

48 Hours 511

Chapter 511 Whitechapel Serial Homicides

Zhang Heng tossed a half-pound gold coin to Holmes, the money for the bet they'd made before.

Sherlock took the coin and slipped it into his pocket, a rare contented smile appearing across his face. "Don't be discouraged, my friend from the far-east; you have progressed greatly compared to a few months ago. As I said, you only lack understanding of this city, but these things cannot be rushed. Live in London for three to five years and I'm sure you'll know most of its crooks and nannies."

"But if one wants to surpass the great detective, I am afraid he will need more than three to five years." Zhang Heng said.

"This is something that has always intrigued me." Holmes tore up the remainder of his sandwich and threw tiny bits of it to a flock of feral pigeons nearby. "You seem to be very obsessed, trying to outdo me at every corner. Why is it so important to you?"

"Climbing the highest peak has always been a climber's ultimate dream." Sherlock Holmes smiled. "You flatter me-my eastern friend sees me as the tallest mountain in my field of work." Just when Zhang Heng thought Holmes had changed, he added, "Well, I don't think I can find a detective better than me."

Zhang Heng wanted to defeat Holmes, not because he was dying to be the best detective, but simply because the main mission required it. It was also something he had struggled to complete ever since this game started. It had been more than a hundred days since he entered this world, and fortunately, his extra 24 hours provided him with another 240 days of game time. Nevertheless, after so many cases, he still failed to defeat Holmes even once.

This arrogant, impossible man of a Victorian sleuth was nothing less but a legend.

However, after stripping off the halos surrounding Holmes, living with him for a period allowed Zhang Heng to peer into the real, true person Sherlock Holmes was. He was really just a man, not a god, meaning that even he made mistakes and had his share of weaknesses. Whether he liked it or not, Zhang Heng had to admit that Holmes was leagues ahead of him in a fair contest, not to mention how Holmes was in a familiar setting. There was indeed an apparent gap between the two of them and a rather large one at that.

Zhang Heng never thought he'd never beat Holmes, though.

Holmes's hubris was justified, and as he said, he was truly the best detective of the era. Zhang Heng wasn't that bad, on the other hand. The two were similar in more ways than they'd like to think, both equipped with excellent observation, reasoning, and an uncanny composure under duress.

He was confident that he could fill in the gap between him and Holmes. After completing so many games, Zhang Heng was no longer the innocent student he once was. Based on Holmes's ability to reason, he estimated his criminal investigation skills were probably at the top of Lv.3.

With Irene's assistance, and when his criminal investigation skills had reached Lv. 2, he might just be able to Defeat Holmes. Instead, the competition appeared to have already begun, something Zhang Heng expected would only happen after he had gotten a bit of practice.

“Look at this.”

Holmes handed over the newspapers in his hands to Zhang Heng, “It seems our dull existence about to end soon.”

Zhang Heng took the newspaper, and when he saw the headline, he was stunned.

(The Whitechapel serial murderer has sent a letter of provocation to Scotland Yard. The public hopes the police will apprehend the culprit as soon as possible!)

Seeing the Whitechapel serial murders, Zhang Heng couldn't help but think of an unsolved case. Reading on, the news matched what he was thinking of.

What was London's most infamous criminal case at the end of the 19th century? It was none other than the case of Jack the Ripper.

In just three months, six women were murdered around the Whitechapel area of London's East End (five of the victims were generally thought to be related to Jack the Ripper). All of them were prostitutes and were killed using ruthless and brutal methods. Due to a lack of substantial evidence, the case remained unsolved, and to this day, Jack the Ripper's identity remained a mystery. Many theories subsequently surfaced about who he was, but the case gradually grew cold as time went by.

If Zhang Heng's memory served him right, then Jack the Ripper had started his killing spree in the fall of 1888. It was now in 1881. He surely didn't expect to bump into the case seven years beforehand, though, and realized how this might just turn out to be his golden opportunity. Although hundreds of years had passed, interest in the Whitechapel murders of 1888 hadn't diminished. In fact, Jack the Ripper remained a hot topic that would be fervently discussed among future generations, where numerous films and novels depicting him sprouted like mushrooms after the rain in the modern world.

Whether police, detectives, or fanboys, they had always sought to find the real serial killer. No matter how compelling some of the theories were, none were convincing and conclusive. It meant the gap between Holmes and Zhang Heng had finally drawn closer. Holmes had the home advantage, but Zhang Heng was equipped with all kinds of weird fan-based theories that later generations had come up with. Zhang Heng knew very well that this game wasn't going to be so simple as the previous ones.

The victims, for instance, all the names of the victims, differed from the original cases. Jack the Ripper would choose his target randomly, and since his killing spree had started seven years earlier, many victims of the actual cases hadn't even began becoming prostitutes yet. Thus, these women wouldn't be the targets of Jack the Ripper. This time, intervals between the prostitute murders had increased significantly. Thus far, three people had already been killed in just half a month. Meanwhile, news publishers had also received the first letter with a “Dear Boss” written on it.

The murderer's arrogant attitude shook up the entire Scotland Yard. Most didn't think that the murderer himself wrote the letter. As a result of the many unknowns, panic began to fester withing the East End bowels, amongst them, prostitutes and women that lived alone. The police had also started to receive flak for the way the case was handled.

No wonder Holmes said his boring life was over after he read the news. The two did not stay in the park any longer, where Holmes hurriedly flagged down a carriage to return to 221B Baker Street. As he

expected, two other carriages were parked by the side of the road. "It seems that we have many visitors today," Holmes said while knocking on the door.

The door opened to a very disturbed Mrs. Hudson. Obviously, she had never witnessed a scene as such before. Seeing Zhang Heng and Holmes had returned, she let out a massive sigh of relief.

"Thank god, you two are back! I have never seen so many police in my life! I wouldn't be too worried about Zhang Heng being the good, law-abiding, courteous man he is. As for our Mr. Holmes, what trouble have you caused us again?"

"Don't worry. This is work!" Holmes chuckled delightfully, adding, "And what a terrible judge of character you are! Our eastern friend here is not as harmless as you thought, Mrs. Hudson. You have never seen his performance in the boxing ring. He is a total beast."

Chapter 512 Handwriting

Zhang Heng and Holmes entered the living hall, and 221 Baker Street was as Mrs. Hudson had described—unusually crowded.

Apart from the familiar faces of Gregson and Lestrade, even the deputy chief of police was there, and it was plainly written on his face that he was in a rotten mood. Seeing their chief pace back and forth by the window, none of the officers dared ensconce themselves on the settee either.

So, the whole group of men stood around the drawing-room. Though plenty of seating was available, no one dared to rest their bums. It was quite a funny sight, except that no one was laughing—every face in the room displayed an expression of grim and solemnness.

Only when Holmes walked in did the group unanimously let out an audible sigh of relief.

"It looks like none of you have been sleeping well these days," said Holmes. "Lestrade, did you have oatmeal and omelet for breakfast?"

"It's not the time for jokes!" the small, wiry inspector smiled bitterly.

The deputy chief looked up at Holmes like a drowning man clutching at a straw. He marched toward the private detective, offered a hand, and chirped cordially, "I've heard a lot about you! Lestrade, Hopkins, and the others often mentioned you, telling me that you're the best detective London has ever seen, possibly even Europe! Also, we haven't had the time to thank you properly for your assistance in the Thames case."

"Oh, it is all but a minor matter." Holmes returned the chief's handshake before motioning his guest to take a seat.

Only when their deputy sat down did the rest of the Scotland Yarders finally rest their feet.

The deputy chief had apparently done his homework before coming to Baker Street. It was already informed of the Eastern detective who worked alongside Holmes—the reason why he made no comment on the matter and dove straight into the issue at hand. He looked at Holmes with eyes filled with anticipation.

"I believe you are aware of the reason for our visit."

“The Whitechapel homicide,” Holmes smiled, reaching for his pipe. “I saw it in the newspapers.” He paused for a minute, then continued, “Left-handed, male, between the ages 30 and 40, not the most steadfast of characters, unstable, is traditional and conservative.”

“How could you tell?” The deputy chief shook his head, looking stumped but impressed. “We haven’t even presented the case to you. Or, could you have covertly been to the scene? In fact, information published on the papers has been somewhat tweaked, not to conceal the truth, but to curb unnecessary unrest from brewing among the public.”

Holmes pointed at a picture of the article with his pipe. “This might have been edited, but the picture is real. All my inferences are based not on the article’s description but rather on the handwriting on the letter sent to the publisher.”

“Oh?!” The deputy chief exclaimed, bemused. “You could tell all from the handwriting alone?”

“Of course. Just like art, a good graphologist can see beyond the literal word.”

The deputy chief looked skeptical, so Holmes took the initiative to explain his deduction. “I won’t talk about age—it’s going to be rather troublesome. If you’re really interested to know, look it up in the paper I published two years ago. There is an obvious disparity between the handwriting of the old and the young. Theoretically, the age of an author could be told from their handwriting. Of course, learning all these takes a lot of practice. Telling apart the handwriting of a male and female is elementary since each gender has their own aesthetic deviations. A lefty is easy to tell as well. Notice those ink stains on the letter? When you write with your left hand, the side of palm tends to rub against the paper, which is why there are smeared blotches all over the letter.”

“Then what about the theory of the killer being weak of character, unstable and conservative? How were you able to tell?” asked the deputy chief in even more intrigue than he already was.

“Notice that the tall letters are not the same height as the short ones—see how his d’s look like a’s, and the i’s and e’s are the same sizes. People with strong personalities tend to write with a clear distinction between the short and tall alphabets. As presented here, this shows the exact opposite of that. Similarly, you can see that his k’s are all written in different sizes, implying that he has an unstable personality. But the capitals are elegant, an indication he is a conservative person.

“That’s everything I could deduce from the handwriting. But your doubts are not unfounded, and since there no evidence points to the writer of this letter being the murderer, we cannot rule out the possibility of someone trying to meddle with the police.”

The deputy chief candidly responded, “You have proven more than once that you are good at what you do. I’ll be frank here and tell you that the police are under great pressure to solve this case, not only from the parliament but also from Her Majesty the Queen herself. She has decreed that we solve the case within a specific period, but so far, we haven’t found any leads yet. You know what the East End is like—complicated and a cesspool of criminals and their offspring. Gregson and his men have identified a few suspects, but one after another, they were ruled out. Now, we have... lost our bearings, so we’ve come to you for help. If we can solve the case on schedule, we will reward you handsomely!”

“You’re too kind,” Holmes nodded, bowing politely. “I happen to be very interested in this case if I say so myself—even if I don’t get paid, I would still do it.”

The deputy chief was ecstatic to hear the private detective's answer. "That's absolutely wonderful! This is the best thing I've heard all day! It's almost noon now, and I've booked a table at a restaurant for you and your friend..."

Holmes interrupted the deputy, "I'm the type who forgets everything else the moment he starts working. Thus, there is no need to eat. In fact, we should begin now, if possible."

"Oh? That's even better, even better!" the deputy chief nodded vigorously. "I heard that you know Lestrade and the lot. If there's anything you need, just give them the orders then. As long as it's within our capability, we will do our best to provide you whatever assistance you require." Lestrade and other officers flushed with embarrassment. It wasn't as if the Scotland Yarders hadn't approached Holmes for help; it was because it made them look ignominious they might as well have publicly announced the incompetence of London police. On top of that, they could also clearly hear the disapproving tone in their deputy chief's voice when he mentioned the Yarders.

Holmes said nothing about it, though. Getting up from his seat, he said, "Well, gentlemen, if that's the case, let's get to work!"

Chapter 513 Autopsy

After the visit to Sherlock Holmes, the Deputy Commissioner hurriedly left, dealing with pressure from the media and the parliament. The other officers returned to their jobs, too, leaving only Lestrade in the apartment.

Although solving Whitechapel's serial killings had suddenly become the police task force's top priority, it certainly didn't mean they could abandon all their other duties and cases. As the largest city in Europe and the world, police work was challenging, to say the least, not to mention how it was now an eventful season for the city. Whitechapel's homicides spurred a flurry of copycats, serving to rile up potential criminals tempted to commit evil. Coupled with the growing panic among its citizens, the entire London police force was forced to cancel their vacations and return to work.

Lestrade had been following up with the Whitechapel cases since the first murder appeared. He was also the person who knew the case best. Naturally, he was the best candidate to stick around and help the two sleuths.

The three got out of the carriage, and there was a morgue not far away. So far, three women had been killed, all ranging from ages 34 to 50. The first two victims' bodies had been returned to their families for their final rites, and the third victim was killed two days ago. No family came forward to claim her body, and it was still there as a result.

When Sherlock Holmes was about to enter the morgue, he was stopped by Zhang Heng.]

"Can you give us some time?"

Lestrade gestured politely with his hands, stepped aside, and waited patiently.

"For this case... I hope the two of us can work separately," said Zhang Heng to Holmes. "Oh?" Holmes asked with a curious look, "...why?"

"I would simply like to verify what I have learned during this time."

Holmes looked into his eyes, leaving Zhang Heng to wonder if Sherlock Holmes had seen through him. However, in the end, Holmes just smiled, saying, "Fine. The more, the merrier. Your joining only serves to make this matter more interesting. If that's the case, let's bet on who catches the murderer first. The loser is doomed to supply two tickets to an opera at the Queen's Theater."

"Are grand plays a new addiction of yours?" Zhang Heng didn't hesitate and agreed to the bet.

The conversation between the two took less than a minute. They then called Lestrade back, and the latter started to introduce the case.

"The deceased was called Bernice, a 46-year-old woman. Like the two previous victims, she was also a prostitute living in the East End's worst parts. Her body was found at the fence behind the cheap apartment where she lived. She was first discovered by a coachman who went by the name of Slater. We can technically rule him out as a suspect."

The stumpy police officer lifted the shroud covering the body and continued. "Our pathologist estimates that she was killed was around five in the morning. Her neck was slit by a sharp knife, hence the cause of death. The modus operandi is similar to the other two murders that we encountered before this. After she died, the murderer mutilated her body. When the coachman found her, a section of her bowels had been thrown over her right shoulder."

As he explained the gruesome murder, Lestrade passed some photos of the scene to Holmes and Zhang Heng.

"The difference is that part of her uterus and abdomen had also been cut away. This piece of the puzzle baffles us. I simply can't imagine why the murderer would go to this end.. what was his purpose?" Lestrade went on, unable to stop a hint of concern and anxiety from seeping through his composed nature.

Holmes's eyes lit up, but he did not rush to say anything. Instead, he asked Zhang Heng, "You go first, or me?"

"You go first." Zhang Heng was still studying the photos, including that of the two previous victims. He looked hard, sifting through them, trying not to miss out on even the slightest detail. At the same time, he was interested to know how his inferences compared to those of later generations.

It wasn't that Zhang Heng didn't realize how unrealistic beat Sherlock Holmes by relying on his Lv.1 criminal investigation skills. He hadn't the slightest room for faults this round, not to mention how letting Holmes go first was actually a strategic move so he could observe where he placed his attention.

On the other hand, Holmes wasn't the least bothered by the fact that he had to go first. He immediately took out the magnifying glass he often used from his pocket and walked to the body. Suddenly, Holmes seemed to transform into this incredibly sharp hunting hound, sniffing around the corpse in excitement. He even put his face up to the rotting body, although the putrid odor is emitted. Five minutes later, Holmes put away the magnifying glass with a look of satisfaction on his face. It was now Zhang Heng's turn.

As if the start of a boxing match, Zhang Heng inhaled sharply as he closed in on the corpse. In the past few months of tailing Holmes, he had gained heaps of valuable knowledge, where he made significant progress in anatomy, forensic anthropology, and wound inspection. All these meant that the body in front of him was now a treasure trove filled with clues, and he was equipped with the right tools to harvest them.

He first noticed a foul stench of alcohol in the air and later found the deceased's skin to be reddish, suspected to be caused by telangiectasia. Combined with the smell of alcohol, this indicated that the victim had a long-term drinking habit. Later Zhang Heng also noticed the fatal wound on the neck. It wasn't clean-cut and straightforward, but the murderer had brutally sliced and butchered the neck to the point her head was almost severed.

Other than the apparent wounds, noticeable strangulation marks were also apparent on the neck. Zhang Heng frowned. Those were the marks of a rope or a hand. It looked more like a handkerchief caused it. Zhang Heng remembered a rumor that claimed Jack the Ripper to a woman, but such a conclusion was too premature with only a handkerchief as evidence.

Zhang Heng remembered Holmes' warning that detectives were required to be absolutely rational and objective when handling a case. One couldn't afford to have preconceived ideas. This sort of reasoning involved using clues to eliminate irrelevant evidence, eventually leading to the indisputable answer. If one was subjectively biased when gathering evidence, it only served to stray them further away from the truth.

So Zhang Heng set aside all the clues he'd found so far and continued examining the body. In addition to wounds on the victim's lower abdomen and neck, there were injuries to her neck and face.

"It can be seen that the murderer has a real disdain toward prostitutes," Lestrade, who was leaning against the wall, sighed. "Otherwise, he wouldn't have done anything like this to her. I have been an officer for so many years, and I have never seen anyone treating another person like this."

Zhang Heng did not respond, turning to look at the scratches on her face in silence. He then looked down, before finally, his eyes locked onto her abdominal cavity. The uterus is an extraordinary organ, the origin of life. A human fetus is conceived here. It could be seen that this serial killer had a special liking for this organ unique to a female. In the first murder, the victim's throat was slit, and there were a dozen stab wounds on her body. As for the second victim, her abdomen was slit open, and her uterus was also stabbed. For the third victim, the serial killer went one step further and cut off half of the uterus. Like a prospective miner, the demented killer had just strolled into an endless goldmine, digging out their innermost desires from the depths of her very bowels.

Chapter 514 Cooling-Off Period

It was in the opinion of many people that serial killers were absolute lunatics or unhinged, cold-blooded thugs.

The fact was that it wasn't an accurate representation. Serial killers weren't all the same. Studies have shown that a number of them come in the form of highly educated idealists who have a high sense of morality, even willing to sacrifice themselves in pursuit of the truth they so desperately sought.

They often came as good-looking, well-dressed, and well-spoken individuals with stable careers and closed interpersonal relationships. As for how they ended up being serial killers, the reasons varied from one individual to another.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation defines a serial killer as a person who has murdered three or more people, with a cooldown period between the crimes. Unlike mass killers, they would carry out massacres in one place in a short period, or spree-killers who murdered in a frenzy.

Jack, the Ripper, was your textbook serial killer.

His crimes only occurred within the confines of Whitechapel, and he had a consistent behavioral pattern. According to Lestrade, among the three murders that had taken place within half a month, there was a ten-day gap between the first and the second, but the third murder happened only five days after that.

It was clear that the rate of murders was accelerating

Whether the killings were for a mission, entertainment, ideals, or only a career choice, the killer got a certain kind of satisfaction from the act itself.

It wasn't dissimilar to those addicted to video games or patroning brothels, where serial killers were simply addicted to killing people. Every time after visiting a brothel, most people would have a so-called refractory period, and similar to that, the "cooling-down period" was like a serial murderer's refractory period.

After each murder, the killer's excitement would peak before gradually deflating. They would relive the experience and continue to learn until their next crime was due.

This phenomenon proved to be little more than troublesome, considering how you'd be facing a constantly evolving enemy—the shortening cool-down period a tell-tale sign of the declining emotional stimulation and gratification that each murder granted the killer. For that reason, the murderer would need to kill even more frequently to ease the gradually intensifying cravings.

If Zhang Heng remembered correctly, two more murders occurred in the East End on the third day after the first letter. However, one of those crimes was different from the rest—modern-day researchers concluded that this particular case wasn't the work of Jack the Ripper himself. But it was unclear if it a copycat or if someone was trying to rock the boat, taking advantage of the chaos to kill before putting the blame on Jack the Ripper. In short, Zhang Heng didn't have much time to solve the case. If possible, he wished that no more murder victims turned up. The best-case scenario was to find the murderer within three days. Of course, now that the rate of the killings had only gotten more frequent, he might not even have three days to solve this. Not to mention how he was competing against the formidable Sherlock Holmes.

Zhang Heng got to work immediately. After examining the body in the morgue, he went straight to the crime scene. But whatever that had happened there had long been cleaned up, and all the evidence collected by the police. There was still small traces of blood on the ground, but other than that, not many clues were left. After a visit to all three murder sites, it was clear from the locality of the crime scenes that the murderer was only getting bolder. He had moved from dark and dingy alleyways to a loading area, then to the fence behind the apartment—each new murder having a possibility of being

discovered than the last. Zhang Heng marked the three locations on the map, then going by Lestrade's addresses, he visited witnesses who discovered the bodies and the last person who saw the victims alive. Unsurprisingly, having been harassed and bombarded with questions by reporters, police, and nosy curtain-twitchers, the witnesses were immediately put-off by Zhang Heng the moment he revealed the purpose of his visit.

When he took out a gold coin from his pocket, though, their attitudes took an almost instant turn. The once hostile witnesses become hospitable again and readily regurgitated answers they had been repeating so many times before this.

The police reports had actually provided all these facts, and Zhang Heng had already read them, so that wasn't his focus.

Thanks to the generations of fans inspired by Jack The Ripper, Zhang Heng already had a list of suspects. The specific names and ages may not be useful, but their corresponding occupation and motives are made for a great reference.

For instance, a retired sheriff believed that Jack the Ripper was a sailor on a German merchant ship since the Whitechapel district was very close to the pier. The arrival and departure of the merchant ship from London coincided with the time the victims were killed. He speculated that the murderer was probably a seaman. As for the killer's mysterious disappearance and the fact that no further crimes were committed afterward, the sheriff surmised that the murderer must have fled to the United States.

Zhang Heng could then use this information during his interviews with the witnesses and enquire if they saw any sailors around the victim's last seen location on the night of the incident.

There were other theories like the royal conspiracy theories, the barber theory, midwife theory-all of these a sort of collective intelligence. Each approach had a corresponding entry point, but the results, on the whole, weren't ideal. The witnesses spewed all manner of claims, and the ramblings weren't nearly good enough to form a firm conclusion.

Zhang Heng realized that he might be heading in the wrong direction, but he had to give it a try anyhow since he had the advantage.

He had been so busy the whole day that he forgot to eat his lunch. In a blink of an eye, the sun was already hanging low, so Zhang Heng decided to call it a day. He had been to many places today, and he had managed to collect a diverse and extensive chest of information. It was time to stop for now and sort his thoughts out.

When Zhang Heng returned to 221 Baker Street, Holmes had already finished his dinner and was tackling a dessert plate with a fork. He did not seem to be in a hurry.

"How was your investigation today?"

"I don't have any leads for now. What about you?"

"I've found a handy clue, and I'm digging deeper into it. I should have the results tomorrow," Holmes smiled. "Would you like me to give you a few tips, my dear eastern friend?"

Zhang Heng shook his head.

“The one who sprints first might not be the first to reach the finishing line.”

“That’s true, but the person who runs first would always hold an advantage. I’m already choosing the opera we’ll be watching,” interjected Holmes as Zhang Heng seated himself across the table.

Mrs. Hudson walked in carrying dinner. It was smoked bacon, peas and bread, and a few pieces of fruit. The dessert was pudding. Zhang Heng finished his meal quickly, wiped his mouth, and returned to his room. He took out the revolver he had bought three months ago, a kerosene lamp and a knife.

Holmes raised his eyebrows in surprise at the sight of Zhang Heng’s gear.

“Going out again?”

“Mhmm. The murderer may be on the prowl. Even if I don’t find him, I could at least inspect the environment and condition of the crime scene at night,” Zhang Heng added after a pause. “Also, I could use the chance to understand the sex workers in a deeper fashion.”

“Not bad,” applauded Holmes. “You’re becoming more assimilated to this city.”

Chapter 515 I Have A Few Questions To Ask You

The East and West Ends were like two completely different worlds come nightfall.

Only one street lamp still glowed, and the rest were either broken or vandalized. Until now, no one took the initiative to repair them. Hence, a many spots were left dark and unlit. The low, squalid, dilapidated buildings, uneven roads, and dark alleys made navigating around the area an awful nightmare. After the Whitechapel serial killings, the police sent an entire battalion to strengthen waning security.

Up until now, Zhang Heng had come across two teams of very serious-looking police officers. They sternly held onto their batons while a whistle hung around their necks, ready to be blown at the earliest sign of trouble. No matter how many officers were deployed, making them patrol the area seemed to yield pointless results. They couldn’t keep their eyes on every street corner. More importantly, the police simply couldn’t maintain such intensive patrols for an extended period.

In fact, the police had increased their workforce when the second murder case surfaced. Thus far, they still hadn’t found any leads, and instead, a large number of low-level officers had started complaining about the dreary working hours and how they simply weren’t paid enough. Before the murders, patrol officers typically headed to the tavern for a cool-down and a pint amid their patrols. After the series of brutal killings, none were inclined to pull such stunts anymore.

Zhang Heng still wore the old coat he bought when he first arrived, and Irene had also given him the scarf she wore when she masqueraded as a gypsy busker. Coupled with his recently mastered makeup skills, few would doubt that he wasn’t from around here.

Zhang Heng first headed to the location of the most recent homicide. This particular spot had now become the focus of the police. Since residents inhabiting the area had done well to avoid the place at all costs, Zhang Heng could stand quietly behind the fence during the day without having anyone to bother him. During the day, he attempted to identify the soil using the method that Sherlock Holmes taught him. However, that provided him with little useful information because the entire East End’s

infrastructure was in shambles. Puddles and mud smeared every inch of the road, and even if the murderer's shoes were stained with dirt, it was no longer reliable evidence.

At night, Zhang Heng came here to look at the lights, curious to know if the nearby houses were lighted at that time. To avoid unnecessary trouble, he trod lightly, careful not to overstay his welcome. He quickly walked out from behind the apartment, and it was about then that he spotted a girl in her early twenties on the side of the road. She had an old coat draped over her shoulders, and she lugged around a wine bottle in her hand. When she saw Zhang Heng, she took the initiative, saying, "Hi?"

Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows, feeling amused, and flabbergasted.

"Exciting, isn't it; I won't let you down!" The girl's smile seemed somewhat forced.

"Since you know about the recent tragedy here, you should have stayed home," said Zhang Heng.

"I need to pay for rent and food. I just borrowed this half bottle of wine from someone," replied the girl. Her English sounded like she wasn't from this country, a heavy accent embedded among her words.

"No matter what happens in this world, we have to keep working, don't we?"

"Well, at least stay in a crowded place, or with your companions, perhaps. You will feel safer."

"This line of work is not as simple as you think it is. We, the prostitutes, have our designated territories. I am just a foreigner who arrived here not too long ago. They will definitely not accept me," the girl sadly related, "I can only linger in places they won't go. Anyway, what are you thinking?"

"You shouldn't be here," said Zhang Heng lightly. "Know what kind of men come here at this hour?"

"They say a murderer wouldn't commit two crimes at the same spot."

The girl's body had been trembling a little from the beginning, and obviously, she wasn't as bold as she seemed on the surface.

"That's right, but, ever thought that even if that serial killer doesn't come here, there will be others with ill intentions dropping by this place. Behind every famous serial killer lies many impersonators. You being here provides them the opportunity to honor their idol by killing you," said Zhang Heng as he took half a step towards the girl. The girl could not help but gasp in shock, subconsciously stepping back. Zhang Heng then took the half-finished bottle of wine from her and looked at the label. "Do you usually drink this kind of wine?"

"That's right." The girl replied, her eyes darting around wildly, scanning her surroundings to see if there were passing cops. Zhang Heng opened the cork and smelled the bottle's contents. "How much can you make in one night?"

"Huh?" The girl pondered for a while. "Three or four pennies. If I am lucky or if someone is generous, I may be able to earn more. Or I can meet several customers in one night."

Zhang Heng then threw a half-pound gold coin to the girl.

"Come with me tonight." The girl was thrilled at the prospect of earning a gold coin. No wealthy men were living in the East End, which was the first time encountering such a generous and rich customer.

However, she later recalled what Zhang Heng said. Her heart sank instantly. She was not that valuable, anyway. To be more precise, she possessed nothing of value as well, except for her own life. "Don't overthink it. I just want to ask you a few questions," Zhang Heng reassured the frightened girl. "I guess you haven't had dinner? Let's look for a place to get something to eat."

The girl only hesitated for less than half a second before she decided to go with Zhang Heng. Like what she had said earlier, she knew the risks of following a stranger. That said, she was willing to risk her life to put some food into her very empty stomach. Such was probably the fate of people like her.

Zhang Heng saw many other prostitutes while he was heading to the restaurant. They posed and slithered seductively, doing everything they could to attract potential customers in the pubs and alleys. That included some older women that were in their 50s and 60s. Logically, they should have laid low after Jack the Ripper went on a rampage, and the streets would only be safe after the authorities arrested the serial killer. To Zhang Heng's surprise, none of them stopped work.

The one thing more terrifying than Jack the Ripper was life itself.

"Once you get yourself into this line of work, it's tough to get out. Think of it as being trapped in the mud. Since you can't get out, you can only watch yourself sink slowly."

This was what an experienced colleague told her when she first entered this line of work. The latter died of typhoid fever three months ago, all alone in her home when her life fizzed out. No one knew she was dead until the rent collector knocked on her door two days after her death. The girl did not want to end up like her when she became old.

However, reality had always proven to be the harshest of teachers. She was not good at talking like the others, and in her younger days, she didn't get to earn much. Once she became older, lesser and lesser customers would want her for business.

Her mood became even worse when she thought of this. Suddenly, Zhang Heng spoke up.

"How should I address you?"

Chapter 516 Key Questions

"Noomi, I'm from Sweden," the girl replied, licking her lips.

Seeing that she was still a little uneasy, Zhang Heng produced a cigarette from his pocket and handed it to her. She thanked him graciously, but it wasn't until the cigarette touched her lips that she realized something odd. She then asked slowly and cautiously, "You... How did you know I smoke?"

"It's simple. Although you haven't smoked in a while, your teeth are still yellowish, and the holes on your clothes are the result of cinders burning through them," Zhang Heng said. After that, he paused for a while, noticing how his mannerism had become more and more similar to Holmes. It was probably because they had been living together for some time now.

On the other hand, Holmes was no exception to Zhang Heng's influence, greatly interested in his fighting style and having started indulging in rock climbing lessons.

Noomi's surprise brought Zhang Heng back to reality, "Oh, what is your profession? You have an excellent observation."

“Detective. Actually, I came to investigate Bernice’s death. Oh, and the two victims before her as well.”

“Are you a detective?”

Noomi was relieved. “No wonder you went to that place. I overheard the men in the tavern saying the police have locked on to a suspect. They all said that the devil is doomed.”

Zhang Heng wasn’t allowed to comment on this matter. It had always been the usual practice of Scotland Yard, where they would first release a batch of vague information to stabilize the situation. It was done to put the public at ease, which would otherwise have ended up in panic and hysteria. As far as these murders were concerned, only they knew how far along the investigation was, so far.

“I am just helping out,” Zhang Heng was forced to say. “Before the murderer is arrested, I would advise you to be more vigilant about your safety.”

Noomi wasn’t the least bothered.

“Not only are the girls in a state of constant fear in a time like this, but our business has greatly deteriorated as well. Everyone hates that guy. Anyway, it’s not easy for me to get a customer, and I can’t be bothered by other things. Of course, if everyone is as generous as you, my life would have been much easier.”

Zhang Heng did not say anything after that. He chose to change the subject, “Do you know all the three victims?”

Noomi hesitated, “As I said, even the prostitutes have their territory. I’m not familiar with the first and third girls, but I live quite close to her with the second victim. We even cross paths sometimes...”

Zhang Heng swiftly retrieved information about the second victim from his mind.

“Edna? What do you know about her?”

Noomi pondered for a while. “I heard that she had an Indian boyfriend, and he worked in a glass factory. But he was no good to Edna. He was a violent drunkard, bludgeoning her up every time he had too much to drink.” Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows. This was a new clue. The police had also found out about Edna’s boyfriend, but they did not know about the latter’s violent tendencies, nor did they know that the two had conflicts before. That said, it was highly unlikely that Edna’s boyfriend was Jack the Ripper. The police had an excellent job of covering all the aspects of their investigation. On the night of Edna’s death, Jack was drinking at the bar with someone, leaving more than a dozen witnesses to prove his alibi.

It was a good sign, though. Zhang Heng’s decision to approach the prostitute could prove vital to the investigation, and thus, he continued his interrogation.

“Any other information?”

Noomi shook her head. “I don’t know Edna too well. This is how we usually behave in this line... every woman for herself, looking out for themselves first. We usually have no time to stick our noses in the affairs of others. Oh, one more thing! I’m not sure if this helps, but I heard that Edna had a child before she met her boyfriend, but she sent it back to her birthplace.” “Oh?”

This time, Zhang Heng's interest was truly aroused.

Back in the real world, someone had managed to summarize the similarities between the victims of the Whitechapel homicides. Other than the fact that they were all prostitutes, most of them suffered from moderate to severe alcoholism. Otherwise, they would be living with at least one drunkard and even had offspring as well. In the three homicides, Zhang Heng was currently investigating, the victims' names and ages had been altered to some extent. However, alcoholism and cohabitation were two factors that remained unchanged. The second victim, however, was the only one with a child.

Nonetheless, the information provided by Noomi now filled the gaps in dotting Zhang Heng's investigation.

As of now, Zhang Heng was confident Jack the Ripper didn't select his targets based on the difficulty of achieving his goal. When he was hunting, he did abide by a set of strict guidelines. Or at least for the first few crimes that he committed, he carefully selected his targets. When the authorities started to close upon him, he would then abandon some of his rules to stay afloat.

So the question was, how did he acquire information about his targets?

According to Noomi, there were territorial boundaries, even among the prostitutes. They were usually unfamiliar with their counterparts from a different territory, and it just happened that Jack the Ripper committed the crime in a vast area. Not to mention how only a few people knew that the second victim had a child. At most, it was just a rumor that was spread among the inner circles.

The prostitutes were considered the group of people who belonged to the lowest of society's lows even if they lived at the East End. However, the men that live here still needed their services. No one would care about their affair other than their bodies. Even if one met up with them every night, they would not know their living conditions, families, and interpersonal relationships.

A man deliberately collecting all this information would surely attract attention. Although the police officers of Scotland Yard were not as capable as Sherlock Holmes, they were more diligent than expected. It would be impossible for such a person to exist without catching their eye.

The case was beginning to get more and more interesting. Zhang Heng realized that if he could find the answer to this question, he might not be far away from finding Jack the Ripper.

Seeing that Zhang Heng had paused and seemed to be thinking about something else, Noomi became a little nervous. "Sorry, I'm not bright, and I don't have many friends. Did I manage to help in any way?" "No, you did a great job. Have we arrived at the restaurant? Let's have dinner first, and let's stop talking about homicides. Let's talk about your daily routine."

"My daily life?" Noomi was bewildered. She has been in this business for so long and had encountered many strange requests. No one, however, had asked her such a common question. It was then that a look of sudden realization flashed across her face.

"Oh, you want to know about my customers and me..."

"No, no, I don't want to know about that. I want to know about your hobbies, places you would go to every day, people you meet, and so on. I don't need the details," Zhang Heng explained. He simply

wanted to learn more about the prostitutes through Noome. From there, he hoped to find how Jack the Ripper selected his targets.

Chapter 517 Same Starting Point

Zhang Heng returned to 221b Baker Street at four in the morning. It had been a peaceful and uneventful night at Whitechapel, and the only real bother were a few drunks fighting in the alley behind the pub. As soon as the police arrived, everyone disappeared from the street except for the wasted ones, to sloshed to even wake up. Nothing else happened after that.

After sending Naomi back to her place, he headed home to bed. At seven o'clock, three hours later, his eyes flipped open.

As he walked out of his room, where Holmes, as usual, had already finished breakfast and was smoking his pipe, flipping through the day's newspapers. "Good morning."

"Morning." Zhang Heng sat down at his usual seat, rang the bell, and waited for Mrs. Hudson to bring his breakfast to the table.

"You came back rather late yesterday night. How did it go? Please don't tell me you still found nothing. I had high expectations of you," remarked Holmes as he turned a page, his eyes still fixed to newsprint.

"I have found one very important clue. I have a general idea of how the killer selects his targets." "Oh?" Holmes straightened up, finally tearing his gaze away from the newspaper. He looked at Zhang Heng "Pray, tell."

"Don't forget that we're now in competition against each other. If you want to know, you should go find out yourself," Zhang Heng answered.

Holmes burst into laughter. "Are you still mad at me for choosing the opera ahead of time? Alright, I take back what I said. But I've also managed to learn a lot of things. If that's the case, let's see who finds the answer first then." He put down the papers in his hand, fetched his hat and walking stick from the hanger, and said to Zhang Heng, "I must admit, you're putting me under a bit of pressure. It seems I'll have to raise my game."

"Hopefully, you can still catch up," said Zhang Heng with a grin on his face.

By the time he finished his breakfast, it was seven-fifteen. Quite some time had passed since Holmes left. Zhang Heng lingered at the breakfast table for a while and began sorting his thoughts. What he had said to Holmes wasn't in any way an exaggeration. In fact, he did discover a lot of things last night, especially after his talk with Naomi. He found a precious piece of information. According to her, churches of the East End wouldn't accept girls in her trade, except for a tiny chapel known as The Church of the Sacred Heart. The priest treated the prostitutes as equals, and when some of them had no place to go, he often allowed them to spend the night at the church. On top of that, the generous clergy periodically passed out loaves of bread to the starving women when he had the opportunity.

Naomi might not realize something amiss, but Zhang Heng sensed it clearly enough.

He finally found the answer he had been searching for the whole night.

Who could approach these prostitutes openly without attracting attention? The answer had actually been staring him in the face the whole time—a clergyman. In fact, there wasn't even the need to deliberately collect information about these women since they actively sought the parish out to reveal all their secrets no holds barred during confession sessions anyway. Zhang Heng looked at his pocket watch but did not leave immediately, knowing that the Church of the Sacred Heart wasn't yet open at this hour.

While waiting, he briefly planned his next move. After that, he put on last night's gear again and called for a carriage.

When he arrived at his destination, a familiar face showed up at the steps of the church.

Holmes was standing outside the door, watching him, wearing the most intrigued look on his face.

"Interesting. While we both chose to go in different directions, it appears we still ended up in the same place." Zhang Heng felt a little frustrated. He had tried his best to race against time, even successfully obtaining the information he wanted, but despite all the effort, he was unable to curb Holmes's unrelenting progress.

The skills of this Victorian detective could never disappoint.

"Well, should we exchange information we have before we go in?" suggested Holmes.

Zhang Heng considered the proposal and agreed, albeit reluctantly.

Unlike during the previous cases they worked on, where Holmes would candidly explain his reasoning and Zhang Heng would employ them in the investigation, the pair was now in a short-term alliance. This fair transaction of information shouldn't affect the final outcome. But then, the question remained, that if the both of them caught the killer together, who would be considered the winner?

At this juncture, there was simply no point in thinking about it.

"I'll go first," declared Zhang Heng. He gave a quick summary of the information he gathered from Naomi and also his own interpretation of it. "Also, the wounds on the victims' faces—the first one was a little vague, but the knife marks on the second and third victims were crisscrossed. They looked very familiar when I first saw it, and now that I think about it, it resembled a cross. The murderer is likely to be a religious person."

"Impressive analysis and reasoning!" Holmes exclaimed, "I am very glad your work yesterday bore fruit! Mine is relatively simple. I went to the newspaper's publisher in the afternoon."

"The newspaper?" "Yes, I noticed some red ink on that letter. As you already know, I've been researching this subject for a long time and from the material of the paper, I was able to tell the manufacturing company. It's the same with ink. But the information I could gather from the black ink is limited because nearly half of London uses this red ink. The letter, on the other hand, turned out to be useful."

Holmes chuckled, continuing, "Unlike the ink, these letters were not the cheapest. It's not something commonly found in the East End, but when I heard who the biggest customer of that paper mill was, I immediately thought of this place."

“The church?”

“Yes. The church’s stationery is purchased in bulk before they get distributed to each chapel,” Holmes said.

“But there’s not only one church in the East End.”

“Yes, but this is the one closest to all three scenes of crime. And while you were still at home enjoying your breakfast, I talked to the people in the neighborhood. The prostitutes are known to frequent this church!”

Zhang Heng sighed, adding on to Holmes’ account.

“There are two priests in the church. Father Matthew is 80 years old and is semi-retired. He retired to the suburbs five years ago and is now rarely involved with the church. Basically, only his name is attached to the church. Also, at his age and seeing how frail he is, he is unlikely to be the murderer. So that leaves us with Father Jacob. He is fifty-six this year, still strong, and is in charge of the church. The prostitutes often come to confess their sins to him. Now, what they didn’t know was that Father Jacob may, for some reason, resent prostitutes who have children but are drinking and cohabiting. The dear secrets they so openly shared with him turned back on them, haunting them in a lethal fashion.”

Holmes could only smile.

“As I said, we’re both now at the same starting point again.”

Chapter 518 Father Jacob

The doors of the Church of the Sacred Heart flung open sharp at eight o’clock. Father Jacob appeared at the entrance, carrying two baskets of bread to be handed out to the homeless of the neighborhood.

Zhang Heng and Holmes observed the priest from a corner.

“Your previous deduction was wrong,” said Zhang Heng.

“That’s impossible. Even if there is a slight deviation in the details, it’s unlikely to be too far-off,” Holmes said flatly, albeit looking a little resigned.

They were referring to the deduction Holmes made based on the letter’s handwriting.

“Left-handed, male, between the ages of 30 and 40, of a weak personality, is unstable, traditional, and conservative.” It appeared that apart from his gender, the other inferences, such as being left-handed and age, were incorrect. As for the suspect’s character and personality, it was still too difficult to tell at the moment.

On top of that, Zhang Heng noticed that Father Jacob’s left shoulder appeared to have an injury, most likely due to his advanced age. He held the bread basket with only his right hand, probably because his left hand was too weak. Besides that, Father Jacob’s hair was combed neatly, and while his clothes were well-worn, they were spotless.

Father Jacob embodied the archetype of a typical priest, a little old-fashioned and imposing, yet, filled with warmth and kindness at the same time.

Holmes and Zhang Heng looked at each other, seeing the doubt in the others' eyes. Up until this point of the investigation, Father Jacob had topped the suspect list, but now that they had actually seen him in person, Zhang Heng felt that the priest's chances of committing the crime were slim.

Everything else aside, according to Holmes and clues from the crime scene, the killer probably held the victim by the neck with one hand while slicing her throat with the other using a small knife. With Father Jacob's shoulder injury, it was doubtful he could have done all that strenuous and vigorous maneuvers.

Zhang Heng grabbed hold of a homeless man who had just received a loaf of bread. "My friend, I have some questions for you."

"What is it?!"

The man looked alarmed, hurriedly concealing the bread in his coat.

Zhang Heng produced a shilling. "Is there anyone else parishing this church besides Father Matthew and Father Jacob?"

Before he could even answer, the vagrant snatched the shilling and shook his head. "There was a young deacon before this, but he couldn't stand living in the East End, so he left. Now, there's only Father Jacob."

"Does he have a family?"

"No, he has always been alone. He's been in this church for over thirty years. He has never been married, no children either. Erm... but I heard that he has a cousin, but he's not in London."

As the man spoke, his eyes were drawn to the pocket from which Zhang Heng had just taken out his wallet.

Zhang Heng knew what the older man was thinking. It may be daytime, but this was the East End. He gave the man another shilling, but clearly, it wasn't quite enough. Deciding to try something else, Zhang Heng drew his coat back a little to reveal the revolver strapped to his waist.

The vagrant immediately behaved himself. Upon realizing that Eastern man was not someone to be trifled with, he abandoned the idea of robbing him and turned to leave, muttering and cursing under his breath.

Holmes, on the other hand, was already walking towards Father Jacob.

"Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned."

"Every soul makes mistakes in life, my child," Father Jacob said, "The important thing here is if you are willing to repent or not." "I want to confess my sins, all the lies I've told, the things I have done... the guilt that they have brought, they torment my days and my nights!" cried Holmes.

"Very well! It shows that your heart still belongs to the light," Father Jacob nodded. "Come with me, child."

Zhang Heng watched as Holmes followed the priest into the confession room.

About fifteen minutes later, Holmes came out. Before Zhang Heng could ask him anything, he shook his head at his friend. "You don't have to go. It's not him." "Huh???"

Zhang Heng furrowed his brows.

"He had solid alibis when the first and third murder took place," Holmes explained, "He wasn't even in the East End when the first murder happened. Also, that injury on his shoulder is real. He couldn't possibly have done it with one arm."

"What about an accomplice?" asked Zhang Heng.

"We cannot rule out that possibility. I asked him some suggestive questions when we talked, and he showed no sign of disgust towards the prostitutes. And judging from the crime scenes, I don't think there are any indications of an accomplice."

Zhang Heng was not too surprised by Holmes' answer. He had only asked the question for the sake of asking. It was generally rare that serial killers worked with a partner. No matter their reason of starting their demented journey, they all wanted to play God in their own world. But then, there could only be one God.

Holmes wasn't discouraged, though, nor was he disappointed by the fruitless discovery.

"This proves that my description of the murderer is accurate. I just need to find more clues. You're heading in the right direction once we find the commonality between the three victims, we'll be able to identify our killer."

"I hope we still have enough time," replied Zhang Heng.

Although going the church route did not turn out as expected, it did give Zhang Heng quite a few ideas, and soon his attention fell on a small clinic in the East End.

Apart from the priests, another category wouldn't raise suspicions when they contacted the prostitutes. They were the doctors.

Until now, the notorious fourth murder case, in which the Ripper sliced open the victim's abdomen, where he removed part of her uterus and kidneys, had yet to occur. That murder was done in the dark because there were police patrolling nearby, and the whole process probably only took less than nine minutes, not to mention how the cuts were clean and surgical. So, it was no surprise that many people suspected that the murderer had to be a professional surgeon of some sort.

But because Naomi was from Sweden and didn't fit in with the other prostitutes, she had very limited knowledge about the victims. She wouldn't have known where they usually got treated. Zhang Heng had to seek out others to get this piece of information.

Holmes had already left. Zhang Heng turned around to take one last look at the church, and his eyes met Father Jacob's. The priest nodded back politely, picked up a mop, and began cleaning the floor with his head lowered.

As Holmes said, there was quiet and equable energy about him. Zhang Heng felt that someone like him couldn't possibly have anything to do with the Whitechapel serial murders.

The bet between him and Holmes hadn't been forgotten, so he didn't linger at the church and made his way to the tavern, where more prostitutes could be sought.

Chapter 519 Notebook

Zhang Heng did not know where Holmes had disappeared again. On the other hand, he managed to find a few prostitutes who were relatively close to the three victims, and through them, found out about their daily routines.

In the end, Zhang Heng set his sights on a man called Mark Cohen, a Jewish doctor active around the Whitechapel area. He wasn't a qualified doctor registered by the Central Medical Commission, but it was also rare that prostitutes were offered the luxury of getting a qualified doctor to treat them.

During that era, a physician held a high and mighty social position, belonging to a social class called the gentries. However, with the rise of surgeons and pharmacists, physicians gradually lost their high standing, especially after pharmacists gradually transformed into general practitioners, working hand in hand with surgeons to actively promote the British medical system's reform and strive for better rights. But even when it came general practitioners, few were stationed at the East End. None of them were willing to provide any services the prostitutes working around this area.

It was the reason why people like Mark Cohen existed. In a sense, his role was somewhat similar to that of a general practitioner, where he would do his best to treat various illnesses. Other than that, he also doubled up as a midwife and an obstetrician. This made Zhang Heng pay special attention to him.

The prostitutes had mixed comments on him. On the one hand, his services were cheap, and although he wasn't a qualified doctor, he had managed to do his job reasonably well. On the other, a large number of prostitutes had also voiced their discomfort when they were examined, where his stare seemed to follow their every movement, very much like a slithering snake.

Zhang Heng then enquired about Mark Cohen's residence, arriving at the place before sundown.

A stench so intoxicating and revolting overwhelmed the senses, not to mention the pigsty not far away. Chicken manure was everywhere on the road, and Zhang Heng spotted a few women doing their laundry by the ripe sewage while a couple of men with blackened faces walked towards him. They looked to be stokers that worked in the nearby factories.

It did not take long before Zhang Heng found the doctor's apartment. After a few knocks on the door, there was no answer. He then took a look at the lock on the door and found it to have a basic mechanism, one that was only effective against ordinary men. Battling the nauseating odor, Zhang Heng's eyes darted around like a wildcat, ensuring that there weren't prying eyes before he gently picked the lock with a knife.

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The smell inside the apartment was worse than outside, bearing the strange but putrid mixture of sweat and decay. With a deep frown, Zhang Heng pulled out the revolver strapped to his waist. As he explored the apartment further, he saw a pool of blood on the ground. The unit itself was relatively empty, sparsely furnished with only a bed, wardrobe, and dining table. Socks and filthy garments were

strewn everywhere, and as Zhang Heng followed the bloodstains to the curtain, a pair of boots could be seen under it.

Instead of drawing the curtains open, he slashed it with his knife, the blade tearing through it as if it were butter. Unfortunately, he did not find any monsters concealed behind. A false alarm? The boots were still on the ground, probably placed there by their owner.

Zhang Heng quickly drew the rest of the curtains with his other hands.

He saw a spot that looked like a simple consultation room. With only two stools and a small workbench in the middle, the thing most noticeable was a very bloody lump of flesh on the workbench.

This was the origin of bloodstains on the floor and putrid odor, where a massive swarm of black flies noisily devoured the decaying body part. Zhang Heng's first reaction was finding the third victim, Bernice's missing uterus and abdominal flesh. With that, he could lock on to the serial killer. When Zhang Heng walked towards the table and observed the organ, however, he found that the object didn't resemble a woman's womb in shape or size but rather looked like it belonged to some kind of animal.

Zhang Heng then thought of the pigsty that he saw on the side of the road. Other than that, he also saw a notebook on the table. After opening it and flipping through its pages, he only found random notes and scribbles, most of which happened in his daily life. Some medical research was documented, as well. But as Zhang Heng progressed through the notebook, the contents gradually changed. The writer had apparently become more and more agitated with each entry.

Not only had the handwriting become more and more scribbled, but the contents had also changed. Most of them were related to prostitutes. He lamented about a large amount of money they made yet wouldn't stop acting pitifully here in the East End. From an entry about a month ago, he seemed to have gotten into conflict with two prostitutes. One had stolen his pocket watch while they came to seek his service. Mark Cohen went after the prostitute, but the other made him trip, causing him to lose a tooth.

Zhang Heng was going to keep reading, but he heard the door behind him getting opened. He slipped the notebook into his coat, and at the same time, the person entered the apartment. Judging from the footsteps' sound, it appeared two people were walking around in the unit. This surprised him a little but also did little to affect his plan.

He could always jump out the window, but the path had been ruled out when he slit the curtains before this. Once Mark Cohen found out that his place had been broken into, he would definitely make a run for it. Not to mention how Zhang Heng had taken away his notebook, as well.

Hence, he decided it best to arrest Mark Cohen here and bring him to the police station. He hid behind the curtains, listened intently to the sound of the footsteps, and did some calculation in his mind. Once one of them reached out to lift the curtain, and that was when Zhang Heng pointed his knife directly at him. Zhang Heng could see that his target was in shock, and luckily, he managed to retrieve the knife before anybody got hurt.

Almost instantly, the other policeman drew the pistol from his waist and pointed it at Zhang Heng. Zhang Heng raised his hands and threw away the weapon, indicating he harbored no ill intent.

An hour later, Holmes arrived at the police station. He knocked on the floor with his walking stick and looked at Zhang Heng from behind the iron fence. "They planned to let you out half an hour ago, but I asked them to keep you behind bars for a little while longer. I want you to take a moment to experience what I experienced."

"Did you tell the police to arrest Mark Cohen?" asked Zhang Heng.

"Yes, in fact, before you went to his house, the police got to him. The two officers you encountered were there to collect evidence," Holmes laughed. "It seems that I will win the bet this time. I can finally think about which opera I should watch."

"I don't think so," replied Zhang Heng as he looked at Holmes. "You've caught the wrong person."

"Apprehended the wrong person?" Holmes raised his eyebrows.

"You haven't interrogated Mark Cohen yet."

"Yes, but Lestrade said he admitted he was the murderer as soon as he was in custody."

"It's useless for him to admit to the crimes." Zhang Heng took out the notebook and shook it in front of Holmes. "If you interrogate him, you will know he suffers from amentia."

Chapter 520 Guessing

"Interesting." Holmes closed the notebook in his hand. "It appears Mark Cohen had indeed come into conflict with those prostitutes. So, he led himself to the role of Jack the Ripper, all for the sake of seeking pleasure. However, he didn't expect that the deeper he got into the role, the more he lost parts of himself."

"These things were clearly recorded in his notes. He began to imagine that he was the murderer after the first killing was reported. By the time he saw the letter in the newspaper, his soul and mind had completely been devoured by Jack the Ripper, and in the end, he couldn't even tell who he was anymore." At the same time, Zhang Heng had already walked out of the cell. He then loosened his hands and ankles. "And as for the uterus that you retrieved from his residence, give it a once over, and you will find that it does not belong to a human. When the first victim was killed, he had the perfect alibi of delivering a baby girl that night. Once you locate the girl named Clarissa, you will know I speak the truth."

Holmes chewed on the pipe in his mouth, pondering thoughtfully over something.

Just then, Lestrade rushed over from the other side of the corridor. "I contacted several newspapers. The director wants to promote this case! He wants to commend the police force and you as well. After all, you are Scotland Yard's special consultant. This time, you've helped us solve this strange case..."

"Wait," Holmes reached out and interrupted Lestrade. "We haven't caught the murderer yet. So let's forget about celebrating. It will only serve to inflate the murderer's ego."

"What are you talking about?" Lestrade was confused. "The suspect has just pleaded guilty, and he even described how he killed the victims!"

“He got the idea from the newspaper report. The uterus on the table was taken from a pig,” Holmes explained. “Lestrade, I always thought you are the best and brightest Scotland Yard had to offer. If you are willing to spend more time collecting clues instead of boasting your merits, you would surely achieve more than what you have right now.”

Lestrade shook his head when he heard those words. “I have been at Scotland Yard for so many years, and no matter what case it is, we usually close it once somebody steps up and confesses to his crimes. I think you are just overthinking. Anyway, the reporters should be there in half an hour. The director is going to see the queen early tomorrow morning to report the good news. He will also mention you and your eastern friend’s contributions.”

“Have you so quickly forgotten the Thames case? Planning to cooperate with the media to fish out the real murderer? By then, I don’t think the public will cooperate with you,” Holmes went on, shaking his head in discouragement. “It’s the director’s decision. I can’t change it no matter what you say,” said Lestrade said. “Unless you can arrest the real murderer right now...”

Zhang Heng suddenly asked, “Can I meet Mark Cohen?”

“You want to see him? That’s not how the rules work, but in light of your contribution to the police, I believe we can make an exception,” Lestrade said.

Lestrade then brought the two to the interrogation room where the doctor was held.

“I’ve tried questioning him once; hence I won’t be going in this time. Besides, I have to deal with the reporters.”

As Lestrade left, Holmes rubbed his chin. “Do you think Mark Cohen losing his mind wasn’t an accident?”

Zhang Heng nodded, “Judging by his notes, I can see that he did have a mental illness, but I don’t think that it was an accident that his mental health suddenly deteriorated during this period. The police were looking for Jack the Ripper, and he so just happened to come to us and confess his crimes?”

“Interesting guess,” Holmes said.

Zhang Heng noticed that Holmes used the word guess rather than inference. Even Zhang Heng had to admit that after two previous cases that they solved, he realized it would be impossible to beat Sherlock if he only used what he gave him.

Under the deductive framework, it wasn’t possible that his Lv.1 deduction skill would beat Holmes’s which was at Lv.3. Even if he tried hard, the best he could do was to achieve a draw. He sorely needed to find another way to win this bet and to accomplish that, he would need to bolster his deduction skill greatly. In the absence of evidence, he needed to be able to make bold assumptions. Sherlock Holmes once said that guessing was a big taboo for a detective, and the moment they headed in the wrong direction, it was highly likely they would end up stuck in a dead-end. Zhang Heng’s situation was different now, though, where he only needed to win once. As long as he made the right bet, he would be able to complete the game.

Besides, he wasn’t about to make any blind guesses. He saw Mark Cohen sitting in the interrogation room, looking very calm and composed. He did indeed possess the temperament of a doctor, save for a set of small and protruding eyes.

Zhang Heng sat down opposite him.

“Were the three Whitechapel area murders related to you?” “Yes, I killed them,” Mark Cohen nodded and admitted without hesitation, flashing with it, a crazed smile across his face. “I like the way they looked at me when they died. Fear in its purest form. It’s... beautiful!” “Really?” asked Zhang Heng. “Don’t worry. God will punish you.” The doctor shifted uncomfortably, looking slightly annoyed.

“God will punish me? No, no, I’m just doing the right thing! It is the women who are wrong. God instructed me to punish them. They deserved every bit of it because of their sins! I’m simply obeying His command. His voice... they are always in my ears.”

“Have you heard the voice of God?”

“Yes! He said he would reward me and call me his son,” Mark Cohen proudly declared.

“Last question.” Zhang Heng stared into the doctor’s eyes.

“Which church do you usually attend?”

Mark Cohen’s mouth instantly snapped shut the moment he heard the question. His eyes then rolled toward the ceiling as if a doorway to heaven was about to open and he would slowly ascend.

Despite all the showbiz, his actions had already given Zhang Heng the answer he wanted. Zhang Heng got up and left the interrogation room. Holmes listened to their conversation, and not a word escaped his mouth. He did not speak until Zhang Heng walked out of the interrogation room.

“Interesting, so, you suspect Father Jacob brainwashed him?”

Zhang Heng nodded. Instead of answering Holmes’s question, he hurriedly walked out of the police station, flagging down a carriage. Holmes got in with him. “Even if you suspect that he’s the serial killer, there’s no need to leave in such a hurry. I wasn’t done with my questions. There are only two priests in the Church of the Sacred Heart. Father Matthew is too old, and I am certain that Father Jacob is not the murderer. So, the question is, why would he make Mark Cohen, a mentally deranged man, believe he is Jack the Ripper?” “I’m sure the real murderer must be related to him,” replied Zhang Heng. “As for why I am in such a hurry, it is because I am worried about the safety of a friend.”