Circulation time

Things to know (for the reader; the characters will figure these out later):

The characters have absolutely no memories related to hell, instance dungeons, the prohibition against lying, etc. They only have the memories implanted within the instance dungeon. However, common sense (instincts, mental intensity, or habits from hell, etc.) still cannot be changed.

The characters are trapped in a time loop; each cycle, they lose the memories from the previous cycle.

None of the characters know that the person who hasn't arrived yet is Yue Guanshan, but so the reading isn't jarring, I'll just write it in.

Detailed developments:

Chen Ran wakes up on the bed; the memories of hell, instance dungeons, and such in his mind have all been erased. He only has his memories from the mortal world left. He looks at the date and time, then gets out of bed (Record).

> Reason for going to the cafeteria: To verify whether the information matches his memories.
>
> Reason for going to the laboratory building: In Chen Ran's memory, today should be a day when TYN and the three of them chat together, but he only sees TYN silently listening, not speaking. Yet in Chen Ran's memory, Qiu YiNong is very close with these two friends, and when all three are together, it's impossible for Qiu YiNong to let her friends do all the talking on their own. ⇒ Chen Ran begins to doubt his memories or Qiu YiNong, but because the time on his phone and the date and time in his memory are the same, he also has reason to suspect that he may have had his memories altered, or that he and Qiu YiNong are both trapped in a time loop. He arranges to meet Qiu YiNong at the laboratory building. Given Qiu YiNong's personality, when receiving such an abrupt invitation with no context, she normally wouldn't go. If she does go to the laboratory building, then she must have also noticed something abnormal ⇒ reinforcing the argument for being trapped in a time loop or having her memories altered.
>
> Another reason: If this isn't a time loop/memory alteration, then tomorrow things will return to normal, and the two of them will only have lost one day's time — no harm done. If this really is a time loop/memory alteration, then they have to take action; if they don't act, then in the next

time loop/memory alteration they'll also do nothing and be stuck forever in the time loop/memory alteration.

The specific reason for choosing the laboratory building: "If this is science, then it's clear that someone in the academy has developed a device that can make people fall into a time loop. The laboratory building is highly suspect. Moreover, in terms of common sense, under normal circumstances, developing something like this would require experimentation first, and now they might also be inside the loop. Therefore, there's a very high probability that the device hasn't been successfully developed yet."

The Laboratory Building — Decoding.

Upon reaching the laboratory building, Chen Ran deduces that they've had their common sense tampered with (forcibly altered by a person/object) or have lost their memories, based on words like "probably, might, could, etc." Given their original personalities (Chen Ran — an opportunist or a soldier-type, TYN — a strong woman), both are absolutely confident people. Using too many evasive, hedging words in a single line of dialogue goes against their memories and who they are.

After a while, 17 other people arrive and stand together with Chen Ran below the laboratory building.

The following is a short deduction scene by the players (19 people in total) gathered at the laboratory building regarding the time loop:

Giang Triết, after hearing Chen Ran talk about how they might have lost their memories, becomes suspicious about something special regarding them. (Unconsciously using evasive, hedging words.)

Chu Yinian, based on the fact that the players instinctively avoid lying, arrives at the conclusion that the players have taken over the bodies of students.

The specific reasoning process is as follows:

The group had just met and immediately started chatting lively and noisily. (Giang Triết heard Chen Ran talk about how they might have lost their memories. Giang Triết believes they have something special after noticing errors in their memories, etc.) ⇒ All 19 people are extroverts.

Chu Yinian realizes that when everyone talks, they all instinctively avoid lying ⇒ Everyone is an introvert, because only introverts would repeatedly use words like "probably, might, etc."

But if they're introverts, then Argument 2 contradicts Argument 1 ⇒ They have taken over the bodies of students at this school.

Possibilities

From the above conditions, Giang Triết has produced 2 possibilities.

"There are two kinds of possibilities," Giang Triết said.

One: This is a fictional world; we're playing a game.

Two: A supernatural world; we're participating in some kind of supernatural instance dungeon, just like the protagonist in a novel.

Obviously, a time loop is a transcendent phenomenon (science could simulate humans in a virtual world with fully functioning senses, and erasing memories isn't much different from something transcendent).

Giang Triết deduces that they're in the second possibility (i.e., an instance dungeon) as follows:

Everyone here is extremely intelligent. Although their personalities differ, it's impossible that all of them like playing games, because they all have their own busy work. (Given the personalities they possess, this would include all kinds of people, with the common point being that they're extremely intelligent, and the differences being that some are successful, some are ordinary, some are idle, some are busy, etc. In this case, Chen Ran and Qiu YiNong have confirmed to each other that they're both special people, because they have memories of each other, so their memories have a chance of being real (for the two of them, this much is enough). Therefore, it can be deduced that their future achievements are very high. (Qiu YiNong — because in her future trajectory, she's a CEO at a very young age, so her methods and background are absolutely not low. As for Chen Ran — according to his trajectory, before becoming a full-time novelist, he had worked at a sperm bank or as a research staff member related to it.)

Time and headcount: if this were a game, there would be a huge number of players (because this game's simulation fidelity is too high, so the company making it would definitely promote it heavily ⇒ there would definitely be many curious people trying it out). And for 19 extremely intelligent people out of countless players to coordinate and arrive in the same round of the game at

the same time is completely impossible (theoretically possible, but can be ignored and not counted).

If the game company used some toy that the group couldn't refuse to test the Closed Beta of the game, then TYN would become a benchmark (because, as stated, in the future she'll be a director — regardless of whether it's during the process of reaching the director position or already being a director). Then, bringing out an item that TYN couldn't refuse would only make TYN wary (especially when asking TYN to participate in a realistic simulation game's Closed Beta, which would make TYN even more suspicious). Not to mention that the idea of a single game company being able to bring out an item that would move TYN is already highly suspect.

> ⇒ Giang Biệt Ly deduces that they're in a Supernatural Instance Dungeon. At the same time, he also deduces the rule of the Prohibition Against Lying.

In fact, that much reasoning alone isn't enough basis to conclude that they're in an instance dungeon. But whether it's a fictional world, an invention causing the time loop, or a supernatural instance dungeon, they still have to find out the cause of the loop and end it. They only need to know the Prohibition Against Lying (don't ask where the evidence is, because for these monsters, even if they've lost their memories, just being suspicious is enough).

The person who hasn't arrived

Chen Ran realizes the current number of people is only 19 — an odd number — so he deduces that there's still one person who hasn't appeared. At the same time, he doesn't rush to conclude that this is the first loop, because if there had been a previous loop, the missing person might have already cleared it, fled, or died.

Therefore, he voluntarily becomes the "one facing the wall," asking everyone whether they know each other in their memories, recording information, and assigning people to guard the door.

> Distribution table of people on each floor.

Ground floor: Lâm Huyền, Hàn Phi

Floor 1: Chu Yinian, Giang Triết

Floor 2: Tề Nghiễn Thanh, Giang Biệt Ly

Floor 3: Chu Dịch Đình, Ngụy Vô Tà

Floor 4: The remaining 11 people

At this moment, in room 4-10 on the 4th floor, there is a lecture podium and a white screen (Illustration image).

There is a "Laser optics" device (Laser optics indicating suspicion), and there are 2 laser streaks from the red dots.

From this information, Chen Ran deduces that this is the Double-Slit Experiment. Based on the presence of 2 laser beams, Chen Ran believes that an observer is needed for evaluation (meaning observation equipment is needed).

The double-slit experiment is an experiment that verifies whether photons have wave-particle duality.

When the laser fires:
Multiple red dots ⇒ Wave property
2 red dots ⇒ Particle property (observer effect)

In the experiment at this location, there is no observer yet the observer effect occurs. This violates logic, so Chen Ran believes this is a hint.

Chen Ran has TYN press the tape measure against the laser device, while Chen Ran pulls the other end toward the white screen. The measurement is 10.4 m. The group feels it's quite abnormal, because under normal circumstances the distance would be around 8.6 m or 9.8 m.

Chen Ran takes a scalpel and carves the number【24】onto the laser device.

Chen Ran leads the group up to the highest floor, finds nothing else, and goes straight down to the ground floor. (Each floor has 2 people on guard, so the total number of people in the building is 19; the number of people following Chen Ran up to the 4th floor is 11.)

When the 17 people went downstairs, they saw Lâm Huyền looking at them. Chen Ran, seeing that only Lâm Huyền was there, was startled, because there was only one person standing on the ground floor while the other floors had 2 people each. He suddenly looked at his own palm and saw the line of text he had written before entering the laboratory building:【Total 19 people, front 2, one 2, two 2, three 2, four 2.】(Meaning: ground floor 2 people, floor 1 2 people, ... and so on.)

At this point, Chen Ran had confirmed that one person had been killed, and also deduced that when a person dies, the remaining people lose their

memories of that person. Chen Ran arranged to meet Lâm Huyền at the small grove and killed Lâm Huyền. He also lost his memory of Lâm Huyền, which further confirmed his conclusion. (Because before killing Lâm Huyền, Chen Ran had written on his palm that he would kill LH.)

—

When Chen Ran arranged to meet LH at the grove, the 16 people were still standing below the building. Chu Yinian believed that LH would not appear (would die). (Chu Yinian's palm:【Chen Ran and the one who was just guarding the laboratory building earlier, Lâm Huyền, are going to the small grove.】)

The group of old hands at this point also showed that they had recorded this event, and the group began to widen the distance between them.

(Next is the characters' dialogue with each other; this can be skipped because I will summarize their points.)

At this moment, Giang Triết hurriedly reassured the group by steering the topic toward a strategy for clearing: "No rush, let's summarize a bit first."

Tề Nghiễn Thanh spoke first: "First, who died? We might lose memories of someone — this point should be beyond doubt, right?"

Qiu YiNong continued with her proposal: "Second is the double-slit experiment. There shouldn't have been an observer effect, yet an observer effect appeared. We need to figure out clearly what it ultimately means."

Method for Clearing

Ngụy Vô Tà explained the double-slit experiment with the observer effect (wave/particle) and connected it to the concept of "future prediction" in the microscopic world. Qiu YiNong added that observation only affects the microscopic world, not the macroscopic world. She believed that it is the observer acting on the photons that produces the particle property. However, since the recent experiment had no observer yet still produced the particle property, and even if there were an observer it might still produce particles, she concluded that this experiment is implying that "clearing" is unique.

To summarize in just a few sentences: Regardless of whether there is an observer or not, the particle property will still appear (constant, impossible to change). Therefore, clearing is unique (unique here means that the method for clearing is only one, or only someone with a certain identity can clear it).

Chu Yinian continued the topic. He believed that if the instance dungeon (temporarily called an instance dungeon) is regarded as a double-slit experiment, then...

Vật, hiện tượng, vv	Tượng trưng
Time loop |	Laser device
(Laser firing) Photons (light particles)	Players
The result when photons hit the screen (i.e., particle property)	Clearing having uniqueness
The observer	The one who acts upon the players

Everyone relies on these premises to carry out the following chains of reasoning:

The time loop is the laser device, continuously firing photons (the players) that carry a repeating nature (creating the loop).

If a person is killed (i.e., affecting a photon and making it disappear), it will affect the operation of the time loop, leading to the loss of memories regarding the affected player.

Combined with the disappearance of the observer yet the experiment still projecting the particle property —

The particle property is constant, pointing only toward the condition that clearing has UNIQUENESS. When only one person remains, or when the group is left with only one identity as a player, it will fit the condition.

⇒ The deduced clearing condition is to kill all the "Observers."

At this point, Zhang Baixi (a seven-star player) pierces through the final layer of paper. Among this group of people, some have teammate relationships. He believes that the sentence Chen Ran said before entering the laboratory building —

Analysis of Chen Ran's sentence: "I want to ask one question — in your memories, do you know each other?"

The reason Chen Ran said this sentence:

1. Chen Ran wasn't sure whether any of the others knew each other, or whether it was only him and Qiu YiNong who were special. He had to clarify this.
2. Chen Ran vaguely hinted to Qiu YiNong that he and Qiu YiNong had a high probability of being teammates.
3. A reminder to Qiu YiNong and to those who understood what he was hearing: that the school or the current scenes might be modeled from the memories of one of the two of them ⇒ If Qiu YiNong or Chen Ran died, the scene might disappear and the outcome would be uncontrollable ⇒ Qiu YiNong needed to be protected.
4. Protect Qiu YiNong. Convey a signal to the others that if anyone acts against Qiu YiNong, Chen Ran will fight that person to the death (because for Chen Ran, as long as someone is acknowledged by him, he will protect them).
5. Protect Qiu YiNong. When someone realizes the meaning behind Chen Ran's words, everyone will protect Qiu YiNong. Because once they become aware that they didn't know anyone before arriving at the laboratory building (i.e., they have no teammates), Qiu YiNong's specialness becomes more important (at least until the moment when Qiu YiNong needs to die, she will be protected by them).

The unexpected effect of coming out of the laboratory building: Protecting Qiu YiNong. It created a second line of thought: that after going through the double-slit experiment, they had deduced that clearing had a unique nature ("meaning the clearing method is only one" or "the identity is either player or observer"). The group had no way of determining whether it was the former or the latter (in the latter case, Qiu YiNong would be even more protected, because Qiu YiNong might be related to the switching of identities between them). As stated, Qiu YiNong is very special.

Reasons 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were things Chen Ran knew and actively did before entering the laboratory building; the unimaginable effect was an unexpected blessing.

Zhang Baixi, relying on Chen Ran's words, deduced a few more things:

If Chen Ran and Qiu YiNong knew each other, while the others didn't know each other in their memories ⇒ Chen Ran and Qiu YiNong had a high probability of being teammates, and both also had a high probability of being players; the others had a high probability of being observers.

With the premise that Chen Ran and Qiu YiNong are players, this instance dungeon might be modeled from the memories of one or both of them.

At this moment, Qiu YiNong was also very panicked. She hadn't expected that the hidden meaning Chen Ran vaguely revealed to her would be noticed by these monsters and lead them to deduce so many things. She could only stay calm and salvage the situation.

Regarding speculation about the observer:

She believed that obsessing over or paying attention to who is the observer/player is completely meaningless. Her reasoning is as follows:

She believed that everything at present was everyone's speculation, with no direct evidence to prove any of it.

If this is an instance dungeon, the observer could be one of 2 possibilities:

The observer is also a player, but not a player of this instance dungeon — rather, like a guest dragged in by the instance dungeon to influence others in clearing. Meaning, whether the players clear or not doesn't affect them at all.

The observer is created by the instance dungeon, and when the players clear, it will be discarded by the instance dungeon.

- If it's Case 1, whether the players clear or not doesn't affect the observer; the observer can completely ignore the players and let them do as they please.
- If it's Case 2, if the players clear, the observer will be discarded; if the players don't clear and are stuck in an infinite loop, the observer will always be stuck in the infinite loop with no way out — thus the instance dungeon will fall into a deadlock or change to a different observer to restart the instance dungeon.

Therefore, Qiu YiNong believed that investigating who the observer is has no practical value.

Everyone discussed for a while, then headed together to the laboratory building in Area B and found nothing.

At this point, Giang Triết suggested that everyone split up and regroup at night to summarize information.

After leaving the main group, Qiu YiNong, on her way to the library, needed to cross a small forest path. At this moment, she saw Chen Ran smiling brightly

at her, hiding something behind his back, and walking closer. Qiu YiNong felt uneasy and hurriedly dodged Chen Ran's attack. After struggling for about 10 seconds, Qiu YiNong asked Chen Ran why he attacked her — weren't she and he teammates? Chen Ran only analyzed it for her:

Chen Ran believed that if this is an instance dungeon, then it's probably a battle royale type where only the last person can survive.

Facing Chen Ran's attack, Qiu YiNong seized the opportunity and delivered a blow to Chen Ran's groin (crushed eggs!!!!), then turned and ran as fast as she could to a crowded place. Chen Ran didn't chase after her and left.

—

Equipment Storage Room

At this moment, in the equipment storage room of the gymnasium, a young man (Yue Guanshan) had armed himself to the teeth, carrying 2 quivers of arrows and a modern bow on his back. At the same time, he had destroyed all the weapons in the equipment storage room.

In front of Yue Guanshan was a list — the class roster of Chen Ran and Qiu YiNong.

Yue Guanshan pulled up a chair, sat silently, and waited for his prey to come to the door.

2 hours earlier

Yue Guanshan hid behind the laboratory building in Area A, listening to the conversation between Chen Ran and the others. After hearing the group say their names, he quickly ran to the academic affairs office to look up information on the 19 people.

After a "harmonious, bloodless" exchange with the teacher, Yue Guanshan had gathered the basic information of the 19 people (names, classes, majors, student ID numbers, dorm room numbers, etc.).

Yue Guanshan discovered that Qiu YiNong and Chen Ran were classmates in the same class, and immediately deduced the same things the other 19 people had deduced (unclear whether this was off-screen or not).

At this point, Yue Guanshan quickly went to the laboratory building, pretended to be a passerby asking Hàn Phi for directions, and before Hàn Phi could react, killed him with a single blade to the throat. At this moment, Lâm Huyền had

already lost his memory of Hàn Phi, so he only saw Yue Guanshan walking past.

Reason for coming and killing Hàn Phi: To remind Qiu YiNong and the group that there was someone who hadn't arrived yet (acting on Qiu YiNong), in order to switch identities to the observer, go to the equipment storage room to find killing weapons, and manipulate Chen Ran.

At this moment, in the small grove, Yue Guanshan took out his NoteBook and saw the line of text written on it, confirming that Hàn Phi had been killed by him. The loss of memory had led him to deduce the answer for clearing. He could only smile bitterly and quickly run to the equipment area of the gymnasium.

Chen Ran blocks the storage room door

Chen Ran quickly ran to block the door of the equipment storage room, where Yue Guanshan was sitting.

Reason Chen Ran blocked Yue Guanshan's door:

> When Chen Ran deduced the answer, there wasn't much time left (since he didn't know when Yue Guanshan would arrive or go out on a killing spree). In addition, he needed to act on Qiu YiNong to switch identities, so "using all his ability" to protect Qiu YiNong meant going to block Yue Guanshan's door (because Chen Ran had also deduced that Yue Guanshan would deduce the answer based on having killed Hàn Phi).
>
> Chen Ran only needed to go block Yue Guanshan to satisfy "using all his ability," so even if he was killed, he would still pass the game.
>
> Based on this action, he reminded Qiu YiNong that she only needed to lie low and win — those who deduced the answer would protect her.

Note: When Chen Ran killed Lâm Huyền, he had already deduced where Yue Guanshan would go, but he needed to act on Qiu YiNong to switch identities before he could go block Yue Guanshan's door.

Reason Yue Guanshan went to the equipment storage room:

> When he killed Hàn Phi, Yue Guanshan had acted on Qiu YiNong and switched his identity to the observer. What he needed to do at this moment was go to the weapons storage room to get tools to kill everyone on campus (because the others had no weapons, so "using all his ability" for Yue Guanshan would be to kill everyone).

He created a favorable situation so that Chen Ran could come and threaten him. By that time, even if he died, he would have already cleared ⇒ pass the game.

Yue Guanshan's "using all his ability" became killing the people who came into the equipment storage room.

The storage room door was suddenly knocked on. Yue Guanshan's spirit tensed up, and he immediately nocked an arrow and pointed it at the door. But after a moment, there was only the sound of continuous rhythmic knocking on the door. Yue Guanshan recognized this as Morse code and calmly recalled each knock on the door. Very quickly, he decoded the meaning of the knocking: "I'm holding a big hammer guarding the door. If you come out, I'll beat you to death," "idiot," "You're locked in by me," etc.

Yue Guanshan calmly found a wrench and tapped on the metal in rhythm. The main meaning was: "Idiot," "If you dare come in, I'll shoot you dead!"

Then the exchange process was as follows:

"Idiot, if you've got the guts, come out here and I'll beat you to death."

"Idiot, if you've got the guts, come in here and I'll shoot you dead."

"Idiot, if I come in, do you dare kill me?"

"Idiot, if I come out, do you dare kill me?"

In fact, the dialogue between the two can be broken down as follows:

Chen Ran shows that he has deduced the answer and that there isn't much time left, while also threatening Yue Guanshan so that he cannot go outside.

Reason Yue Guanshan didn't go outside:

Chen Ran stood blocking the door, and Yue Guanshan had absolutely no evidence to prove that Chen Ran was unarmed. If he went outside, it would violate the rule of "cherishing life" and he would be eliminated (even if he deduced that Chen Ran was unarmed, before there was physical evidence to prove it, it was defaulted that Chen Ran was armed).

He only needed to wait — one way or another, he would die and pass the game, so there was no need to go outside (explained later).

The subsequent dialogue between Chen Ran and Yue Guanshan serves as a layer of insurance to continuously reinforce the "using all ability" of both sides:

To guard against the case where the instance dungeon is stupid and doesn't know what the two of them are doing.

To anger the opponent (since there's nothing to lose anyway, why not try it).

To serve as a warning — after having continuously confirmed that they themselves are in great danger, if the opponent foolishly rushes in, they themselves would still be counted as having "used all ability."

To let the other party know that they are still outside.

Both understood each other's intentions and used the method of quantum superposition to make their respective "using all ability" conflict with each other. The "using all ability" of one restrained the "using all ability" of the other.

Qiu YiNong's deduction

At this moment, Qiu YiNong was already at the library. She began a chain of reasoning.

If this is an instance dungeon with 20 players, and eighteen of them have no memories of knowing each other, with only her and Chen Ran knowing each other, and the instance dungeon has no discoverable storyline ⇒ This instance dungeon was sampled from the memories of one of the two — Chen Ran or Qiu YiNong.

Regarding the relationship between Chen Ran and Qiu YiNong, she deduced that she and Chen Ran were teammates, because in her memory, apart from being a bit mischievous and cynical, Chen Ran was extremely intelligent. In a brain-intensive place like this, forming a team with Chen Ran was not a bad decision. Moreover, she believed the two had been teammates for a very long time, because she had changed too much (smarter, common sense altered over a long process, more logical reasoning, etc. — compared to her college-era self). In short, yesterday's her and today's her were too different.

She knew Lâm Huyền had been killed by Chen Ran through the notes on her palm, but she had absolutely no memory of Lâm Huyền whatsoever.

> Based on the previous reasoning, this instance dungeon has 2 types of identities: Observer and Player (which could be Qiu YiNong, Chen Ran, or Yue Guanshan). If all the players are killed, the instance dungeon will

end. If an observer is killed, it will affect both the players and the observers (memory loss).

It can be determined that the observers are the remaining 16–17 people (since it's impossible to determine whether the person who hasn't arrived knows anyone), meaning there will be a large number of observers.

There could be many players participating in the instance dungeon, but not all of them can be players. Therefore, the maximum number of players is 18 (Lâm Huyền and Hàn Phi are observers).

According to the double-slit experiment, to ensure the experiment's accuracy, the laser device can only fire one photon at a time. It must pass through one of the two slits to hit the screen and produce a result ⇒ deducing that this instance dungeon has 2 players, and only 1 player can clear it. (However, Qiu YiNong believed that her deduction might be wrong.)

Looking at the experiment from another angle: regardless of which slit it passes through, it only produces the single result of the particle property. In other words, the photons do not interfere with each other ⇒ players killing players does not cause memory loss. However, she was not certain whether killing a player would affect her own clearing.

After finishing her deduction, Qiu YiNong realized a problem: They had no specific clearing method. Qiu YiNong didn't know how to win this game. She had no concrete evidence to prove that killing everyone would clear it.

Therefore, Qiu YiNong believed she had missed some detail, so she began her next round of deduction.

She realized she had overlooked the reason Chen Ran attacked her. Chen Ran's reminder to her at the laboratory building had already proven that Chen Ran knew she and he were teammates. Yet he still attacked her. Qiu YiNong believed Chen Ran was giving her a hint.

Qiu YiNong believed that Chen Ran breaking away from the group proved that Chen Ran had discovered something. In addition, Chen Ran attacked her in a way that made it seem like he was afraid Qiu YiNong wouldn't know he had ill intentions. The fact that he discovered something but didn't tell her, and instead attacked her ⇒ Chen Ran was warning her that this answer could not be spoken — this answer "cannot be said."

Cannot be said, Reason One: If this answer were spoken aloud, the relationship between the two would become a competitive one.

> Cannot be said, Reason Two: If this answer were spoken aloud, clearing would become very difficult. (Take the example of a multiple-choice exam: if you just guess randomly, you're sure to get it right, but once you know the answers to the test, answering the questions becomes a matter of choice ⇒ you can't answer any question correctly.)

If it were the first case, then Chen Ran would have had no reason to attack her in a way that made it seem like he was afraid she wouldn't know he had ill intentions.

⇒ Chen Ran wanted to tell her that it was the second case — meaning she must not deduce the answer.

> ⇒ If Qiu YiNong didn't know the answer, she would clear easily. If Qiu YiNong knew the answer, her clearing would become extremely difficult.

Having reasoned this far, Qiu YiNong immediately stopped reasoning about the answer. She began to shift to reasoning about the person who hadn't arrived yet.

> Clearing involved killing, but that person couldn't determine who was strong and who was weak, so to be safe, he would go looking for weapons. In the school, there were the laboratory building (chemicals), the equipment storage room (compound bows and arrows, etc.), and the cafeteria (knives, scissors, etc.) — these were places with weapons.
>
> The laboratory building had already been checked by the group, and they had found nothing unusual and hadn't discovered that person. The cafeteria would usually have people guarding it and would be crowded (at least 5 people or more), making it very difficult to take from. The equipment storage room was the easiest place to loot, because few people guarded it and it was a secluded place. Moreover, the storage room also had long-range attack weapons ⇒ There was a high probability that the person who hadn't arrived yet was in the equipment storage room.

Giang Triết falls into the trap.

Giang Triết returns to the dormitory to consolidate all the information.

Roles:

- Observer (18 individuals): Influences whether players clear the instance.
    + Role-switching condition: Performing an action that affects the players (preventing them from clearing the instance, causing them to fail, or leading them to deduce the answer) shifts one to the Observer role.

      Note:

        + Observers can still clear the instance even if they die, but upon completion, they will still be eliminated by the instance.
        + Players who have switched to the Observer role can clear the instance if they die.
- Player (Qiu YiNong and Yue Guanshan): Must clear the instance.
    + Role-switching condition: When a player is in the Observer role, performing an action that meets the clearance condition (i.e., dying) switches them back to the Player role.

Giang Triết's room is 403; today is October 4th; Giang Triết is a fourth-year mechanical engineering student; the double-slit experiment takes place in the Zone A laboratory building, 4th floor, Room 4-10; Giang Triết's student ID is 100040. He notices the numbers 4 and 10 appearing with high frequency, yet wonders why his room is 403.

Room 403 is the third room on the fourth floor; each room has four beds; the tenth bed overall is located in Room 403, and Giang Triết's bed is the second one in the room (making it the tenth bed on the floor).

Giang Triết began to analyze the appearance of the numbers 4 and 10. He considered two possibilities:

The number 104 or 410.

- If it were 104, the room containing the clue in the laboratory building should have been Room 10-4; however, it was actually Room 4-10. => Incorrect.
- If it were 410, aside from pointing to the laboratory building (a place everyone would inevitably check), it offered no further guidance. => Incorrect.

The number 14.

- Homophones: "Want to die," "death," "test," "swearing an oath"... there were too many possibilities to rule them all out.
- Abstract interpretation: Linking it to the "no lying" clue—since "no lying" corresponds to the first level of the 18 Levels of Hell, and the 14th level is the *Wangzi* (Screaming) Hell (as previously explained)...

⇒ The entire instance is a hellscape, specifically the *Wangzi* Hell.

Why link it to hell rather than something else?

- If no other clues were found on the school grounds, the number 14 could only relate to the players in the following ways:
- A time loop: The only constant unaffected by time is the number of people; however, due to the memory loss accompanying each cycle, the player count cannot be tracked or controlled.
- 14 represents the number of cycles: Unlikely, because memory is wiped after every loop; thus, 14 cycles or 100 cycles would feel no different from a single cycle. => Incorrect.

14 represents a specific event:

- This would only hold true if the number 14 related exclusively to either Chen Ran or Qiu YiNong.
- However, it involves everyone, and the clue shared by all is the prohibition against lying (which links to hell). => Incorrect.

⇒ The scene was simulated with the rules of the 14th floor of hell (this hell is the hell of instance dungeons). Floor 14: Uổng Tử Hell (Hell of Wasted Death): Those who are reckless and do not cherish life cannot clear Uổng Tử Hell. Recklessness: Suicide. This is easy — just don't commit suicide. The key is... not cherishing life! What counts as cherishing life? Simply put, don't put yourself in danger, and don't let yourself have the possibility of being killed.

Clearing conditions:

If you know the rules: Being killed while using all your strength, unleashing all your wisdom, and not holding back — dying in the state of "using all abilities."

If you don't know the rules: Just die.

"Using all abilities" (only applies to those who have deduced the rules) — explanation: In a situation where you have already deduced your opponent's plan, your "using all abilities" will change depending on the circumstances (for example, if it's 12 noon and you need to eat, your "using all abilities" will become poisoning the food to eliminate other players). As long as there exists a probability of success, it fits "using all ability," but it only chooses the option with the highest probability.

When you have deduced what actions others will take, "using all abilities" will change depending on others' actions. But if you cannot reduce the optimal possibility/choice for that action, you cannot clear the instance dungeon.

Eliminated: When you have violated a hidden rule, you are considered cooked and cannot pass the game.

Giang Zhe instantly realized he had stepped into deep trouble; a cold sweat broke out all over him.

The premise was that human life must not be treated lightly.

To clear this instance, one had to be killed by another; if the hidden rule wasn't deduced, simply dying would suffice. However, if one *did* deduce the rule, then... (best left unsaid).

Thus, for Giang Zhe to ensure a chance at clearing the instance, he would need to wait for the next cycle and hope he didn't figure out the answer. But since he *had* already deduced it, failing to die while "giving it his all" would result in elimination and disqualification from the next cycle—leading to death or the loss of something vital (Giang Zhe didn't know the exact consequence, so he simply assumed the worst).

For someone like him who had already deduced the answer, hiding and waiting was not an option:

1. Fleeing would only spare Giang Triet from immediate death; if discovered, he would almost certainly perish due to his lack of weaponry—a scenario carrying high risk and heavy reliance on luck—which runs counter to the principle of valuing one's life.
2. Fleeing cedes the initiative to the adversary, placing oneself in a dangerously passive position—again, inconsistent with valuing one's life.

3. Fleeing splits the situation into two distinct camps: "pursuers" and "fugitives." Regardless of whether either side goes all-out, the focus remains squarely on the opponent, leaving little margin for error when facing concentrated firepower. In contrast, a chaotic free-for-all would fragment the participants into multiple factions (such as Chen Ran allying with Qiu YiNong and others, with the remaining eighteen potentially splitting further after Chen Ran's faction fell), thereby creating a more unpredictable environment with a higher margin for error.

Giang Triết felt that if he allowed the "Exhaust All Possibilities" mindset to run unchecked, it would generate a multitude of options beyond his control or foresight; therefore, he believed it necessary to condense all possibilities into a single, focused outcome.

For instance: Hypothetical actions for the "absent party" might include poisoning or arson. However, since the mealtime—when the most people would be gathered—had long passed, the poisoning scenario could be ruled out. As for arson, if the absent party had deduced the answer while the other nineteen people were searching the laboratory building, the fact that Chen Ran had assigned two people to guard each floor meant an arson attempt would theoretically have no chance of success; the perpetrator risked being beaten to death before or even after setting the fire, so this option could also be discarded.

⇒ The "Exhaust All Possibilities" process can be influenced and narrowed down through strategic handling.

⇒ If the absent party had indeed deduced the answer by this point, their "Exhaust All Possibilities" logic would dictate killing everyone else (given their head start and advantage in securing a weapon early); consequently, this mindset would drive them to head to the equipment room to retrieve a weapon.

Giang Triết deduced that Chen Ran already knew the answer—inferred from his killing of Lam Huyen and his decision not to regroup with the others. Chen Ran’s departure further demonstrated that he had figured out Yue Guanshan was at the weapon-dismantling depot and would emerge to kill everyone once the task was complete; consequently, Chen Ran’s "all-out effort" would be to intercept Yue Guanshan at the exit, preventing him from killing Qiu YiNong.

- In a scenario where time was tight and preparation impossible, the mere opening of the door by Yue Guanshan would have meant certain

death for Chen Ran; however, by "going all out," Chen Ran successfully cleared the stage.
- Yet, if the person inside the storage room detected someone outside, they would not step out—driven by the instinct to preserve their own life—since there was no tangible proof that the opponent was unarmed.

  ⇒ Both parties would effectively exist in a state of quantum superposition—akin to "Schrödinger's cat"—where neither dared to step in or out.

- Once everyone deduced that the two were playing this specific game, the collective "all-out" move would be to kill both of them—thereby allowing the pair to pass the game; now, the two "foxes" simply needed to sit back and wait.

Giang Triết realized he had been completely maneuvered by those two old foxes. In fact, everyone who managed to deduce the answer had been cornered by the pair. The objectives—killing both targets—and the specific methods required were crystal clear:

- To kill Chen Ran: use a ranged weapon.
- To kill Yue Guanshan: use poison.

Since the two targets were keeping each other occupied, others had ample time to prepare the necessary ranged weapons and toxins. For a mechanical engineering student like Giang Triết, crafting a ranged weapon was a simple task, while obtaining poison was as easy as visiting the laboratory building.

Next came a line of reasoning regarding Giang Triết's own identity:

- Chen Ran had previously asked a peculiar question: "Do you recognize each other from your memories?" The fact that he asked this implied that one of the eighteen individuals was an acquaintance from his own memories. Given the current situation, the most likely candidate was Qiu YiNong, as they were the first two people to appear in front of the laboratory building. Verifying this wasn't difficult; a quick check of the class records at the academic affairs office would confirm whether they were classmates. However, the unidentified individual had likely already been there, and the NPC in the office had probably been silenced. Yet, this only served to reinforce Giang Triết's deduction. If one were to visit the office and find all the NPCs dead, there could be only one explanation: someone was deliberately concealing the connection between Chen Ran and Qiu YiNong. In other words, out of the entire group, they were the only two who knew each other beforehand. Since

the instance's setting was constructed based on the players' memories, this specific memory had to belong to one of them. Put simply, either Chen Ran or Qiu YiNong—or at least one of the two—was a player. As for the total number of players in this instance, there is currently insufficient information to determine it. Faced with this uncertainty, Giang Triet can only regard himself as a player.

Giang Triet felt that if he could simply reach the broadcast station and announce the answer to those still in the dark, the nature of this instance would shift from a battle of wits to a contest of raw strength. Unfortunately for him, however, the broadcast station had already been seized and destroyed by another player.

- It appeared that the person who destroyed the station had managed to deduce the answer—a feat considered impossible; in all likelihood, that person was Qiu YiNong.
- Since a certain number of individuals would remain unaffected by the time loop, the subsequent cycle would begin with a maximum of 18 participants (given that Lam Huyen and Han Phi had already perished before deducing the answer).

At this moment, the group's secondary yet crucial objective was to protect Qiu YiNong.

The time had come to engage in a life-or-death battle against those powerful adversaries.

The Trap-Laden Lab – Constant Elimination

As Giang Triet arrived at the laboratory building, a realization dawned on him.

- If someone else had already deduced the answer and reached the lab first, their strategy of "using their full capabilities" would naturally shift to: "ambushing the second, third, or fourth person to arrive."

The reason:

- Eliminating rivals—after all, fewer competitors make it easier to manage the task of "using one's full capabilities."
- Furthermore, given the objective of protecting Qiu YiNong, eliminating others aligns with that goal (refer back to the reasoning regarding her protection).

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Qi Yanqing was currently hiding in the laboratory building; seeing Jiang Zhe arrive, he realized Jiang Zhe had been eliminated from the game (had Jiang Zhe deduced the need to protect Qiu Yinong, he would not have been eliminated). Now, Qi needed to decipher the plan devised by Chen Ran and Yue Guanshan.

- For someone who had deduced the answer—and realized that Yue Guanshan and Chen Ran were playing a cat-and-mouse game—the instruction to "use one's full capabilities" would translate into "kill these two individuals" (using a long-range weapon to kill Chen Ran, and poison or arson to kill Yue Guanshan).
    + Thus, poison was the easiest method to kill Yue Guanshan; using poison required visiting the laboratory building. However, if one arrived at the building without knowing they were the designated visitor, they would be eliminated—and an eliminated player would then proceed to protect Qiu Yinong. (SUMMARY)
- The reason Chen Ran and Yue Guanshan dared to employ a "quantum superposition" strategy:

Whoever arrived at the laboratory building first would serve as their pawn.

The reason Chen Ran and Yue Guanshan dared to employ the "quantum superposition" strategy:

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The logic was as follows:

If the first person to reach the laboratory building chose to "use their full ability" to kill those arriving later—capitalizing on the element of surprise and lethality—they could potentially eliminate all 17 others (excluding Qiu YiNong, who would not deduce the answer and thus wouldn't visit the lab) and then proceed to the warehouse to kill the remaining two.

Essentially, those who deduced the answer early would head to the laboratory building and fall into the trap.

However, once more than one person had been eliminated, the first person's "full ability" would shift to hiding inside the laboratory. This was because they couldn't be certain if anyone was lying in wait on the path to the warehouse, and the eliminated players would likely kill them to ensure the answer wasn't revealed to Qiu YiNong.

For the eliminated players, their "full ability" was dedicated to protecting Qiu YiNong:

Since Qiu YiNong was a potential "Player," if she remained alive without deducing the answer, the instance could proceed to the next cycle.

To switch one's status to "Observer" and activate their "full ability," it was necessary to disrupt the "Player" (i.e., Qiu YiNong).

While protecting Qiu YiNong, if an opportunity arose to kill others, their "full ability" would shift to eliminating those individuals; Qiu YiNong would be spared until the very end.

Even if Qiu YiNong were the "Player," there was still a possibility that the person who hadn't arrived yet—or Chen Ran himself—was another "Player" (in fact, the fact that only Chen Ran and Qiu YiNong retained memories of each other confirmed that among the three—Chen Ran, Qiu YiNong, and Yue Guanshan—there were at least two "Players"). Therefore, even if Qiu YiNong died, the instance would still... ...can proceed.

If Qiu YiNong is not a player, revert to Scenario 1.

If a player dies while hunting others, they will clear the instance because they are in the state of "Exerting Full Capability."

Reasons why a non-eliminated player can only kill either Chen Ran or Yue Guanshan at any given time:

If Chen Ran is killed first, Yue Guanshan would realize—upon receiving no further replies from Chen Ran—that Chen Ran had been killed by someone else. Consequently, Yue Guanshan's "Exerting Full Capability" response would be to open the storeroom door and embark on a killing spree. Furthermore, the killer (let's call them A) would certainly know that killing Chen Ran would cause Yue Guanshan to emerge; since A cannot know how many "toys" Yue Guanshan possesses, this action would violate the rule regarding the cherishing of life.

If Yue Guanshan is killed first, the only option is arson (as the building is blocked, preventing access to the poison). However, if arson is committed, Yue Guanshan's "Exerting Full Capability" response would shift to exiting the storeroom (since staying means certain death, while leaving offers a chance of survival) and killing people, thereby violating the rule regarding the use of one's own capabilities.

⇒ Chen Ran and Yue Guanshan would immediately enter a state of immortality and immobility.

⇒ Non-eliminated players could only go into hiding and wait for the next cycle.

For non-eliminated players who have deduced the entirety of Chen Ran and Yue Guanshan's plan, their "Exerting Full Capability" response would be to go into hiding:

Reason:

Chen Ran and Yue Guanshan's plan does not threaten their lives.

If they proceed according to the plan, they have a chance to clear the instance.

Acting as bait to lure someone into deducing the plan to go to the laboratory building and get eliminated—whereupon the eliminated players would then go to protect Qiu YiNong.

Chen Ran's perspective:

- Chen Ran deduced the answer early on; he also inferred—based on Han Phi's death—that someone had visited the supply room to retrieve a weapon. Consequently, his "use of full capability" manifested as him blocking the entrance to the supply room.
- However, unable to confirm whether his role was that of an "Observer," he needed to disrupt Qiu YiNong to prevent her from deducing the answer himself. This allowed him to effectively assume the Observer role and provided a logical reason to guard the entrance to Yue Guanshan's location (thereby protecting Qiu YiNong).

Yue Guanshan's perspective:

- Yue Guanshan could have eavesdropped from a hidden spot to learn the players' names, then visited the administrative office to look up their details, inevitably discovering that Qiu YiNong and Chen Ran were teammates.
- After deducing the answer, Yue Guanshan needed to verify its accuracy; he also took the opportunity to warn the players in the laboratory building that an unaccounted-for individual had arrived there and killed Han Phi.
- Upon killing Han Phi, he lost his memories of the victim, but the prior notes in his notebook provided evidence for the answer. Subsequently, his "use of full capability" shifted toward eliminating the other players, leveraging his head start. Yet, his actions—disrupting Qiu YiNong before

seeking a weapon—could also be interpreted as protecting her, leading to his classification as an Observer. This created a perfect, polarized dynamic with Chen Ran, where their respective "full capabilities" counterbalanced each other (Chen Ran protecting vs. Yue Guanshan killing; Chen Ran seeking a weapon to kill Qiu YiNong vs. Yue Guanshan going to the supply room to destroy the weapons).

Chen Nuo’s Deduction

Chen Nuo arrived at the same conclusion as Tề Nghiễn Thanh (in summary). He had to admit that Chen Ran and the "unidentified individual" were the smartest among the twenty participants; both had chosen the precise moment to execute their plans.

However, Chen Nuo felt that the mechanism for switching roles was highly subjective—on what basis did the instance determine one's identity?

Analyzing Chen Ran’s actions: He used his status as an "Observer" to block the entrance to the tool room. Because he had previously influenced Qiu YiNong, the instance had designated him as an Observer.

Yue Guanshan’s action involved killing someone to transition into the role of an Observer. Had he not killed anyone, the group would have had no way of knowing whether he had died or not; his actions allowed them to deduce the correct premise: there were twenty participants in the instance, and no one had died in previous loops.

After deducing the answer, both individuals took actions to influence Qiu YiNong, thereby becoming Observers.

⇒ To switch roles, one must perform actions consistent with that specific role.

- Player: Strive to kill others while also getting killed.
- Observer: Prevent Qiu YiNong from clearing the instance.

What constituted "interference" with Qiu YiNong? Chen Ran and the unidentified individual provided the answer: protecting Qiu YiNong and preventing her from lying.

- Yue Guanshan committed a murder to remind Qiu YiNong that there were twenty participants, thereby ensuring she wouldn't lie.
- Chen Ran warned Qiu YiNong not to deduce the answer.

This interference triggered a chain reaction among the remaining participants, much like a string of firecrackers going off. As the individuals involved

revealed themselves, the move to protect Thu Yi Nong became a logical necessity: an intervention had prevented her from clearing the stage—though without causing outright failure—forcing her to wait for the next cycle.

Consequently, for the person who had deduced the answer, "giving it their all" meant heading to the broadcasting station to destroy the equipment, thereby ensuring no one could shout the answer to Thu Yi Nong. However, since the station had already been wrecked, the next logical target was the broadcasting equipment storage room—where loudspeakers, audio players, and voice amplifiers were kept—to completely eliminate the possibility of anyone using such devices to relay the answer to her.

Having reached this conclusion, Chen Nuo immediately rushed to the storage room to destroy the equipment before Thu Yi Nong could arrive.

Nan Sheng’s reasoning:

If she were Qiu YiNong—faced with a situation where she was forbidden from deducing the answer herself, yet knew Chen Ran was far more intelligent than her—the most logical choice would be to hide and wait for the loop to reset, leaving all decision-making to Chen Ran. She would let him systematically eliminate the observers while ensuring she never came into contact with the answer herself. In this scenario, the best outcome would be getting killed by Chen Ran or the unknown adversary before she could even deduce the answer, thereby clearing the stage; the worst outcome would simply be standing at the starting line in the final loop alongside Chen Ran and the unknown adversary—putting her at no disadvantage compared to risking a deduction herself from the very beginning.

Put simply: the number of participants is not fixed across the loops. Consequently, as the cycles repeat, everyone other than Chen Ran, Qiu YiNong, and the unknown adversary will eventually perish.

If the unknown adversary still chooses to go to the sports equipment room, Chen Ran will simply block the entrance as before.

In other words, during the final time loop, Qiu YiNong would only need to kill Chen Ran.

That would leave only two people at the scene: Qiu YiNong (who lacks the answer) and "the other person" (who has deduced it).

Qiu YiNong would be guaranteed victory.

Of course, this is an ideal scenario; many variables could still come into play. For instance, in the final loop, the unknown adversary might decide not to go to the equipment room and head elsewhere instead.

However, such variables are actually controllable, provided Chen Ran prevents "the other person" from deducing the most likely reality: that Chen Ran and Qiu YiNong are the players. In other words, Chen Ran had to resolve the issue at the academic affairs office before the other person could make their move...

Regardless, the plan Chen Ran chose was this: Qiu YiNong would kill him. Since Qiu YiNong had not yet deduced the answer, she was not in the "giving it her all" state; therefore, she simply needed to enter the equipment room and be killed by the person who already possessed the answer—and was thus in the "using full capability" state—to clear the game.

Simplified summary:

- For Qiu YiNong: Since Chen Ran warned her against deducing the answer, she refrains from trying to figure it out and instead stays in hiding, waiting for the loops to progress. She leaves the task of handling the situation entirely to Chen Ran, allowing him to gradually eliminate the other observers.
- Ideal scenario: After several loops, only Chen Ran, Qiu YiNong, and the unidentified individual remain. At this stage, both Chen Ran and the other person know the answer, whereas Qiu YiNong does not, keeping her in a safe position.
- Chen Ran’s plan: He intentionally allows Qiu YiNong to kill him. This leaves only Qiu YiNong (who does not know the answer) and the other person (who does).
- Outcome: Because Qiu YiNong never deduced the answer, she does not enter the "Exhausting All Capabilities" state. Upon entering the tool room, the person who knows the answer will be in that "Exhausting All Capabilities" state and will kill Qiu YiNong.

Therefore, within Chen Ran's plan, the only thing Qiu YiNong needed to consider was killing him while he was in his "all-out" state. Chen Ran had revealed a specific weakness to her: his stamina. Given her intelligence, exploiting this vulnerability to gain the upper hand and send him through the stage would be an easy task.

Furthermore, under Chen Ran's scheme, the observers simply needed to faithfully protect Qiu YiNong to guarantee a smooth, worry-free completion of the stage, thereby ensuring they would not interfere with his plan.

The only remaining variable was the person who had not yet arrived.

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As time passed, more and more players deduced the answer. They employed their own methods to shield Qiu YiNong: some scouted the areas she might traverse, erasing any graffiti or utility pole markings that revealed the answer; others ensured no slips of paper fell within her line of sight; some destroyed display screens; and others stood guard at doorways to block entry. In short, they provided 360-degree, airtight protection—actions the instance classified as those of an "observer." Like a photon altered by an observer, Qiu YiNong remained forever unable to access the answer.

Qiu YiNong chose to remain in hiding while the others protected her. Meanwhile, Chen Ran and Yue Guanshan continued to play a game of quantum superposition. Clearly, both were supremely arrogant individuals who held absolute faith in their own ability to predict the future.

Day 2 of the loop

(At this point, only 18 players remained in the instance, as Lam Huyen and Han Phi had been killed and cleared the game in the previous run; since Yue Guanshan would not join the main group, Chen Ran’s faction consisted of 17 people.)

Yue Guanshan woke up in Dormitory Room 403 (dormitories were divided into zones based on majors, year of study, etc.). Checking the time, he saw it was October 4th. He spotted two birds on a power line; certain that the bird facing north would fly first and land on a tree branch, he watched as it happened exactly as he remembered. From this, Yue Guanshan hypothesized that he was either trapped in a time loop or that his memories had been altered.

He made his way to the laboratory building; after checking several rooms, he arrived at Room 4-10 on the fourth floor, where he encountered the double-slit experiment. Afterwards, Yue Guanshan went down to the ground floor and hid in a secluded corner, waiting for someone to arrive.

The difference compared to the previous iteration was that this time, he had killed both of them (Giang Triet and Chu Yinian).

After Chen Ran and the others left the experimental building and found no one else around, Chen Ran arranged to meet Giang Biet Ly and Chu Dich Dinh in the small grove with the intention of killing them.

After killing the two of them, Chen Ran began to ponder the actions of the person who had not yet appeared.

- Logically, killing just one person would have been sufficient to verify his hypothesis; however, since Yue Guanshan killed two, Chen Ran concluded that Yue Guanshan was actively managing the headcount.
- Chen Ran had already deduced that someone was missing—based on the fact that the number of participants in the instance was typically an even number (4, 6, 8, 10, etc.)—but he lacked a definitive answer; Yue Guanshan's act of killing two people provided the concrete evidence he needed to confirm the absence of that one individual.
- The reason Yue Guanshan killed two people during this loop was as follows:
    + If Yue Guanshan had killed one person and Chen Ran had killed another, the total number of participants in the next loop would have been sixteen. Excluding Yue Guanshan, Chen Ran would have perceived fifteen participants—a number that appeared frequently enough to leave him uncertain about whether anyone was actually missing.
    + Yue Guanshan wanted Chen Ran's plan to continue unfolding in subsequent loops.

Clearly, the actions of Yue Guanshan and Chen Ran had diverged from the events of the first loop; despite their memory loss, it appeared they were being influenced by some external force.

—

After countless loops, only eight people remained in the instance.

Seven of them stood at the laboratory building, discussing matters just as they had on the first day. Chen Ran assigned two people to keep watch on the ground floor before entering the building.

Upon reaching Room 4-10 and seeing the double-slit experiment, Chen Ran immediately grew wary; he stepped in front of Qiu YiNong to shield her.

Just as Chen Ran was about to speak, three people pushed the door open and entered: Yue Guanshan and the two guards from earlier.

Yue Guanshan walked over to stand beside Chen Ran. Their positioning at that moment was rather peculiar—standing within the inner semicircle:

Chen Ran gestured for Qiu YiNong to look at him: “Listen very carefully to what I’m about to say.”

Yue Guanshan also signaled for Qiu YiNong to look his way: “Listen closely.”

The remaining five people stood on guard, poised to bolt at a moment's notice.

Chen Ran began to lay out his reasoning—covering everything from his deductive process to the significance of the double-slit experiment—yet he never once uttered the actual answer.

For instance, he mentioned the prohibition against lying—aligning with the characteristics of the Hell of Tongue-Cutting—and the recurring appearance of the number 14.

Since they were all intelligent, the others quickly deduced that this was the Hell of Unjust Deaths, even though Chen Ran never explicitly named it.

Before the others could fully piece together the answer, Chen Ran and Yue Guanshan drew their blades and slit Qiu YiNong’s throat. She offered no reaction, looking dazed and vacant—like a puppet. (Chen Ran had likely taken the knife from the cafeteria and concealed it until they reached the experiment building.)

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Back in the first secret chamber, Qiu YiNong regained consciousness in her body. She saw that Yue Guanshan had lost consciousness, whereas Chen Ran and the others had not. It was clear: only she and Yue Guanshan had entered the instance as actual players; the others were merely constructs created by the instance itself.

Qiu YiNong recalled details from the experiment building. When Chen Ran had told her to listen carefully, he had actually written "In the left ear, out the right" on his palm (implying she should hear the words but not take them to heart or commit them to memory—essentially ignoring them). The message written on Yue Guanshan’s palm was: "Don't deduce anything; don't think at all." Consequently, because Chen Ran did not utter the words "Hell of Unjust Deaths," Qiu YiNong—unable to even form a coherent thought, let alone engage in deduction—failed to figure out the answer. Simply put, the message conveyed by Chen Ran and Yue Guanshan prevented her from deducing the solution or reacting in time to their surprise attack, resulting in her immediate death. Since she never deduced the answer, she never "used her full

capabilities" and thus did not meet the conditions to remain in the Hell of Unjust Deaths; consequently, she cleared the instance.

By preventing her from deducing the answer, Chen Ran and Yue Guanshan had effectively become "Observers." However, the act of killing her caused them to be classified as "Players"; consequently, Qiu YiNong's death would trigger a counterattack from the remaining five individuals.

The logic is straightforward: Chen Ran and Yue Guanshan held the advantage of possessing a weapon, meaning their "full-effort action" would be to eliminate the other five. Once those five were dealt with, the two of them would turn on each other—though the issue remained that they weren't certain they could defeat all five.

Conversely, the group of five held a numerical advantage, so their "full-effort action" would be to kill the two armed individuals.

In other words, both sides satisfied the other's condition for a "full-effort action"—meaning whoever died would successfully clear the level.

Yue Guanshan was cunning; he hijacked the situation from Chen Ran, turning a 1-versus-3 scenario into a 2-versus-5 one—a move that seemed disadvantageous no matter how you looked at it.

Chen Ran leveraged his status as an Observer to engineer a favorable situation (beneficial to his eventual Player status) before making the switch. This was because killing Qiu YiNong automatically transitioned him into a Player.

Furthermore, the behavior of a Player who has deduced the answer requires a "full-effort action." Since he possessed a weapon, Chen Ran's "full-effort action" would normally be to kill the remaining three people; however, with Yue Guanshan's arrival, that action shifted to teaming up with him to eliminate all five.

Simply put, the two used their Observer status to create the perfect environment, then killed Qiu YiNong to switch to Player status and joined forces to eliminate the rest. The method employed by Chen Ran and Yue Guanshan:

As observed in the second loop, Yue Guanshan’s actions deviated from those of the first day; Chen Ran explained to Qiu YiNong that this was the "method of controlling variables" (refer to Chapter 615).

- [That is precisely the case. In other words, right from the very first loop, Chen Ran and Yue Guanshan had clearly defined a specific objective.]

- [That objective was: once only eight people remained, they would stage a final confrontation to clear the trial—right there within the experimental building.]
- [Once this goal was established, even if they lost their memories in the second loop, they would inevitably identify that same objective all over again.]
- [In doing so, they could circumvent the effects caused by the time loop.]

This is easy to understand: given the established objective, the number of people decreases with each loop, inevitably leading to a point where only eight remain.

Once the headcount drops to eight, the participants—driven by the very objective they set—will engage in a final, decisive confrontation.

In other words, the method for controlling variables involves identifying what remains unaffected by the loop and incorporating that element into the plan. This ensures that, even if discrepancies arise during individual loops, the ultimate outcome still fulfills the set objective.

Consider the example Chen Ran cited:

Since the town's population is not reset by the time loop, one can factor the headcount into the objective.

By eliminating individuals to reduce the population, one can—once only oneself and the killer remain—identify the culprit with 100% certainty.

- [The moment they deduced the answer, they immediately mapped out their ultimate objective.]
- [That is, once the instance was reduced to eight participants, they would face off at the laboratory building.]
- [The goal was set.]
- [What they needed next was to...]
- [...disengage themselves from the game.]
- [Regarding Chen Ran: He recognized me from his memories, so he could determine that both of us were likely players.]
- [Regarding Yue Guanshan: He used a different method—likely visiting the administrative office to confirm my acquaintance with Chen Ran—thereby establishing that one or both of us were players.]
- [Things became straightforward. First, they had to ensure that players remained in the instance so it would continue to run.]
- [Consequently, both adopted the behavior of an "observer" to step back from active participation.]

- [Yue Guanshan committed a murder to signal that one person was missing, thereby qualifying as an observer.]
- [As for Chen Ran, he hinted to me in the small grove that the answer shouldn't be deduced, thus also qualifying as an observer.]
- [However, for Chen Ran, merely stepping back wasn't enough; he also had to control fluctuations in the participant count.]
- [Simply put, he couldn't allow other players to kill anyone, or the headcount for the next loop would spiral out of control. That is why he asked everyone if they recognized each other from their memories.]