.

The timing is essential because the success of this scheme depends on Wheel of Time's memory loss overlapping with the remaining duration of Eternal Kingdom. Suppose the entire transfer process takes fifty seconds after Eternal Kingdom ends. Qiu Yinong then uses Wheel of Time and sends everyone affected by it back to five minutes earlier. Because fifty seconds have already passed, the remaining duration of Eternal Kingdom is only four minutes and ten seconds. Hua Changsheng does not remember the transfers because she is still affected by Wheel of Time. From her perspective, the other five people in front of her are genuine. She therefore does not wait for her memory to return. Once the remaining four minutes and ten seconds pass and she can use her skill again, she immediately activates Super Energy Modeling and initiates Forced Settlement. She kills the true Shu Renjun and the four fake Players. The real Chen Ran, Qiu Yinong, Cui Yu, and Lin Xuan have already been moved elsewhere.

The reason Hua Changsheng does not simply wait for the Wheel of Time effect to expire is also important. Shu Renjun had already told her about Lin Xuan's operation before his death, so theoretically she could have waited until her memory returned and realized that his warning was accurate. However, she did not trust him. Shu Renjun was already a dead man walking, and Hua Changsheng naturally assumed that he would attempt to use his final moments to manipulate her. Furthermore, even if she understood the spatial-transfer scheme, she had no practical method of pulling the four genuine Players back into the Original Space. Therefore, waiting would not improve her position. The moment her skill became available, Forced Settlement was still the safest move. This is why Lin Xuan's plan succeeds in protecting the others while allowing Shu Renjun to die. It constitutes a Superior answer: self-preservation, protection of Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong, and the elimination of Shu Renjun. But it is still not an Extraordinary Performance because Hua Changsheng survives.

That distinction becomes the central problem. To obtain an Extraordinary Performance, Hua Changsheng herself must die. Lin Xuan initially believes Cui Yu may be the key. Shu Renjun is already dead, meaning Cui Yu can only choose to die together with Hua Changsheng. If Lin Xuan can arrange the Red Light, Green Light game so that Cui Yu and Hua Changsheng are paired, Cui Yu's Golden Mouth, Jade Words could potentially force a situation in which Hua

Changsheng dies. This explains why Lin Xuan deliberately preserved Cui Yu instead of immediately judging Hua Changsheng after obtaining her Lie. However, Shu Renjun had already anticipated this possibility before his death. His information given through No Distance was not merely a warning that Lin Xuan's spatial-transfer plan was real. Once Hua Changsheng's memory eventually returned, she would realize that Shu Renjun had been telling the truth. Therefore, the actual purpose of his explanation was to gain enough credibility that she would trust his final deduction: Lin Xuan was attempting to achieve Extraordinary Performance, and Hua Changsheng needed to prevent that by ensuring that she herself did not die.

This changes the nature of the entire test. Lin Xuan alone cannot achieve Extraordinary Performance. Chen Ran must become involved. What initially looks like Lin Xuan attempting to trap Hua Changsheng is actually a game between Chen Ran and Shu Renjun across different points in time. Shu Renjun is already dead, but his consciousness and deductions continue to affect the present. Chen Ran considers two possible approaches. The first is to use Eternal Kingdom to open the way, allowing the five Players to return to the Original Space and continue the Red Light, Green Light game with Hua Changsheng. The second is to use Wheel of Time to return to the period before the Forced Settlement, pull Hua Changsheng out of the third secret chamber and back into her own dungeon, and then trick a Lie out of her. Shu Renjun understands that these are the two routes available to Chen Ran, and the choice between them determines whether Hua Changsheng can be killed.

When Chen Ran examines the Eternal Kingdom route, the result is unfavorable. If Eternal Kingdom opens the way, Hua Changsheng's winning probability rises sharply. The moment the effect is restored, Hua Changsheng can return to the Red Light, Green Light game, where Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong remain frozen. If the next square is cleared, the dungeon will eventually force two of the remaining three Players to participate. The possible pairs are Lin Xuan with Hua Changsheng, Lin Xuan with Cui Yu, or Cui Yu with Hua Changsheng. Therefore, even if Cui Yu is the key to killing Hua Changsheng, there is initially only a one-in-three chance that the game will pair them. Worse, Hua Changsheng knows her own dungeon's rules and may know a special rule that singles her out when the number of remaining Players is odd. That makes Cui Yu's chance of being paired with her even less reliable. At the same time, Chen Ran remains vulnerable to Hua Changsheng's ability because she needs to control him for a sufficiently long period before using her skill. Even if Eternal Kingdom reconnects, another hour-long control sequence could eventually cause it to expire again.

The Wheel of Time route therefore appears more promising. Chen Ran can use Wheel of Time to reset the situation and then have Lin Xuan reconstruct the necessary spatial arrangement. However, Shu Renjun reveals the hidden problem: he has already left Hua Changsheng a contingency. If the Wheel of Time route is used, the Shu Renjun in Space 3 can eventually be transferred into the Original Space. That is necessary because the genuine Shu Renjun in Space 4 is already dead. If Lin Xuan simply removes the corpse or fails to provide a living Shu Renjun, Hua Changsheng will immediately realize that something is wrong and understand that she can use her skills. The existence of the living Shu Renjun is therefore not incidental; it is a camouflage requirement. Space 3 and Space 4 both have normal time flow, so the Shu Renjun in

Space 3 is the only version capable of replacing the dead Shu Renjun in Space 4 without creating another obvious time-flow discrepancy.

This creates an additional trap. Once the Shu Renjun from Space 3 is moved into the relevant situation, Hua Changsheng in that space may realize that she can use her skill. That space therefore becomes unusable. Shu Renjun's goal is to force Chen Ran into a position where every apparent solution has a corresponding countermeasure. He tells Chen Ran that he has already thought about what he will say to Hua Changsheng through No Distance after the reset. In other words, even though Wheel of Time changes the point in time at which the confrontation occurs, it does not erase Shu Renjun's deductions. The Shu Renjun in Space 3 still possesses the consciousness required to continue the plan. The dead Shu Renjun in Space 4 cannot be revived, so the living version in Space 3 has to take his place. This makes the identity of the Player almost as important as the spatial position.

The six Players eventually reappear in the Original Space through another combination of Wheel of Time and Magic Cube Universe. At this point, however, it becomes extremely difficult to determine which versions are real and which are fake. Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong remain frozen, while the other four appear to be waiting for Eternal Kingdom to end. Shu Renjun considers the two possibilities available to him. Either nothing has happened and the Eternal Kingdom effect has not yet ended, or he is already dead and the Shu Renjun currently standing before Hua Changsheng is actually a version from another space. If Chen Ran and the others are preparing to kill Hua Changsheng through deception before Eternal Kingdom ends, then the second possibility becomes more likely. Shu Renjun knows that the Ninth Floor Master of the Liar Killer Alliance specifically assigned Lin Xuan to track him. He therefore has no intention of allowing his own death to end the battle. Even if he dies, he wants to drag the others down with him. His resistance has become a matter of proving that his life and his choices had meaning.

Around three minutes remain before Eternal Kingdom ends. Shu Renjun examines Qiu Yinong first. She is frozen, and even if she uses Wheel of Time later, it should only return her and Chen Ran to the earlier stage of deciphering the first Square. Because Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong are already close to completing that process, the exact moment of the reset could potentially change if they deliberately delayed, but Shu Renjun concludes that this is meaningless. Hua Changsheng is going to wait for Eternal Kingdom to end regardless, so changing the timing of the Highway Decryption does not fundamentally solve the problem. Cui Yu is also not a meaningful variable because his Golden Mouth, Jade Words can make people hear the truth as a Lie, but Hua Changsheng is unlikely to judge someone during this waiting period. She knows that judging a statement risks creating an opportunity for deception, so she can simply refuse to act until her own skill becomes available.

That leaves Lin Xuan as the only Player capable of making a meaningful intervention. Shu Renjun considers Space Transfer and Player Transfer. If Lin Xuan transfers everyone into a space with the same flow of time, there is no advantage. Therefore, the only useful possibility is Player Transfer. Shu Renjun leaves a small mark on the floor with his cigarette butt. His logic is simple: if the mark disappears, then he has been transferred to a space with a slower flow of time. This gives him a physical test for something that would otherwise be almost impossible to

detect.

He continues observing Chen Ran, who is playing defensively rather than aggressively in the remote chess game. Shu Renjun interprets this as Chen Ran potentially giving up. Then Chen Ran suddenly removes the pieces that they had placed during the current attempt, leaving only the pieces from the earlier review and Shu Renjun's white piece on the central point. Chen Ran then activates Wheel of Time.

The reset creates an apparently perfect dead end. Qiu Yinong uses Wheel of Time in the actual dungeon and returns to five minutes before Hua Changsheng's attempted Forced Settlement. Shu Renjun immediately explains why this alone changes nothing. The same actions will simply happen again. The only conceivable solution would be for Lin Xuan to move Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong into a Slow Time Flow Space, allowing them to clear the dungeon more quickly and then return to the Original Space.

At the same time, Chen Ran would need to trick Lin Xuan into telling a Lie so that Cui Yu could judge Lin Xuan to death. If Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong then cleared the dungeon while Lin Xuan died, only Cui Yu and Hua Changsheng would remain. Cui Yu could potentially kill Hua Changsheng. But even this route contains a fatal flaw: Hua Changsheng does not have to participate immediately. If she refuses to participate, the dungeon may not force her to do so for two hours. By then Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong could enter a Chaotic State and lose their ability to reconnect to Eternal Kingdom, allowing Hua Changsheng to use Forced Settlement. Therefore, every apparently complete route still ends with Hua Changsheng surviving.

Chen Ran does not answer this verbally. Instead, he places his chess piece in exactly the same position as before. This detail matters because Chen Ran and Shu Renjun are not operating under identical information conditions. Chen Ran can potentially communicate with another version of himself through Lin Xuan and therefore alter his next move based on information acquired in another space. Shu Renjun cannot do this. Because he is the Amnesiac, whatever move he made during the previous time loop must be repeated in the next one. Therefore, if Chen Ran deliberately repeats his own previous sequence despite having the ability to change it, he is creating a pattern that Shu Renjun is forced to follow. The board reaches exactly the same state as before, and the black pieces appear to be heading toward the same dead end. Chen Ran then activates Wheel of Time again.

The same cycle occurs inside Hua Changsheng's dungeon. Hua Changsheng repeatedly attempts Superpower Modeling and Forced Settlement, while Qiu Yinong repeatedly uses Wheel of Time to pull her back. Under ordinary circumstances Hua Changsheng should simply throw Qiu Yinong into the Triple Layer Simulation, preventing her from using skills. However, Lin Xuan creates the counter to this. Whenever Hua Changsheng throws Qiu Yinong into the other space, Lin Xuan transfers another Qiu Yinong over, allowing Wheel of Time to pull the first Qiu Yinong back and reset the time again.

This produces a direct logical loop. Lin Xuan and Qiu Yinong will die if they stop using their abilities, but Hua Changsheng cannot exploit the loop properly because each reset removes the

memory necessary for her to understand what happened. Shu Renjun wants Hua Changsheng to escape this loop, because he has already predicted the larger scheme and wants her to counter Lin Xuan's route. Yet he himself cannot simply explain the answer because his own memory is repeatedly reset, while Hua Changsheng has no reason to trust him. The result is a strange equilibrium in which neither side can produce a decisive victory.

This repeats again and again. During the remote chess game, Chen Ran activates Wheel of Time for the eighteenth time. Shu Renjun initially believes that Chen Ran is simply trying to find the answer by repeatedly losing and restarting. But on the next cycle, Chen Ran does something different. He flicks Shu Renjun's white piece off the board. He then takes a black piece and places it directly on the central Tengen position. The meaning of the move is no longer part of the previous loop. Chen Ran states that placing his piece there was not an attempt to humiliate Shu Renjun. It was a declaration that Shu Renjun had no moves left. He then presses the black piece firmly into place and states that Shu Renjun has lost. The deduction is not that Chen Ran found a way to defeat Shu Renjun inside the existing loop. The important point is that Chen Ran understood that the loop itself was the trap. By repeating the same sequence eighteen times, he had demonstrated that Shu Renjun's available responses were exhausted. The only remaining move was therefore to refuse to continue playing according to the structure Shu Renjun had established.

The realization destroys Shu Renjun psychologically. He asks whether he has lost to himself. The phrase has a deeper meaning because his entire life was built around resistance, yet the final opponent he could not defeat was his own accumulated choices and regrets. When he killed his mother during his lifetime, he did not cry. When he arrived in Hell and suffered endless torment, he still did not cry. But now two lines of tears run down his face. The attack is described as Heart Execution, apparently coming from the River of Time and directly piercing his heart.

The connection is explicit: in life, he killed his mother and was executed by firing squad, meaning he ultimately lost to himself. After death, he again loses to himself. When he touches the tears, he asks whether he regrets it. The tears are named Regret, and they appear to carry him back to a memory of a sunny afternoon, when he was desperately gripping a wire while strangling a woman and she turned around to look at him without saying anything. The logical battle therefore ends not simply with Shu Renjun being out-calculated, but with the revelation that the final contradiction in his life was internal.

In Space No. 2, the time flow is slow enough that Chen Ran and Qiu Yinong should still be in the Road Game. The other four Players are waiting quietly, presumably considering what comes next. Then Lin Xuan suddenly disappears and Chen Ran appears in his place. This creates a second Chen Ran in the secret chamber. Hua Changsheng immediately prepares to use her skill, but Chen Ran tells her that it is useless because she already lost in the Original Space. He then ignores her and turns toward Shu Renjun. Instead of immediately continuing the deduction, Chen Ran brings up the opponent he encountered in the previous dungeon. That opponent had left him several lines that seemed like poetry and appeared to expect Chen Ran to complete the

remaining verses. Chen Ran admits that his own story does not seem to have reached its conclusion. Shu Renjun studies him for a long time before agreeing to complete the poem.

Chen Ran recites the opening: “Don't laugh at a youth's dream of the Martial World; who among the young doesn't dream of the Martial World? With a white horse and a sword, he traverses the Nine Provinces, aspiring to be the foremost figure in the human realm.” Shu Renjun understands what Chen Ran is asking for and completes the poem. He recites that looking back, all are merely guests; countless autumns have crushed the dusty road; the frosty blade once severed the rain of a thousand mountains, yet now it struggles to cut through a single withered thought. He then explains that these lines are his story. If he dies here, then his story ends here, and everything that follows must be completed by Chen Ran. Chen Ran straightens his sleeves and collar and solemnly thanks him. The next moment, Chen Ran disappears, and time returns to two and a half minutes earlier.

Back in the Original Space, Lin Xuan disappears and Qiu Yinong appears. There are now two Qiu Yinongs. Hua Changsheng reacts immediately and prepares to draw her gun, but the second Qiu Yinong acts first. She activates Wheel of Time and retrieves the earlier state. The result is catastrophic for Hua Changsheng. Qiu Yinong disappears, Cui Yu experiences an intense stabbing sensation in his mind, and Hua Changsheng collapses, foaming at the mouth with her eyes rolled upward. Lin Xuan reappears and immediately recognizes that something has gone terribly wrong with her mental state. Normally a Three-Star Heart Cultivation Player should not simply become mentally ill because of pressure, but that assumes the Player still has enough mental energy to Suppress the State of Mind. Hua Changsheng's mental energy has now been overdrawn so severely that she cannot even maintain basic thought processes. Shu Renjun, who had previously been transferred from Space 3, collapses as well and is in even worse physical condition, barely breathing.

Cui Yu's memory eventually returns, and the first words he manages to say are “No Distance?” The recovered memory reveals the real price of the repeated loops. Time had been rewound nineteen times, and during every one of those loops Shu Renjun used No Distance on Hua Changsheng. Therefore, Shu Renjun had actually used No Distance nineteen times. Once Qiu Yinong deactivated Wheel of Time, the accumulated mental-energy consumption from all nineteen uses was released at once. Both Hua Changsheng's and Shu Renjun's minds were overwhelmed. A normal Three-Star Player's consciousness would begin becoming blurry after only several consecutive uses of No Distance. Nineteen uses therefore pushed both of them far beyond what their minds could withstand. This also explains Shu Renjun's earlier statement that he had “lost to himself” during the Chess Match Across Space. He had correctly predicted Chen Ran and the others' plan, so he repeatedly used No Distance to monitor Hua Changsheng, but that very action planted the conditions for his eventual mental collapse.

The deeper deduction is that Wheel of Time was naturally suited to counter No Distance. No Distance was created by the Ninth True Self Player, and the Ninth True Self Player was associated with Qiu Yinong. Therefore, from a deduction standpoint, it makes sense that Qiu Yinong's Wheel of Time would naturally counter No Distance. It is even possible that Wheel of Time was stripped from or derived from the Ninth Player's True Self Skill. The exact origin is not

explicitly confirmed here, but the functional relationship is extremely strong: Shu Renjun repeatedly uses No Distance to create information links across the dungeon, while Qiu Yinong's repeated resets erase the consequences of those links and eventually force the accumulated mental burden back onto him and Hua Changsheng.

Lin Xuan then approaches Hua Changsheng and repeatedly asks her who she is. She cannot provide a coherent answer. Her mental state fluctuates between pain, screaming, mania, fear, and fragments of traumatic memory. She insists that she did not kill either her adoptive father or her biological father, begs someone not to hit her, promises that she will obey, and at other moments screams that everyone around her is a devil and that she will kill them. When Lin Xuan asks again who she is, she eventually answers that she does not know. This answer is significant because it means Hua Changsheng's Lie has effectively been exposed. The Players present are relieved because her mental collapse has prevented her from giving a meaningful response that could create another complication. However, Lin Xuan's attention immediately moves to Cui Yu. Hua Changsheng is already doomed, but Cui Yu's situation is different.

The two shots rang out almost simultaneously. Lin Xuan had just been caught in the exchange of Lies when he suddenly felt something being drained from his mind. The sensation was immediate and severe. His ears buzzed, his head split with pain, and before he could understand what had happened, his consciousness began to fade. The three of them were simultaneously teleported back into the third secret chamber, while the wall of the chamber slowly rose and revealed the white light representing successful clearance. Qiu Yinong immediately activated Wheel of Time and then used Collect. This was the crucial reset because the entire preceding sequence had been built around manipulating which versions of the Players were present in which spaces. Once the reset took effect, the complicated spatial arrangement disappeared, and the remaining Players returned to the state in which the dungeon had been cleared. Lin Xuan, however, had paid a heavy price for the repeated use of No Distance. His consciousness could no longer withstand the accumulated strain, so he collapsed completely.