

Carefree 501

Chapter 501: Qiu Liang

The Tantai Family had a high status in society.

Since the mansion could not possibly fit the entire family, a few family members would do jobs outside and fund the family financially.

Tantai Mieming's aunt, Tantai Jueqing was one such person, an exorcist.

She was a beautiful lady and preferred floral clothing. Her skin was fair and she had an elegant demeanour.

Furthermore, Tantai Jueqing was the one and only family member of the Tantai Family who was on friendly terms with Fang Yuan. Sometimes, she even helped out the much-busier Tantai Juexin in teaching Fang Yuan the techniques of exorcism.

Logically speaking, Fang Yuan should be rather close to this aunt of his.

However, the overly-matured Fang Yuan could tell that this lady had ill intentions and was merely wearing a mask.

Although she did not display any signs of any ulterior motives, Fang Yuan trusted his intuition!

"I have nothing else to teach you regarding the identification of plants and pharmaceuticals! You are a genius, Ming!"

Tantai Jueqing squinted her eyes and smiled as she rubbed Fang Yuan's head.

"Aunt Jueqing, can you tell me about the outside world?"

Fang Yuan displayed curiosity a 5-year-old had as he pestered his aunt for more stories about the outside world.

Although he knew that Tantai Jueqing had ill intentions, this was nevertheless still a good opportunity to gather more information about the outside world!

Tantai Jueqing seemed to be on a long break herself after the recent mission.

"Alright!"

Tantai Jueqing brought her hands together. "The outside world is very interesting! There are tall buildings all around! Every night, light from all the buildings come together, displaying a sight which is prettier than a rainbow. There are also a lot of delicacies and entertainment there! The chocolates and figurines which I gave you last time were only the most basic... Other than these, there are also planes which can fly in the sky, and these planes can fly across many other countries in just a single day..."

'This world is so technologically advanced?'

Fang Yuan blinked as he listened intently as though he was longing to see it for himself. 'Also... Why would Tantai Jueqing attempt to make me interested in the outside world? Does she really have an ulterior motive?'

Of course, he knew that Tantai Guijing and the fellow family members would never allow him to leave the mansion.

'However, it's not a bad idea to leave this place...'

Fang Yuan snickered to himself. 'I shall play along with you.'

Although there are many secrets in the Tantai Family which were worth discovering, this was not the time!

In other words, the secrets here were too much for him to handle. Fang Yuan would prefer to expose himself to the outside world first.

Furthermore, Fang Yuan would have to worry about the monthly 'ritual'. It was obviously an attempt to keep things under control! The longer the ritual, the more effective it would be! Unfortunately, Fang Yuan had not restored most of his abilities and could not resist against it.

Since he was underqualified to control the situation, it would only be wise to step out of it.

"Aunt!"

Fang Yuan tugged on Tantai Jueqing's hand and started to sound cringy. "Next time when you leave, bring me along, will you?"

"No way!" Tantai Jueqing smiled sheepishly. "You are a very important person and the Hall of Sacrifice requires you..."

'There she goes again, trying to end her sentence halfway to pique my interest.'

Fang Yuan secretly rolled his eyes.

He knew that he could not continue to plead. After all, the role which he was acting was an abnormal kid.

"Cough cough!"

A few coughs were heard as Tantai Juexin displayed a cold look. "Jueqing, you've said too much. Mieming, please leave with us!"

"Yes!"

Fang Yuan obediently packed up and left the room.

However, as his ears twitched, his sensitive hearing ability allowed him to eavesdrop a little.

"Keke... Brother, what are you afraid of? Are you afraid that he will learn the truth?"

"Enough! This plan is the hope for the entire family. Those old fogeys must fear their death, right? It's a pity that he's too..." Tantai Jueqing's voice sounded excited. "We... will all die!"

"Sister, do you hate us for doing all these?" After a long and awkward silence, Tantai Juexin spoke once more.

"Yes, I hate all of you and I hate this cursed family! I hate myself..."

Tantai Jueqing sounded pitiful as though she was forcing herself to speak.

"... Are you responsible for the missing pair of scissors?"

"Scissors? The one which Qiu Liang used years ago? Haha... finally, the truth is out?"

...

There was the faint noise of fighting and the information coming from the argument started to interest Fang Yuan. Unfortunately, he saw a few servants walking towards him and felt that it was inappropriate to continue eavesdropping and could only walk away.

"A 20-year cycle? Could this be about the peak of the curse on the family? Also, that pair of scissors..."

The pair of red scissors which Qiu Liang had used to attempt to kill Fang Yuan was ingrained in his memory and Fang Yuan felt an inexplicable vibe just by recalling it.

Now that he thought about it, every single person in the family was not as simple as they seem and that pair of scissors might just be a piece of magical equipment.

"Lost? This would mean that it has been guarded all these while. This is interesting..."

Fang Yuan slowly walked away. Unfortunately, he was already too far from the room and could no longer hear what they were talking about.

"Ah, it's young master Mieming!"

As he entered a garden, he noticed a few servants carrying a rack which was covered with a white cloth. A part of the white cloth was dyed red.

All the servants in the family feared Fang Yuan. Now that they suddenly realised that he was in the garden, they shrieked and released their grip on the rack, allowing it to fall to the ground. A corpse rolled out from the rack.

This female corpse was wearing a servant's clothing and had a pale look. Her eyes were wide open and there was an obvious cut on her neck, as though she was being sliced by a sharp object.

Just as Fang Yuan gazed towards the corpse, he could feel an indescribable chill down his spine.

"What are you doing there! Quickly clear things up!"

As the housekeeper lectured the servants, he forced a smile as he looked towards Fang Yuan. "Young master Mieming, this place is dirty. It will be best for you to return."

"Oh!"

Fang Yuan quickly agreed, turned around and took his leave.

The housekeeper heaved a sigh of relief. "Did the two of you not take your meals?"

It's not that, Housekeeper Zhang. It's just too scary! We have this recent death and immediately after, we see him..."

"That's right. When a normal child sees a corpse, he will surely feel scared, right? He doesn't even have any reaction at all! The rumours are true..."

"Ahong was fine yesterday and now, she's found dead in her room. That room was locked from the inside. Could it be... that thing?"

...

Fang Yuan paid no attention to their gossip.

From his birth till now, he had already heard enough of such stories. If he were to investigate every single incident, he would have been exhausted to death.

Of course, the final piece of information was a little more interesting.

"Could it be ghosts?"

Fang Yuan returned to his room and chuckled. "Even this place is no longer safe. I should leave this haunted mansion as soon as possible."

"Of course, the priority would be to improve my abilities!"

At night, Fang Yuan rushed to the spot behind the Hall of Sacrifice as he waited for the appearance of the Ghost Garden.

Ever since he had learnt all about it, he had already planned on using the Ghost Garden for himself.

Now, he was prepared to create a few types of medicine.

"This Hall of Sacrifice..."

Under the dim moonlight, the dark building resembled a black hole which was seemingly trying to absorb everything.

Fang Yuan could sense a pair of prying eyes coming from the Hall of Sacrifice.

"Elder?"

Fang Yuan paid no attention to it and waited for the moon to set before walking into the Ghost Garden.

Oddly-shaped plants created an eerie shuffling noise as though they were welcoming him.

"Human equipment cannot deal with ghosts. Even these plants do not belong to the humans..."

Fang Yuan walked about in the garden. "In reality... the Tantai Family did not share with me their medicinal formulas for the more effective medicines. Now, I am merely creating the basic ones."

"According to the matured plants here, there are only 2 concoctions I can create. One will be the Spiritual Eye Water which will allow normal humans to observe the traces of ghosts. The second will be a concoction which will mask the traits of a human body, making it harder for the ghosts to detect the person using it."

Fang Yuan had his Fiery Golden Eyes and therefore would not need the Spiritual Eye Water. Therefore, he went straight into creating the other concoction.

"It is a requirement for me to create the entire concoction while I am in the Ghost Garden!"

Fang Yuan arrived at the Ghost Faced Sunflower and pressed on the forehead of the face.

"Sniffle!"

The pale face started to cry in a melodious tone and blood started to tear from her eyes.

Fang Yuan collected the blood with a test tube before adding the powdered seeds of Corpse Vine in. Following which, he added a few more odd ingredients into the mix.

In the test tube, the blood-coloured liquid suddenly turned transparent.

"I've succeeded!"

It was the norm to fail in creating these concoctions. Even elders in charge of making these concoctions would not have such a high probability of success as Fang Yuan had.

"However, I don't know how useful will this be..."

Fang Yuan held his concoction and was about to leave. Suddenly, he felt a chill.

A gold hue flashed in his eyes as he noticed a blurred silhouette.

"Could ghost be more visible in this alternate dimension?"

Fang Yuan revealed a smile on his face. "Am I... trapping myself? However, I must expose myself to... the threats of this world!"

At this point, Fang Yuan drank the concoction in his hands without a second thought.

A smelly and rotting stench filled his mouth but there were no visible changes to his body.

Taking light breaths, Fang Yuan slowly walked about in the Ghost Garden.

Finally, he could see it. A lady wearing red placed her hands on her hips and like a snake, she slithered on the ground with her shoulders.

The face of the ghost was that of... Qiu Liang!

Chapter 502: Awakening

Under the moonlight.

The ghost in red clothes raised her head. She was Qiu Liang, the lady who had died years ago!

She was emotionless and her eyes were wide opened as though she was stubborn. She was squirming on the ground as though she had lost the use of her limbs, turning her into something which resembled a large red snake.

"I cannot do this!"

Just by gazing at her, Fang Yuan was overwhelmed with fear. "If go against her now... I will die! She is not a normal spirit!"

Thinking up to this point, Fang Yuan started to hold his breath and made his way towards the entrance of the Ghost Garden.

He didn't know how long the concoction which hid his human traits could last. His life would be in danger for every moment he spent in the Ghost Garden.

He was getting nearer and nearer the entrance...

As Fang Yuan arrived at the entrance, the red ghost suddenly raised its head and a murderous look flashed in its eyes!

...

In the study room of the Tantai Family.

A group of people gathered in the room. Tantai Juexin and Tantai Jueqing were among the group.

Tantai Guijing appeared even more frail-looking than usual as though he was on the brink of death. In reality, his actual age was only about 50. However, he had such a look because of something which backfired on him in the past.

He cleared his throat and began. "The 20-year cycle is about to rest. What opinions do you guys have with regards to this?"

Other than Tantai Juexin and a few others, the rest were all old and frail looking as they displayed shock on their faces.

It was a 20-year cycle! This was the curse of the Tantai Family! Everyone with the Tantai blood would not be able to escape. If this were to happen in a cycle of a few years, the Tantai Family would be wiped out and killed, especially the few elders who had already survived a few cycles.

"Didn't we discuss to using 'that' to deal with the curse of the 'Door'? Juexin, do you think he's fit for it?"

A bald elder slowly spoke.

"Second Granduncle..."

Tantai Juexin stood up and appeared vexed. "That thing is the most gifted person I have ever seem. He is only 5 years old now and yet he is already as capable as most other exorcists. However... I did not realise that he was displaying signs of awakening!"

"That's impossible! Unless he has perfect control over it, otherwise, he will not be able to control his 'awakening'!"

A few elders spoke with frustration.

Most of them there were top-notch exorcists and knew the power of ghosts and curses.

Even the strongest human cannot fight against a ghost! Only a curse would be able to deal with another curse!

"This is not a lie and I'm sure all of you know that."

Tantai Juexin replied coldly before returning to his seat.

Everyone remained silent for a while. They all knew the terror which would come with 'awakening'. The calm period now was the most obvious sign of all.

"Cough cough..."

Tantai Guijing continued. "In order to break the curse on us, we need to find that 'Door'. All that we have prepared up till now is not enough! Mieming still needs to mature as well. Therefore, we should stick to our original plan... Of course, if we cannot resist this curse, the only thing we can do will be to sacrifice Mieming."

Everyone remained silent.

At the end, Tantai Guijing suddenly thought of something and asked, "Do we have a lead on the cursed scissors?"

The Tantai Family was a family of exorcists and therefore it was only normal for the family to have a collection of weird objects.

That red scissors was among the collection. It was cursed with a powerful spell which would enable it to harm spirits.

"We do. That pair of scissors will curse whoever it kills, turning the person into a ghost. Only by finding another ghost will the first ghost be freed... We have used a female servant as a bait for the scissors to complete its curse on a new victim. In the next 7 days, it will not come out to harm others. Furthermore, we can use black magic to trace it."

Tantai Juexin toyed around with the dagger in his hands as he calmly explained.

"That's good. Quickly recall it back. After all, it is still useful in dealing with curses."

Tantai Guijing nodded his head. "The meeting is over!"

...

If Fang Yuan were to eavesdrop on the exchanges during the meeting, he would be utterly shocked.

The red pair of scissors cursed by black magic would curse whoever it kills! Qiu Liang did not die under the pair of scissors. Furthermore, the scissors now had a new target and therefore, there would be a safe period of 7 days!

Therefore, the red scissors which he had seen was not the simple cursed red scissors, but 'something else'!

It might just be the thing responsible for the curse over the entire Tantai Family!

After all, Fang Yuan still had Tantai blood in his body.

Although the curse would more likely seek out the elders, there could be exceptions, for instance, Tantai Jueshang!

"Run!"

But for now, Fang Yuan was still clueless.

As soon as he exchanged glances with the female ghost, he knew right away that the ghost had already detected him.

"Bang!"

Decisively, he leapt out even further than a matured adult could and like a gust of wind, he arrived into the real world.

Behind him, the female ghost had disappeared.

Fang Yuan appeared pale and in pain. As he lifted his pants up, he could see a black palm print on his ankle.

"Almost..."

Even though Fang Yuan had already arrived back in his dimension, the sense of danger had not faded away.

"To the Hall of Sacrifice!"

His eyes darted around as he quickly ran towards the dark hall, pushing the door with all his might.

"Who's that? Eh? It's you!"

A skinny old man in black clothing appeared stern as soon as he spotted Fang Yuan. "This is not a place you are suppose to be in!"

Although Fang Yuan only skimmed through the hall, he could already observe most of its interior.

Lanterns lined the walls of the hall and equipment were laid out on the sacrificial table. There were many caskets as well as a single painting scroll hidden in the corner of the hall.

On the painting scroll, the drawing was a... door!

'That is... exactly similar to the door that I saw in the memories of this realm!'

Fang Yuan wanted to take a few more glances at the things around. Suddenly, he felt a sense of confusion.

"What have you angered..."

The old man noticed a red silhouette and his expression changed. Immediately, he plucked a black ring from his finger and threw it towards the ground.

"Bang!"

A layer of black fog appeared, engulfing the old man within. The old man took a few deep breaths and immediately, his body started to rot and within seconds, he became a zombie.

Without a second thought, Fang Yuan turned around and ran for his life. After just a few steps, he could hear a pitiful shriek. It was from that old man!

"What is that?"

Fang Yuan did not slow down. As he arrived at the ancient mansion, he noticed the silhouette of a group of people.

At the same time, the feeling of confusion in him finally disappeared.

"Did that old man become my scapegoat?"

Fang Yuan clenched his fist. He had finally encountered the threats of this realm and could not wait to restore his cultivation!

"I don't want to care anymore. No matter how eerie this realm might seem, I have to begin my experimentation on dream elemental force!"

...

On the second day, Fang Yuan had received news of the death of the old man. Tantai Juexin had personally delivered this piece of news to Fang Yuan. Evidently, he was suspecting that Fang Yuan might have something to do with his death.

From Tantai Jueqing, Fang Yuan had also obtained information about the scissors which was cursed with black magic.

"What was 'that' which I encountered last night?"

Fang Yuan sat on his bed and started to recall what had happened last night with a look of confusion growing on his face. "Something is not right. To think about it, that female ghost's face was a little blurred and did not seem to be Qiu Liang's face... Could the ghost have taken advantage of my mind to cause me to hallucinate? All because I have imagined about Qiu Liang being cursed by the scissors, and that is why I have imagined her to be the ghost in red?"

"Regardless, I am sure that the appearance of these ghosts have something to do with the Demonic Heart Realm!"

"This realm is even more affected by the Demonic Heart Realm compared to Da Qian!"

Fang Yuan clenched his fist. "In order to resist against such pollution and foreign entities from the Demonic Heart Realm, I must regain my ability to harness dream elemental force! Furthermore... it feels a little different here!"

All along, Fang Yuan was already interested in the other paths of the Demonic Heart Realm.

Although Shang Hou did not have the records of such paths on him, every path would have its foundations rooted in dream elemental force! After obtaining the many dream master records, Fang Yuan had his own theory.

Of course, in a thousand of his ideas, 999 of them would be likely to be useless and could even result in him suffering an irreversible damage. The last idea might not be entirely safe as well. Therefore, dream masters had completely given up trying to explore the other paths.

After experiencing the dream dao, why would the dream masters be interested in any other paths?

Being in another realm was the best opportunity for Fang Yuan to pick off where his research had left off.

Experimenting on himself would surely be more effective than using other dream masters as experimental products!

The weirdness of this realm and the fact that it had been polluted by the Demonic Heart Realm further affirmed Fang Yuan's thinking.

"The first step is always the same, and that is to sense the dream elemental force."

Fang Yuan closed his eyes and weird shapes started to appear in his consciousness.

These shapes started to float around and gather together, forming an inverted triangle.

The triangle was quickly formed which could be due to the fact that the realm had long been polluted by the Demonic Heart Realm. With that, streaks of evolved dream element force started to descend.

"Purple?"

Fang Yuan was stunned. "Isn't the dream elemental force of the Demonic Heart Realm silver?"

In that instant, an even more drastic change happened.

His body started to absorb the dream elemental force greedily as though a desert had come across a flowing river.

"This is..."

Completely submerged in the process, Fang Yuan did not notice that his body was turning pale. Following which, the temperature of the room started to go down as well.

This was not the physical temperature, but a higher-dimensional cold sensation only felt by the soul.

"Ah!"

A shriek had jolted Fang Yuan out from his trance.

He quickly came out of the room and realised that a tray of food was scattered across the floor.

"What happened?"

Fang Yuan frowned as his eyes glistened.

On the ground, there were fine prints which resembled the shape of a human!

"This force... it is indeed representative of inauspiciousness!"

Chapter 503: Revelation

"Name: Fang Yuan (Tantai Mieming)

Essence: 1.0 (100)

Spirit: 1.0 (100)

Magic: 3.0 (100)

Profession: ???

Cultivation: ???

Technique: ???

Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 6)], [Fiery Golden Eyes (Level 1)], Unknown Physical Property"

...

Fang Yuan whipped his stats window out and observed the changes.

With an Essence of 1, it would mean that Fang Yuan had the physical qualities comparable to that of a full-grown adult. This was shocking, considering that he was a 5-year-old child.

In this realm, humans were extremely restricted and some of the stats in the stats window were sealed. Even Fang Yuan felt that it was difficult to improve himself.

'It would be reasonable if my stats are sealed up due to the existence of a powerful being from the Demonic Heart Realm.....'

Fang Yuan once again corrected his understanding of this realm. "This realm must be hiding a huge secret! It might just be related to that 'door'!"

The scene which Fang Yuan had observed while he was traversing to this realm and the abnormalities in this realm made him certain of this.

If he could find the source which caused everything that is happening, he might just understand the greatest secret of the Demonic Heart Realm!

"Also, what does it mean by 'Unknown Physical Property'? Why is it classified directly under my 'Skill' section..."

Fang Yuan predicted that the mutated dream elemental force which he had previously absorbed was like a key, unlocking the potential of his own body.

"What's happening?"

It was obvious that someone was spying on Fang Yuan's living quarters. Not long after, Tantai Juexin quickly rushed over with a look of anticipation and fear as he gazed upon the mess before him.

"I don't know!"

Fang Yuan remained expressionless and spoke the truth.

"Where is Cuihe?"

"Missing!"

"Head to the study!"

Tantai Juexin had an unsettled look on his face as he chased Fang Yuan away before calling for Tantai Jueqing. "I cannot detect Cuihe's energy. I'm afraid that she is dead... Your ability can be used here. Take a look."

"I know."

Tantai Jueqing bent over and caressed the mess on the ground. Suddenly, her eyes turned white.

She had seen it. Cuihe was carrying a tray of food. As she arrived at Fang Yuan's living quarters, she slowly opened the door.

Behind the door, it was...

"Ah!"

A high-pitched shriek was heard. Tantai Jueqing fell to the ground as though she had fallen from a great height and her throat was in pain.

Unknowingly, a dagger was pressed on her neck and stream of blood trickled down from the wound.

"You... tried to kill me!"

Tantai Juexin retorted as he calmly kept the dagger. "What did you exactly see?"

"Keke... I didn't see anything!"

Tantai Jueqing smiled sheepishly which made Tantai Juexin feel a chill in his heart. "However, I am certain that Tantai Mieming's physical property is awakened!"

"Is that so? Finally..."

Tantai Juexin gave off a weird expression and remained silent for a while. "I'll tell Father about this!"

"Right, those old fogeys fear him, right? After all, even the Uncle in-charge of guarding the Hall of Sacrifice is now dead. It's good to know that he was once the one with the strongest self-defence!"

Tantai Jueqing chuckled. "The both of us might just die this time! Therefore, the elders will surely go all out and go ahead with the plan now, right?"

"You... you are mad!"

Tantai Juexin glared at his sister and spoke with confidence.

"That might be the case!"

Tantai Jueqing toyed with her long hair and seemed unfazed. "Even normal human beings will turn mad if they were to be born in such a family!"

...

"Unique Physical Property? What is that?"

Fang Yuan felt confused as he gazed at the faded handprint on his ankle.

This was the injury he had sustained from the ghost last night. Even after applying his family's traditional concoction, his condition did not improve. However, as soon as he awakened his physical property, the entire handprint started to fade away and he quickly recovered from it.

"I can even recover from an injury sustained from a ghost..."

Fang Yuan intently focused on his own body and felt a little confused. "I can feel that my body is now able to absorb even the mutated dream elemental force, turning it into something I have yet to understand... It seems like the more dream elemental force I absorb, the stronger this physical property will become?"

He soon arrived at the study and started to prepare for his lessons.

At this point in time, Tantai Juexin walked over with a straight face. "Do your preparations properly. We will go through the 'ritual' tonight!"

"I understand!"

Fang Yuan could detect his abnormal emotions. However, he still calmly replied his father.

"Hehe... Little Ming." As soon as Fang Yuan returned to his room, he noticed Tantai Jueqing sitting on his bed. Her small feet were wearing a pair of bright-red leather shoes which were knocking on the side of his bed.

"Aunt Jueqing!"

Fang Yuan paid his greetings.

"Are you going to go through the 'ritual' tonight?"

"That's right."

"Let me tell you, tonight will be different! Furthermore, do you know about your 'birth'?"

Tantai Jueqing leaned towards Fang Yuan and started to whisper into his ear.

Although the entire act was seductive, thinking about how Fang Yuan was still a 5-year-old kid made it seem inappropriate. Fang Yuan could only roll his eyes inside.

"My birth?"

He acted as though he was confused.

"Your parents, they hate you! Especially your mother... pay her a visit."

Tantai Jueqing chuckled. "Are you not confused as to why she does not visit you frequently? Go pay her a visit. You know the location of her house..."

'This woman!?'

Fang Yuan's pupils contracted and his face remained emotionless. 'Is she cursing me? To try to take control over me?'

"It's successful!"

Gazing at the puppet-like Fang Yuan, Tantai Jueqing was elated. "Go! Go and pay Su Xin a visit and retrieve the red scissors for me!"

"Pa!"

In the next instant, her wrist was being held tightly by Fang Yuan. "Although I don't know what you are trying to do, I'm sure you have ill intentions! Unfortunately, I don't want to continue playing with you!"

At this point in time, in his stats window, the words which represented his Unique Physical Property started to glow.

"Screech!"

Although her wrist was being held by a child's hand, Tantai Jueqing's face was filled with extreme pain.

Dark purple streaks started to spread from her wrist as though she was experiencing frostbite.

"Shing!"

A knife flashed past as Tantai Jueqing severed her entire arm. At her wound, the blood froze up and did not drop a single bit.

"It seems like... I've underestimated you!"

Tantai Jueqing snickered. "What do you want to do? Kill me?"

"I don't have such a plan. I only want to leave this place..."

Fang Yuan sighed.

He was determined to leave this place since the encounter with the ghost.

Such a scary ghost was not something he could deal with right now. Furthermore, looking at how things were, the ritual at night might be troublesome.

Considering his current abilities, every outcome seemed like it would be disadvantageous to him. Therefore, leaving was the best plan.

He could slowly explore the secrets of this family after he had grown up.

"This has always been what you wanted from the start, right?"

"That's right! I wanted to screw up the preparations of the family and that's why I'm convincing you to leave. Otherwise, it would also be good if you could encounter that thing in the Hall of Sacrifice as well! However, now, my mind is changed." Tantai Jueqing gazed at Fang Yuan. "I want to tell you the truth!"

"Shut up!"

The door was struck open. Tantai Juexin, Tantai Guijing and a few other elders rushed into the room.
"Jueqing, what do you think you are doing?"

"Keke... I've had enough of all of you. Why am I subjected to your control since birth? Like a mere puppet of the family?"

Tantai Jueqing started to laugh hysterically. "Now, I want to screw all of these up, because... I want to! Tantai Mieming, do hear me carefully. You..."

"Ding!"

A knife struck towards Tantai Jueqing, only to be obstructed in mid-air.

Fang Yuan had long observed Tantai Juexin's knife techniques and started to speak with a cold tone. "Let her continue!"

"As my elder brother, you don't even care about me!"

Tantai Jueqing spoke with a deadly tone. "The truth is that... you are not human! You are an 'existence' created by the Tantai Family's curse. Your birth resulted in the death of an innocent child's soul! You possessed his body!"

"So... this is the truth!"

Fang Yuan mumbled under his breath. He had already thought about this and Tantai Jueqing had merely proved his predictions.

The curse which the Tantai Family had been suffering from was indeed the more powerful amongst curses. To deal with ghosts, one could only use ghosts!

Therefore, the Tantai Family had always been conducting secret experiments. Finally, when Tantai Juexin's wife was about to give birth, a few elders of the family had sacrificed their lives to curse the unborn baby and thereby calling a true evil ghost into the baby's body in an attempt to create a tool to resist against the curse on the family!

The evil ghost would go on to possess the baby's body as a 'human' and exist in the world. From there, the ghost would be controlled by the family!

The reason why Tantai Mieming's mother, Su Xin had hated Fang Yuan and did not care for him was because Fang Yuan was not her son, but the murderer of her son!

This was why Tantai Juexin had felt conflicted all along!

Why was the Tantai Family so scared of Fang Yuan? Why would Qiu Liang want to kill Tantai Mieming with the cursed red scissors? This was because, in their eyes, Tantai Mieming was just a... ghost!

"This is the truth, great!"

Fang Yuan clapped his hands and revealed a wide grin.

"You..."

This expression was not what Tantai Jueqing had expected.

"Do you expect me to break down and become crazy, or start a killing spree?"

Calmly, Fang Yuan continued. "To me, this is a good thing. At least I don't have to feel sorry!"

If Fang Yuan had reincarnated as someone else's child, there would be consequences.

Now, even his parents were treating him like a powerful ghost and a murderer. They had no feelings for him and therefore, Fang Yuan felt less restricted to do what he wanted to do.

He could also leave the family without hesitation.

"But, where did the ghost which they had summoned go to? Has it escaped? Could something go wrong during the ritual? Or..."

Fang Yuan thought about all the possibilities as a chill went down his spine.

Chapter 504: Spirit Sealing

"I am a... ghost?! Or should I say, I have a ghost inside me? Could I be sharing my body with a ghost?"

Fang Yuan's thoughts were confused.

"It's impossible!"

He tried to ignore the possibilities of a ghost in him. "If this is true, how can I not be aware of it?"

The more he thought about it, the more he would think about the incident where the servant who was bringing food to his room had mysteriously disappeared and was once again uncertain about the facts.

"Family head! What's happening?"

The few elders realised that Fang Yuan's reaction was unexpected. "Is he really awakened?"

It would be normal if Fang Yuan were to go on a killing spree if he was a real ghost. After all, a ghost would naturally hate the living.

Therefore, Tantai Mieming's reaction was not normal.

This would mean that all their previous sacrifices were naught, which made them start to panic.

"He must have awakened! Otherwise, how would he be able to freeze Jueqing? We know how strong Jueqing is!"

Tantai Guijing gazed at her severed hand and his eyelid started to twitch. "However, he is able to perfectly control his powers! This is unbelievable!"

His face was filled with excitement as he glared at Fang Yuan. "Regardless, we have given you this body for you to inhabit! It feels good to be human once again, right? For this, shouldn't you feel obliged to help us? After all, you are still a part of the Tantai Family and are still under the family curse! Helping us would also mean to help yourself!"

Tantai Guijing was a sly fox. He had already planned for all these from the moment they had guided the ghost into this body.

Whoever gets the blood of the Tantai Family would be cursed! Even if the person were to change a body in the future, the curse would still be there!

If changing a body would allow them to break free from the curse, the Tantai Family would have done so long ago. This was an unbreakable curse!

"In order to remove this curse, we need to go to the 'Door'. Tonight, we shall open the netherworld..."

Tantai Guijing's face became flushed with excitement.

"I refuse!"

Fang Yuan was decisive. "I want to leave this place. Of course, I will promise you that I will return in 20 years time to help you resolve this problem!"

Of course, Fang Yuan was interested about the 'Door'. Furthermore, this would be the secret behind the curse on the Tantai Family.

Although he knew that the family would reject his request, Fang Yuan would still nevertheless made his request known.

"Leave? For 20 years?"

All of their expressions changed. "That's impossible. You are the tool which we created. You will have to listen to our orders!"

"If that is so... I'm sorry, the discussion is over."

Fang Yuan shrugged his shoulders.

"It seems like we've been treating you too well, and you have forgotten something... We have allowed you to possessed our family member's body for us to be able to control you!"

An elder stood out with a cold look. "Leader... do it!"

Without waiting for Guijing to speak, he immediately retrieved a bronze bell and shook it firmly.

"Clang! Clang!"

The bell appeared ancient-looking and there were many carvings on the outside. On the surface of the bell, there was a layer of green rust. With a firm shake, the bell gave off a distinct ring.

"It's not too bad. Continue sounding it!"

Fang Yuan appeared indifferent.

"How is this possible?"

The elder opened his eyes wide. "I have poisoned you with 13 types of poisonous worms. How can you remain unaffected?"

Fang Yuan snickered.

Every month during the ritual, the Tantai Family had always wanted to deal with Fang Yuan. Of course, he would have to think of a solution to resist.

These poisonous worms were of the lowest quality and were flushed out of Fang Yuan's system as soon as the rituals were over.

Although Fang Yuan did not display his might in the past, having the willpower of a True Divine would allow him to gain delicate control over his own body, up to the point where a normal human would not be able to imagine.

'The only problem is... I am able to purge the visible poisonous worms but not the invisible ones.'

Fang Yuan thought to himself as his pair of hands started to shake.

"It is still effective!"

The few elders were absolutely sure of it as they took out their weird equipment. Some of them started to chant their own matras and one of the elders even started to shout loudly. "Head... If you don't want to die, then do it!"

"Sigh..."

Tantai Guijing sighed before taking out a mirror and pointing it towards Fang Yuan.

In the mirror, there was an image of a 5-year-old kid which resembled Fang Yuan. However, the child remained emotionless as he started to stretch his hands out towards Fang Yuan.

In the real world, Fang Yuan remained motionless as though he was desolated.

"This is indeed the powerful inherited treasure of the family head. The Ghost Calming Mirror will be able to stun even the most powerful ghost!"

The rest of the elders were elated as they quickened their actions.

A rune was printed on Fang Yuan's body and it started to spread like an earthworm. Within moments, it had already covered more than half of Fang Yuan's body.

The Tantai Family were experts in dealing with ghosts and had many tricks up their sleeves.

They were using their most powerful techniques against this one.

Every month, they would smear fresh blood on Tantai Meiming in an attempt to curse him! It was an extremely dangerous act on its own and even elders would risk death doing it. Furthermore, it would attract all kinds of supernatural dangers.

However, the effects were astonishing.

Just as the rune was almost covering Fang Yuan's entire face, there was a dim glow in his eye.

"The best outcome would be to let him willingly help is. Unfortunately... we can only use our last resort, using him as the tool to allow us to complete our curse on the 'Door'!"

Tantai Guijing sighed. "Prepare to... open the netherworld! Also, lock Jueqing up."

All the elders were overwhelmed with emotions of all sorts.

Outside, many members of the Tantai Family were already waiting. They were donned in a black attire and held tools in their hands as they appeared well-prepared for what was about to come next.

As soon as they heard the order, they immediately took action.

Tantai Guijing and the rest brought Fang Yuan to the Hall of Sacrifice.

The place of connection to the netherworld was there!

"Wooooo!"

A bewildering fog appeared in the surroundings. It covered the sky and light could only seep through the fog. It was as though they had arrived in another world.

'They... They don't intend to remove the curse. Instead, they are treating me as a sacrifice to tide through this cycle!'

Fang Yuan's consciousness was still attempting to struggle in the final moments.

The Tantai Family had a few intentions as they watched Fang Yuan grow. If Fang Yuan was able to mature, they would risk it all to attempt to remove the curse.

However, this cycle seemed especially dangerous and even the head and the elders were not confident of tiding through it. Therefore, they had prepared to sacrifice him to mitigate the effects on themselves.

'I think that I will not be the only one entering the netherworld this time!'

Fang Yuan could sense a huge danger approaching. 'If I cannot escape... I will die!'

'I have no other choice!'

He had made up his mind. Absorbing the mutated dream elemental force, his willpower started to focus on the question marks in his stats window.

"Buzz! Buzz!"

The entire stats window started to shake violently. In an instant, the unknown fog started to dissipate and the question marks beside his techniques turned into a new number and more information flooded the stats window:

'Active Physical Property - Spirit Sealing Body!'

'Spirit Sealing Body (1st Grade): Your body is a weapon which is able to seal evil ghosts. You will be able to seal any ghost that you come into contact with into your body! You have activated the 1st Grade, and the capacity for sealing evil ghosts: 1! You can choose to release the ghost!'

"According to this realm, since souls and curses cannot be destroyed, this ability to seal ghosts in me might just be the most powerful..."

Fang Yuan felt a little confused. "How did it appear?"

The advent of evil ghosts would surely not bring with them the counter to their own kind. Fang Yuan knew himself and knew that this was not a skill of Tantai Mieming's, but his own.

"Could it be that... I have the blood of the Tantai Family?"

The Tantai Family was a renowned family of exorcists. Their blood would have the unique gene which might activate certain abilities in their descendants.

After eliminating all the possibilities, even though this explanation might sound absurd, it was the only one!

"Initially, Tantai Juexin and Su Xin's child would have the greatest potential among the people of the Tantai Family. He would be able to awaken the property to seal spirits, becoming the last hope of his family!"

The blood of the Tantai Family already had the potential to mutate by itself. It was only normal for the ability to counter ghosts to be mutated from the people of the Tantai Family.

Fang Yuan had even suspected that this child might just be a Fate Soul created by the realm's last ditch attempt to save itself!

Unfortunately, the Tantai Family was unaware of this and had decided to curse this child, using it as a tool to fight against the invasion of evil spirits!

This would be akin to destroying their own hope! What an irony!

"Although the true spirit of Tantai Mieming has already been killed by the fellow elders, the evil ghost which they have summoned must have been sealed by my physical property to my advantage?"

Fang Yuan was about to figure out the complete truth to the secrets of his birth.

It was the 'truth' that even Tantai Guijing was unaware about!

"The Fate Souls created by the realm would always be estranged. The will of this realm would either have been destroyed or have gone crazy..."

"But now, my survival depends on it."

"The control methods of the Tantai Family will be able to control me as a human being, but it will surely not be able to control the evil ghost which I am about to release!"

Fang Yuan finally understood something. At that moment where he had awakened his own physical property, he must have likely to accidentally released the evil ghost, causing the unlucky servant's death.

"Spirit Sealing Body will allow be to seal the evil ghost in me and therefore allowing me to use its powers? Interesting!"

In Fang Yuan's consciousness, he released his tyrannical willpower. "Since this is so... I shall release you!"

In the real world.

The zombie-like Tantai Mieming suddenly stopped in his tracks. The black earthworm print started to subside from his skin.

"This is not good!"

Tantai Guijing was shocked. With that, he quickly took a glance at his own mirror.

Blood started to gush out from his mirror. Tantai Mieming's image was undergoing a certain change.

The young kid was growing. He grew taller and stronger and finally... he became a mature young adult.

His facial features were blurred and he was wearing a white shirt. His skin was dark-green as though he was frozen to death.

"How is this possible? He is no longer a human, but a real... ghost!"

Chill vibes began to fill his heart.

This was true horror...

Chapter 505: Departure

"Juexin, now!"

Tantai Guijing quickly retreated as he hollered. His actions were nimble and unlike that of an old man.

Tantai Juexin's face was gloomy. A dagger covered in all sorts of inscriptions appeared on his hand and he charged towards Fang Yuan.

This dagger was one of the top 5 magical weapons in the Tantai Family! It possessed extremely strong cursing powers. A normal ghost would be completely dispersed by it and would disappear for a long period of time.

However, due to the indestructible characteristic of ghosts, they could not be completely killed.

Of course, the stronger the curse was, the more dangerous it was.

At this instant, Tantai Juexin's right hand which was wielding the dagger had already turned into ghostly bones.

"Slash!"

The dagger glided across Tantai Mieming's figure. However, there was no blood at all. A black shadow flashed past.

"Eagle Claw, strike!"

Tantai Juexin felt an immense pain at his abdomen. Even his strong and experienced body could not withstand such pain and he fell to the ground.

At the same time, a small silhouette moved rapidly around like a snake and dodged a few arrows.

'Tantai Family's tools are mainly used against ghosts. Of course, even if normal human experts meet such weapons, they will still immediately lose control of their mind and be slaughtered. But, I am different!'

Fang Yuan had already understood most of Tantai Family's exorcism techniques. Furthermore, his physical property was astounding. He could even use an evil ghost to attract the firepower!

Fang Yuan swiftly climbed over a wall. His body was already as light and nimble as a swallow. After he climbed over the wall and turned his head back, he saw the figure of the man that appeared to be frozen to death moving about within the family elders.

That man was different from Fang Yuan; he was really a ghost! Also, this man was definitely way beyond normal ghosts. Else, why would there be great expectations from the family for him to go against the curse of the door?

"Woong! Woong!"

An extremely chilly forcefield opened up. It was as though this realm had just turned into a world of ice and snow.

"Elder Seven, Eighteen?"

With just a breath, two family elders died at once. One of their body cracked into pieces while the other's head fell down. The only similar thing was that purple-black frostbites appeared on both their bodies!

If this evil ghost was not present to hinder these family elders, these family elders would have immediately activated the other tricks they planted beforehand and be able to cause great trouble to Fang Yuan.

"This side... after climbing over this wall, it's the kitchen area! It's the least guarded!"

Fang Yuan quickly climbed over the walls and alleys. He had already known the landscape of the family mansion in and out. Thus, he could directly avoid numerous dangers and quickly arrived at the outermost wall.

"Eh?"

Suddenly, a terrifying undulation erupted behind him.

Fang Yuan turned around and looked towards the Hall of Sacrifice. A nebulous feeling kept spreading from there. Even the building began to turn illusionary.

"The netherworld? The curse of the door has erupted in advance?"

Even if Fang Yuan were to turn back and return now, he could not salvage the situation. Thus, he still decided to leave.

"The outermost wall is the Tantai Family's last barrier, or should I say, a layer of enchantment! I'm definitely what it's guarding against!"

Just by going near the wall, the cursed earthworm prints on Fang Yuan's body began to activate. It was obvious that he was targeted.

"Physical destruction is totally useless... it might even be transferred away directly... To destroy it, I can only rely on the power of a ghost."

A cold smile appeared on Fang Yuan's face. His pupils gleamed with a golden light.

He could sense that the powerful ghost he released was already nearby!

"The seal on the evil ghost released by my Spirit Sealing Body isn't really removed. After a period of time, he will still be dragged back into my body..."

Fang Yuan observed the surroundings intently, "Of course, such a release was very dangerous too. This is because the powerful ghost released will definitely want to kill me in order to obtain real freedom!"

The usage of the Spirit Sealing Body was not without risks.

Furthermore, every time an evil ghost was released, it was like walking on a tightrope!

Of course, there was still some advantage in facing such an evil ghost that had been sealed before. For example, his sensing ability would be heightened.

Additionally, with the special ability of Fiery Golden Eyes, Fang Yuan could immediately see the footprints coming from the east side of the ground.

"His spiritual aura... has become weaker!"

By linking together his thoughts, Fang Yuan was even more shocked.

"He's severely injured just from that short moment he had contact with the curse behind that door? What exactly is the curse of that door?"

Suddenly, the footprints had already arrived in front of Fang Yuan.

An immense sense of danger struck.

"Here!"

Fang Yuan immediately turned around. A swirl emerged in front of his chest as he reached out both his arms.

A purple-black evil ghost appeared and was immediately devoured by the swirl in front of Fang Yuan's chest.

"It's over!"

Fang Yuan looked at his arms. A black coloured layer had appeared on his arms and his arms went stiff. It was as though he was frostbitten.

"This physical property still has its dangers!"

With no hesitation, Fang Yuan placed both his arms on the wall and climbed over it.

"Bloop!"

It was as though he crossed through a layer of water. Wilderness appeared before Fang Yuan's eyes. There was a dense forest not far away and a small road could be vaguely seen there.

"After making use of some of the evil ghost's spiritual force, I indeed broke through the enchantment... Although the price I paid was to be frostbitten on both my arms!"

Fang Yuan looked behind. The entire Tantai Old Mansion had turned illusionary at this moment.

The faint silhouette of a door appeared in the centre of the mansion. It actually devoured the entire mansion!

Where the mansion once stood was now flat grounds. There were no buildings on it at all.

"It's pulled into the netherworld? But with Tantai Family's foundation and expertise, and this mansion's defence, they could definitely survive for a while even though... many will die!"

If Fang Yuan was powerful enough, he might have chosen to stay and explore with Tantai Family. But now, he still turned around and walked away without hesitation.

"A new world, here I come..."

Fang Yuan looked at the sun in the skies and his eyes glistened.

...

Chen Residences.

The owner of Chen Residences was Chen Xinbo. Chen Xinbo was a successful businessman and he was said to have a net worth of over 8 digits. However, he retired at the peak of his career and built the residences in the rural village. He also brought along his family to live in seclusion.

Currently, Chen Xinbo, who was already 50 plus years old, had an uneasy look on his face as he looked at the person in front of him.

"Detective Ma, I'll leave everything to you!"

"Rest assured! Mister Chen!"

This Detective Ma was a 30 plus years old man. He was donned in a jacket shirt and he had a pair of glasses on his face. He was astute and sharp looking. He then continued, "My detective corporation is meant to handle such troubles. You can be assured that I will settle everything related to the paranormal!"

There was a 6 years old girl beside him dressed in a cute princess dress. She had two braids and was licking a round lollipop. After hearing such, she rolled her eyes.

Of course, that expression of hers was not noticed by Chen Xinbo. Even if he saw her doing that, he would not be bothered.

Chen Xinbo grabbed Detective Ma's hand shakily as though he saw his saviour, "Of course... I've heard about you from the newspaper! As long as you can settle the abnormalities in this area, the rewards would definitely satisfy you!"

"Tell me about what happened first! The more detailed, the better!"

Detective Ma raised his glasses.

"Okay. About a month ago, the subordinates of my residences said they saw the figure of a woman in white clothes... I obviously did not believe at first, but recently, her appearances became more and more frequent. I even saw her with my own eyes last week. Ever since that day, one of my servants disappeared. Even the police could not find her..."

Chen Xinbo sighed and rubbed his eyes.

"From then on, everyone in the residences was living in fear. Even I couldn't handle these ghost rumours... thus, I approached your detective corporation."

"Female ghost in white clothes? Understood. What is the name of your missing servant? Can I take a look at her room later?"

Detective Ma replied.

"Of course you can!"

A tinge of happiness appeared on Chen Xinbo's face, "Detective Ma, you have travelled here from afar, please take a good rest and have lunch first before starting work!"

Chen Xinbo left with his brows slightly loosened and hands behind his back.

"Clang!"

Detective Ma closed the door. He had an excited look on his face, "Haha... Xiaoling, you heard that? We are rich! That's why I said, in such times, who would notice you if you don't put up advertisements? This Chen Xinbo had obviously done bad deeds and is just scaring himself. Hehe... watch how I bleed his money!"

"Yes, yes, yes..."

The little girl stopped licking her lollipop and rolled her eyes, "You looked for people to make up stories on the newspaper just to attract such spendthrifts!"

"Hehe... there's no case in this world that can't be solved by me!"

Detective Ma was filled with pride. He then looked at the little girl ingratiatingly, "... As long as you help me! Xiaoling... you must help your father this time! Next time, I will give you 10 more lollipops every month!"

"At least 20 more!"

"I can't, you must think about the cost required to run our corporation. At most 15 more!"

"Deal!"

Ma Xiaoling grinned from ear to ear. However, at the next moment, she became serious, "But, daddy, I'm afraid it wouldn't be so simple here!"

It was really suspicious for such a normal little girl to think so deeply. However, Detective Ma who knew her daughter was mature for her age was not bothered, "How is it not simple, isn't it just someone acting as a ghost to scare people?"

"No... I suspect there might be a real 'ghost' here!"

A tinge of terror flashed past Ma Xiaoling's face.

"What?"

Detective Ma almost jumped up and his volume increased by folds as he circled around, "What a loss! If I knew there were really ghosts here, I should have asked for more rewards from him..."

"Isn't it too late to regret?"

Ma Xiaoling shrugged her shoulders. Suddenly, a white shadow flashed past her eyes.

It was the figure of a woman. Below her long hair was a pair of blood-red eyes.

"AHH!!!"

Ma Xiaoling screamed and hugged onto Detective Ma's leg like a koala bear.

"What's wrong?"

Detective Ma turned and saw nothing.

"This place... this place is very dangerous! Let's leave!"

Ma Xiaoling grabbed tightly.

"We can't, I already promised him. We can't destroy the reputation of our detective corporation here!"

Detective Ma was troubled-looking as he continued, "Also, without this money, we can't even pay the rent for our corporation. We will be homeless next month!"

Chapter 506: Investigations

The missing servant was Xia He.

Her room was neat and tidy. There was not a single speck of dust to be seen. Detective Ma examined a photo frame. The photo in it was a smiling young lady with two dimples by her cheeks. "What a pity..."

After having a sumptuous lunch, he started on his detective works.

The first stop was the servant's room.

"How is it? Did you find anything?"

After examining every single thing in the room to its finest detail, Detective Ma gazed towards Xiaoling with anticipation.

This daughter of his was rumoured to possess the Yin Yang Eye. She was able to see things others could not and was being utilized by Detective Ma as his own secret weapon.

"Nope..."

Ma Xiaoling spoke in a soft voice. She still seemed to be in shock after seeing that white shadow previously.

Previously, she only used her Yin Yang Eye to help her father pick up clues in the crime scene, for she was able to examine things up to an incredible detail.

This was the first time she had encountered a ghost!

"If that is so, let's walk around the building!"

Detective Ma was in deep thoughts. "We could have some findings there... Interestingly, Mister Chen has a background. I found out that his jade business was rather large in the past. However, as his business peaked, he unknowingly pulled out and brought his family here to live in seclusion... Eh, why have we not seen his family members? Let's ask him!"

"You must be talking about Missus Chen and Young Mistress!"

The housekeeper, Uncle Chen wore a tailored western suit and a tie. His hair was perfectly combed. As soon as he heard that Detective Ma was about to enquire about the whereabouts of Mister Chen's family members, he quickly replied. "Because of this incident, the both of them are scared to their wits and have already returned to the city!"

"Ah, I see!"

Detective Ma nodded his head but inside, he was exclaiming to himself. 'This is suspicious indeed!'

If a normal person were to encounter a haunted house like this, even if they were not superstitious, they would still shift elsewhere to live first, right? This had to be especially so for the rich.

However, Mister Chen Xinbo had decided to stay behind. His act was even more suspicious after considering the fact that someone had just gone missing.

"Sigh... Missus Chen had advised Mister Chen before she left. However, he was insistent in staying behind and claims that he wants to accompany Elder Mistress!"

Uncle Chen added.

"So, it seems like another mistress is unwilling to leave!"

Detective Ma nodded his head. The reason for her unwillingness to leave was most likely that she was either brave or that she was showing an attitude.

"Alright, we will like to take a look at your residences. Housekeeper, please lead the way for us."

"No problem! Mister Chen has reminded us to provide assistance to you whenever possible!"

Uncle Chen revealed a wide smile as he led the way for the duo to start their inspections.

The residence was huge. Other than the main living room, the study and the bedrooms, there was also a backyard, a horse stable and a kitchen for the servants. There was even enough rooms for each servant to have their own.

"Master is... too kind. He always fought for the best for us servants and was willing to fork out the money to expand this place so that we can have better living conditions."

Uncle Chen sighed. After bringing Detective Ma around the garden, he brought him to the master bedroom.

The corridors were paved with high-quality red sandalwood and art pieces decorated the shelves along the corridor. There were old paintings hung up on the walls as well and the entire residences had an artistic vibe to it. Chen Xinbo must have been a person who appreciated art.

"This..."

Detective Ma noticed the jade pieces displayed on a shelf. Through the glass panel, he could see the brilliant green hue of the jades. "Are these uncut? Straight from the emerald quarry?"

"Keke... Detective Ma, you have good taste. This piece is one of Master's most valued treasure!"

Uncle Chen chuckled as he pointed towards one of the gems. "This rock variant is extremely valuable. It was mixed together with a few worthless rocks before Master identified and bought it. He had a friend who offered 8 million for it, but Master nevertheless rejected the offer."

"8... 8 million?"

Detective Ma's mouth was agape. It took a few moments for him to snap out of his trance as he swallowed his saliva.

If not for the fact that security was tight here, he might even think of stealing the rock.

"Of course, that offer was only an estimate since the rock is still intact. Therefore, it's value is still uncertain. Who knows, it might be filled with worthless rocks..."

Uncle Chen laughed. "However, some people like this thrill! Detective Ma, do you have knowledge of emerald?"

"Cough cough... Of course!"

Detective Ma straightened his back and appeared serious. "The crystal emeralds have a unique power of the mind. The people of the West use it for divination."

"Keke..."

Uncle Chen forced a smile.

The topic was on the value of the gems. Why would anyone talk about anything related to the supernatural?

"Father..."

At this point in time, Ma Xiaoling tugged at his pants. She had made a discovery.

"What have you discovered?"

Detective Ma whispered.

"There..."

Ma Xiaoling pointed to a door. The door was exquisitely designed and the ancient bronze handles had a brilliant glow to it.

"Whose room does this belong to?"

Detective Ma cleared his throat and enquired.

"That room..." Uncle Chen appeared conflicted. "That is Elder Mistress's room!"

"Can we take a look?"

"I'm sorry... Our Elder Mistress doesn't like to see strangers!"

"I see!"

Detective Ma did not insist. However, he secretly made a decision.

...

It was nightfall.

"Father... I still don't think this is a good idea. That is a girl's room!"

Ma Xiaoling had a conflicted look as she gazed at the tools which Detective Ma had prepared.

"It's alright! Since you feel that the room has a problem, there must be something dirty in there!"

Detective Ma spoke loudly. "I shall do my investigations. This is for the sake of Elder Mistress too."

"Is that so?"

Ma Xiaoling seemed to have suspected something. "Are you thinking of laying your hands on the Chen Family's assets and at the same time get a stepmother for me?"

"Pui! Cough cough!"

Detective Ma almost choked on his own saliva. "What nonsense are you spouting? I... Am I such a person?"

As he spoke, he nervously touched his neck and tidied his clothes.

"If this was a simple detective mission, you wouldn't have changed your clothes intentionally..." Ma Xiaoling rolled her eyes.

"Be good. Look after the house and I will get you some lollipops!"

Detective Ma wiped his sweat off before flipping out of the window.

As a detective, he had a few detective tricks up his sleeves. He traced the path which he had walked through in the daytime and arrived at a place near the master bedroom.

At this point in time, another door creaked open. Chen Xinbo held a candle in his hands and arrived at this elder daughter's room before whipping out a pair of keys. "Wei'er, I've come to see you!"

"It's already so late and yet he is still visiting his daughter. There must be something wrong!"

Detective Ma cursed under his breath as though he had imagined a certain scene in his mind. "This is worth my time to investigate..."

He made his way forward slowly and gingerly. However, he was unaware that a pale palm was following him behind...

...

"Eh? Who are you?"

At the same time, Ma Xiaoling examined the child before her suspiciously.

He was about the same age as her. However, he was covered in mud and fallen leaves. His clothing was tattered as though he had just returned from the wilderness.

Most importantly, his palms were purple and appeared frozen as though he was suffering from frostbite. However, he did not care a single bit as he began to pick up the dessert on the table and started munching on it.

"Are you from the village? Are you being bullied?"

Ma Xiaoling noticed the young boy's hands. "Do you want me to apply medication for you?"

"It's alright, it will heal by itself!"

Fang Yuan rubbed his tummy. "Ha... I am finally half-full. However, I still want some meat. Do you know where the kitchen is? Oh, wait, who are you? Do you belong in this house?"

"No... No! I had followed my father here. He is a superb detective and he has come here to conduct a paranormal incident!"

Ma Xiaoling was confused. Was it a good idea to reveal what her father was doing?

"Paranormal?"

Fang Yuan's eyes glistened, revealing his excitement as he began to mumble to himself. "I was only looking for the biggest house here. Could it be so coincidental? This is great... I have yet to see ghosts in the outside world. The stuff in my old mansion is too creepy."

After escaping from the Tantai Family, he had randomly chosen a direction and this was the first time he had found a settlement.

Why didn't the happenings in the Chen Residences attract the attention of the Tantai Family?

It was likely that the Tantai Family was too focused on dealing with their own curse. Why would they bother themselves with other stuff?

Furthermore, they were secretive about the location of their own mansion and would be worried of revealing their location if they came out too often to help families like the Chen Family.

"Hey, are you sure its a ghost?"

Fang Yuan glared at Ma Xiaoling.

"That's right... I've seen it for myself!"

Ma Xiaoling bit her lips.

"Your eyes..."

Fang Yuan examined her eyes and nodded his head. "I believe you! However, let me tell you a piece of bad news. If you really encounter a ghost, your father might not be able to survive!"

"You..."

Ma Xiaoling was about to cry. "What should I do? Boohoo..."

"Very simple! Hire me!"

Fang Yuan patted his chest. "I can guarantee that your father will be safe!"

A paranormal detective would be useful! To Fang Yuan, the normal case studies which a paranormal detective would take up would be good practice for him.

'Anyway, I don't have anywhere else to go. I shall let this detective help me make a fake identity and allow me to stay with them before helping them deal with some paranormal stuff... eh? Why do I feel like there are ghosts everywhere I do?'

At this point in time, Detective Ma had slowly arrived at the door. Through the seams of the door, he could hear Chen Xinbo speaking:

"Daughter... Let me see you again!"

He spoke with a soft voice and started to caress the long hair of a girl leaning against the door.

"That is..."

Detective Ma's pupils contracted and his hair stood on its ends!

Chapter 507: Assistance

"Kacha!"

A shockingly loud sound made Chen Xinbo turn around. With a stern look, he shouted. "Who's that?"

"It's me... me... Haha, Mister Chen, the moon is really bright today, haha..."

Detective Ma stood out and nervously scratched his head.

Chen Xinbo seemed to have used too much strength from the shock of discovering that someone was spying on him. The head of the girl suddenly rolled to the ground and tumbled around. It was a skeleton with hair!

"Ah! Wei'er!"

Chen Xinbo let out a cry and quickly carried the skull in his hands before wiping the dust away from it. "Did it hurt? Be good, don't cry! The pain will go away."

Looking at how Mister Chen was treating the skeleton, Detective Ma shuddered in fear.

...

"Sigh..."

It was nightfall and Uncle Chen was suffering from insomnia. He held a wine glass and sipped on wine as he reminisced about the past.

"Elder Mistress's death was a huge blow to Mister Chen... From that day onwards, he was desolate and gave up on all of his business. Furthermore, he believed that monk, that he could really recall Elder Mistress's soul with jade! Everyone in the residences were in fear and Missus Chen had pleaded her husband, but Mister Chen was still unwilling to leave..."

The Elder Mistress of the Chen Family was dead!

However, Chen Xinbo refused to accept this fact. He had even ordered the people of the residences not to speak a word about her death and everyone had to act as though Elder Mistress was still alive. This was a requirement for the 'ritual'!

He had spent almost half of his fortune buying rare and treasured jade rocks and was using them to create a spell capable of recalling a soul!

This was the truth about the Chen Residences!

"How can a dead person be revived? Master is crazy!"

Uncle Chen's face was flushed as he mumbled to himself. "Even if her soul returns, it will only be a ghost, right? Everyone in the residences is already scared to their wits. Sigh, I need to look for an opportunity to advise Master about this!"

He did not realise that a pair of pale hands had landed on his shoulders. Suddenly, the pair of hands tugged up.

"Pa!"

The wine glass fell to the floor and shattered as Uncle Chen was lifted from the ground.

"Haa...."

His face was flushed from the alcohol and as he struggled, he could not force himself out of the pair of cold hands.

"Elder Mistress... Elder Mistress's soul... let me go!"

His tears and mucus were flowing out as he spoke whatever he could think of.

However, that pair of hands held relentlessly. Finally, with a twitch, Uncle Chen had lost his breath.

"Bang!"

His corpse fell to the ground and the reflection in his eyeballs were...

...

"Detective Ma!"

Finally, Chen Xinbo had pieced the skeleton together and spoke without turning his head to look at Detective Ma.

"Ah... Mister Chen, yes!"

Detective Ma let out an embarrassing smile. It was none of his business that Mister Chen had this quirk to keep corpses.

However, if he wanted to be paid, he had to ensure that Chen Xinbo was happy.

"The real reason I hired you is for you to assist me in looking for my daughter's soul! I've seen her... However, she is unwilling to see me! If you can let me see her once more, I am willing to pay whatever price you ask for!"

Chen Xinbo's crazed look was a desperate one as well.

"Cough cough... Don't worry, Mister Chen! I will do my best to accomplish it!"

Detective Ma adjusted his tie. Suddenly, he noticed a white shadow flashed by. "Gh... Ghost!"

His legs turned jelly as he collapsed to the ground. A strong sense of fear paralysed him.

"D*mn it d*mn it d*mn it... I have yet to repay my car loan. If I delay any longer, the bank will mortgage it, this is a huge loss..."

Unknowingly, this was the only thought which surfaced in his mind.

"Creak! Creak!"

On the other side of the room, a pair of pale hands appeared on the railing. Following which, there was a head full of long black hair.

A female ghost crawled into the room on all fours and there was a crackling sound as she made her way across the room.

"Wei'er? Is that you?"

Tears welled up in Chen Xinbo's eyes as he rushed towards the ghost. "Are you here to visit Father?"

The female ghost raised her head, revealing bloodshot eyes and a pale face.

In that instant, Detective Ma felt a sense of familiarity looking at the face. If not for the eyes and the pale face, this lady might be beautiful.

"No... You are not Wei'er!"

Chen Xinbo slipped and fell to the ground. "You are.... Ahhhhhh!"

"Bang! Bang! Bang!"

Detective Ma realised what was happening. He quickly got up to his feet and ran like mad towards the stairs. "I'm doomed! My client is dead and I won't get to earn anything!"

With quick steps, he made his way downstairs.

Initially, the lower level would be the living room which would link to the guest room.

However, this time, Detective Ma was shivering in fear. He looked towards Elder Mistress's room and noticed a big pool of blood seeping out. A pale pair of hands were firmly planted on the door, leaving a bloodied palm print.

"This is none of my business!"

He was on the verge of crying as he rushed down the stairs.

When he arrived at the first floor, all he could see was the same corridor as upstairs. The ghost in white was advancing towards him.

"No... Don't come over!"

Detective Ma shuddered as he looked towards the face of the female ghost.

"Get lost!"

At this point in time, an explosive exclamation was heard.

"Bang!"

Wood shavings flew about as a piece of the door was smashed on the female ghost. At the same time, Detective Ma seemingly heard his own daughter's voice. "Father, let's go!"

He stumbled his way and finally arrived at the living room downstairs.

Only now did he realise that his daughter, Ma Xiaoling was with another child. They were pulling Detective Ma's hands, guiding him towards the exit.

"There's a ghost! A ghost!"

Detective Ma started to scream at the top of his lungs.

"There's no use. Other than the 3 of us, there are no more living humans in this residences."

Fang Yuan scoffed as he looked at his fist. "Is it... not strong enough?"

It was impossible for any physical object to cause harm to a ghost.

If Fang Yuan restored his cultivation as a True Divine to create the purest form of martial arts willpower, only then would he stand a chance of harming the ghost.

"A ghost from the outside world is already much stronger than the Demon Spirits of the Demonic Heart Realm. This realm is haunted..."

Fang Yuan took a quick look at his stats window.

If he were to use his special ability, he would be able to seal this ghost in him. However, he was not planning to do so.

"I am not desperate enough to rely on my special ability to survive. I will only use my Spirit Sealing Body when I am desperate... More importantly, I have to improve in my other abilities!"

Although the Tantai Family believed that it was impossible to kill spirits from the realm, Fang Yuan thought otherwise and even hoped to test it out by himself.

"What? There are no other survivors? Wait a minute, little child, who are you?"

Detective Ma started to stare at Fang Yuan suspiciously. "Are you eyeing on my daughter? Let me tell you, if you don't have a betrothal gift worth at least a million dollars, don't ever think about it..."

"Father!"

Ma Xiaoling rolled her eyes. "Is this the time to have this conversation?"

She realised that the female ghost had already come down from upstairs and were approaching them at a breakneck speed.

"Che!"

Fang Yuan scoffed and stopped in his tracks before staring at this man with a moustache. "Listen up, I am not interested in your daughter. I only saved you because your daughter has hired me for my services, and that is all! For saving you, the price you will have to pay will be to settle my identity issue and provide me with 3 meals and lodging!"

"What?"

Detective Ma scoffed in a high-pitched voice. "Dream on!"

"Oh!"

Fang Yuan shrugged his shoulders. "If that is so, then you're on your own! I am confident that this ghost will surely catch up to you guys!"

Detective Ma looked at Fang Yuan and the approaching ghost before breaking out in cold sweat.

"Alright, I'll promise you!"

"Very well, I believe you will not go back on your words. This is because you should fear me more than the ghost!"

Fang Yuan turned around and his joints started to crackle. "13 Successive Flying Eagle Strikes!"

"Whoosh! Whoosh!"

Gusts of wind started to rip even the floorboards apart. Wood shavings flew about as though a tornado was heading towards the female ghost.

"D*mn it!"

Witnessing this scene, Detective Ma rubbed his eyes in disbelief. "Where this this boy come from? With such a combat power, he must be even more powerful than the special forces, right?"

It wouldn't be as surprising if Detective Ma were to witness this in a matured adult.

More importantly, how could such combat power be found in a young kid as old as his daughter?

Detective Ma felt that his view on the world was becoming obsolete.

"Whoosh! Whoosh!"

Claw marks appeared on the pillars behind and the female ghost was nowhere to be in sight.

"Is it still not powerful enough..."

Fang Yuan composed himself as the wooden block in his hands crumbled into dust.

His stats were now comparable to a young adult. However, his combat prowess were undoubtedly the best in this realm as he represented the most powerful of humans.

Such rare martial arts was still rendered useless against the most ordinary of ghosts! How could the humans of this realm stand any chance against the ghost infestation?

"Must I... really use the Spirit Sealing Body?"

He knew that he could strengthen this physical property of his by sealing spirits.

"However, the more spirits I seal, the more danger I expose myself to. If I cannot sustain, I will immediately experience backlash and become the most devastating... monster!"

Fang Yuan's eyes glistened. Suddenly, he rushed towards Ma Xiaoling and threw a test tube out.

"Whoosh!"

In mid-air, a pair of pale hands were drenched by the concoction from the test tube and started to smoke before retracting back.

"Thank... Thank you!"

Ma Xiaoling was stunned. If not for Fang Yuan, she would have been dead!

"It's too early to thank me. Let's talk about this after we leave the residences... Let's hope that this is a ghost which follows rules!"

Fang Yuan gazed up at the sky. It was slowly brightening as daytime arrived.

Although ghosts were scary, their behaviors were predictable. For instance, they only haunt a certain area and mostly strike at night, laying low in the daytime.

This was not because they were restricted to do so, but it was merely their habits!

If one knew the habits of a particular ghost, one would be able to effectively deal with it!

An exorcist would be required to have good observation and judgemental skills. Of course, there were many who were overconfident with these qualities and were still killed by ghosts!

Chapter 508: Settling Down

"Come! Everyone, take a sip!

Fang Yuan took out a bottle of concoction and passed it to Ma Xiaoling and Detective Ma.

"This is the same concoction which I used previously. After drinking it, you will be able to remain hidden before the ghost. If you use it directly, it will be able to keep the ghosts and bay for a short while..."

"Blergh! This is smelly!"

After hearing about its properties, Detective Ma quickly took the bottle from Fang Yuan and gulped it down with a frown.

Seeing this, Ma Xiaoling prepared herself. She pinched her nose and licked a little before twitching. "This is disgusting... it tastes awful!"

"Be glad that you can drink this! Head to the door!"

Fang Yuan frowned. He was already prepared for his escape and therefore stole some seeds from the Ghost Garden. Even he was not confident of germinating the plants outside the Ghost Garden and therefore, his supply of the concoction was limited.

'Now that the both of them are hidden, I am the only living person in this place.'

Fang Yuan slowed himself down and soaked his hands with the concoction. He remained alert of his surroundings.

However, after that sneak attack, the female ghost seemed to have disappeared into thin air.

"Phew... We are finally here. Will we be safe outside?"

Detective Ma and Ma Xiaoling ran across the garden and arrived at the gate of the Chen Residences.

"Something's not right. Wait up!"

A hue of gold flashed across Fang Yuan's eyes. Suddenly, he rushed forward and pulled the both of them back.

"Kacha!"

Before them, the originally opened metal gate began to transform into the female ghost's... mouth!

The female ghost became extremely big in size as she opened her mouth and waited at the entrance.

Ma Xiaoling screamed.

If they had continued running, they would have ran into the female ghost's stomach.

"Get lost!"

Fang Yuan rushed forward and struck his fist out.

With the concoction-soaked fist, he finally managed to hit the body of the female ghost.

It was chilly!

A chill sensation started to spread from Fang Yuan's fists. The sensation slowly turned to a burning hot one.

The feeling of hitting a ghost was like hitting a metal person. Fang Yuan did not manage to harm her.

"Get... lost!"

Fang Yuan exclaimed. Using more force on both of his hands, he managed to push the female ghost away, revealing an opening.

"This is the time... run!"

Ma Xiaoling held her father and slipped through the opening. Finally, they ran out of the real gate and arrived outside.

At the same time, the sun started to rise in the East, spilling its golden rays across the land.

As they looked back, the Chen Residences remained sturdy. If not for the mess around, everything which happened last night only felt like a terrible nightmare.

"Phew! We're finally out."

Detective Ma stroked his moustache. Suddenly, he started to wail. "It's gone! Gone! My career... My task... all gone!"

"Father... shouldn't you be worried about the brother who saved us out?"

Ma Xiaoling spoke with contempt.

"I'll let him die for all I care..."

Detective Ma started to tear. "No, he should die!"

"That's right, then you won't have to pay me anymore, right?"

Fang Yuan stood at the side and snickered.

"Ah!"

Detective Ma leapt backwards and held his waist. "Are you human or ghost?"

"Of course I'm human! However, if you are not going to pay up, you will have to face the consequences of ghosts!"

Fang Yuan chuckled.

"Oh no, paying up is a small issue. Now that everyone in the Chen Residences is dead, every single one of us is going to be a suspect! We will be caught!"

Detective Ma knelt on the ground and held his head with both his hands.

"You're wrong. Only you will be caught!"

Fang Yuan made a cute expression. "Who will believe that two kids can kill so many people?"

With this blow, Detective Ma froze on the spot.

"Alright, brother, what else do you need Father to help you out with? Save him once more!"

Ma Xiaoling could not take it any further as she tugged at Fang Yuan's sleeves, pleading him to help once more.

"This is true... after all, you are still useful."

Fang Yuan rubbed his chin. "Don't be a crybaby just yet. As a detective, you must have your relationships in the police station, right? I can give you something so that they will visit the ghost themselves. Naturally, they will know that you are speaking the truth and at the same time, you will be able to publicize your reputation."

"Thank you, brother!"

Detective Ma quickly thanked Fang Yuan like a fish out of water. He held onto Fang Yuan's hands tightly.

"Your desperate look makes me think... Xiaoling, what is your father's name?"

"Ah, when my father was born, he had his fortune told by a blind person. The blind fortune teller said that he will become a talented person in the future and therefore called him..."

"Ma Wencai!?"

Fang Yuan sounded in disbelief.

"No, it's Ma Wencai[1]!"

...

After a week, in the office of Detective Ma.

Fang Yuan wore a checkered shirt and suspenders. Like a grown-up, he was eating breakfast as he browsed through the newspapers.

'The Ghost Killer in the Haunted Chen Residences!'

'The Government Heavily Rewards Professionals!'

'The Exclusive Interview of Ma Wencai, the Great Detective - How I Fought the Evil Ghost with Wits and Courage!'

On the printed text, there was also the photograph on Ma Wencai smiling like a fool.

"Xiaoling, your father is really ugly!"

Fang Yuan commented as he set the newspaper aside and began to eat his eggs and toast.

"My apologies. Credit goes to you!"

Ma Xiaoling seemed humble.

Fang Yuan paid no attention to her.

All he needed now was time to mature and grow without much attention.

"Wow... Ma Wencai the Great Detective is here!"

The door opened and a delightful Ma Wencai in a suit walked into the restaurant before displaying a pose. "How's this? Am I handsome?"

The two kids were speechless.

"Alright!"

Ma Wencai realised that no one was paying any attention to him. Lazily, he took out a document and placed it before Fang Yuan. "Brother, your identity is settled. You are an orphan adopted by me. Your name will be Fang Yuan!"

"Hmm, that's great!"

Fang Yuan scanned the document and nodded his head in satisfaction.

He would be a fool if he continued to use his identity as Tantai Mieming. Furthermore, he was not used to that name and it was better for him to re-use his original name.

"From today onwards, I will be part of the detective corporation!"

Fang Yuan smiled. "The both of you will handle the normal cases. If both of you are unable to deal with it, then leave it to me!"

"This is great!"

Ma Wencai nodded his head and rewarded Fang Yuan with a piece of bacon. "...About that, the Chen Residences is already sealed up as a restricted area and the prices of property in the vicinity have also fallen. They are now recruiting people to deal with the powerful ghost. Brother, are you interested in this?"

"Not at the moment!"

Fang Yuan lazily picked up the piece of bacon graciously which made Ma Wencai suspect if he was merely a young master who had left his own family.

"Take my advice. If you don't want to die, don't ever return to the Chen Residences! You were lucky the previous time to have encountered a restricted ghost who will only kill in the residences. However, it can still come out but it merely chooses not to. If you anger it, hehe..."

"I understand."

Ma Wencai shuddered in fear before stroking his moustache in confusion. "That female ghost seems to resemble the missing servant - Xia He. The newspapers have dug up the entire ancestry of the Chen Family. Although Chen Xinbo was a good father, his other hobbies were not that respectable. Even the housekeeper, Uncle Chen, was an accomplice! Could it be that Xia He has had enough of it and attempted suicide to become a ghost so as to take revenge? This does not make sense, the timeline is not right!"

"It will not be a ghost if you are able to understand it!"

After finishing his breakfast, Fang Yuan wiped his mouth with a piece of serviette. "That ghost might be Xia He or it might not be. The real Xia He might have been dead all along and a random ghost might have come along to impersonate her... It is even more unclear as to how the ghost had appeared and there is no reasonable explanation for it. According to my predictions, the most possible scenario is that Chen Xinbo had started a ritual to recall his daughter's soul, which became the source of all trouble. The ritual, together with the suicidal servant, might have created the powerful ghost!"

"If that is so..."

Ma Xiaoling shook with fear. "Mister Chen is rather pitiful... He might have been killed by his own daughter's soul..."

"How can a dead person be revived?"

Fang Yuan scoffed. "On the other hand, I am interested in that monk. We can investigate in this direction in the future."

The corporation was rather huge. Other than the offices, guest lounge and information room, the living quarters of the Ma Family was behind the office. There was also a small gym.

"This is not bad!"

Fang Yuan examined the exercise equipment in the gym and the sandbag hung before him before nodding his head in satisfaction. "The current plan will be to raise my physical stats to the limit of this realm before I reach 20. Also, through the corporation, I will encounter all kinds of spirits and undergo my research."

Fang Yuan had left the ghost in the Chen Residences in order to use it to train himself as well as act as a bait.

If was rare for such a thing to occur, and even more so that the ghost was binded to the location. Therefore, Fang Yuan would not seal it up and instead, he would make full use of it by studying it.

Furthermore, he could use it to test his own progress in martial arts as well as test the effectiveness of martial arts or spiritual spells in dealing with these ghosts.

Finally, the bounty placed on the ghost by the government was also a bait. He might be able to bait other exorcists to the residences.

"Alright, let's begin!"

Fang Yuan's arms started to move slowly as he practised Jujitsu.

To a 5-year-old kid, he could not attempt the most strenuous exercises.

He still had to test out the possibility of using spiritual spells in this realm as well.

Every day, he also had to experiment in growing the seeds which he had smuggled out from the Ghost Garden.

Life ahead for Fang Yuan would be exciting.

"It's this type of realm again!"

After training, Fang Yuan arrived at the window. Looking at the tall buildings, a reminiscent smile appeared on his face.

[1]: Different tones for both names.

Chapter 509: The Photograph

"We will all surely die!"

In Silver Eagle University, in the private room of a cafe, a few people who seemed like students gathered together. They were all looking pale and panicky. "All of us have seen it. Lu Xia is dead. We cannot run! Everyone in the photograph will die!"

One of the girls could no longer hold it in and started to cry.

"Bai Ling, don't cry. There must be a solution!"

Beside the girl, a tall and handsome-looking boy comforted her as though he was her boyfriend.

"I don't care... I want to transfer out of this school and leave this place!"

Another girl started to wail.

"Rather than leaving, why don't we look for a monk or a daoist? They might be able to help us. Right, Brother Yang?"

The last guy wore spectacles. He was shorter and appeared decent. Under such circumstances, he was still able to keep his cool.

"Wu Lu, don't worry. Xiu Wen is right. There must be a solution to this!"

Yang Guang spoke with confidence as though he was trying to encourage himself. "We will surely be able to escape from that d*mned curse, for sure! Speaking of this, I have gathered information and realised that there are many respectable people in this field that we can pay a visit to. Perhaps... we can let them examine the photograph!"

As he spoke the word 'photograph', he became subconsciously softer as though he was in fear of something.

"Photograph?"

The two girls shuddered in fear and Xiu Wen raised his glasses before retrieving a monochrome photograph from his pocket.

On the photograph, there were 5 people and the background was an abandoned apartment.

However, where Lu Xia once stood, it was now white and empty as though the film of the photograph was overexposed. The remaining 4 of them had weird expressions and Bai Ling's face was beginning to blur up.

"Will the next one be Bai Ling?"

Xiu Wen mumbled to himself.

He could not throw this photograph away, and it was indestructible, even after being soaked in water or being burnt by fire.

Previously, before Lu Xia's death, there were the same signs on the photograph.

"No!"

Bai Ling screamed. "I don't want to die!"

"Relax, we'll protect you!"

Yang Guang hugged Bai Ling tightly. Witnessing this scene, Wu Lu's eyes began to tear up and Xiu Wen passed her a piece of napkin. "Lulu... Don't worry, I will protect you."

Wu Lu nodded her head and felt a tinge of sorrow in her heart.

She had always held a torch for Lu Xia. Although she knew that Xiu Wen liked her, she never reciprocated. Never would she have known that this weak-looking boy would feel so reliable now!

"We seem to have made a big mistake that time!"

Yang Guang suddenly spoke. "All of us were scared to our wits! How could we have forgotten to take the camera? There might be clues on it!"

"Are you crazy?"

Bai Ling turned pale with fear. "Didn't Lu Xia say that that was merely a second-hand camera? If we return to the apartment now, the 'ghost' might be waiting for us!"

"Of course I am not intending to go there alone! I am thinking of asking others to go, for instance, private investigators!"

Yang Guang held a piece of newspaper article in his hand. "The Great Detective Ma Wencai is a famous paranormal investigator. He has solved countless paranormal cases and will surely be able to help us. Although his fees are high, I am already prepared to use all my pocket money and my earnings from my part-time job to pay for it."

"Count me in!"

Wu Lu clenched her teeth. "If we can settle that ghost once and for all, it would be avenging Lu Xia."

In the newspaper article, Ma Wencai seemed to have grown plump. However, his face was still full of energy and the newspaper heading wrote: "Detective Ma breaks an impossible case once again..."

Bai Ling wiped her tears and seemed to have recalled what had happened on that day.

...

The afternoon sun of the hot summer made everyone groggy.

It was a rare break during the weekends and Yang Guang had asked Bai Ling out for an afternoon tea.

At this point in time, Lu Xia called Yang Guang over the phone. "Yang Guang? Do you want to explore? I've just bought a cheap camera and we can try to take some photographs!"

Yang Guang was interested in photography since young and often saved up to buy expensive photography equipment. Unsurprisingly, he was interested in Lu Xia's new buy.

"Alright!"

If Bai Ling could turn back time, she swore that she would have used every means to stop Yang Guang! Unfortunately, there was no such thing as 'ifs'.

Their meeting spot was an abandoned apartment in the outskirts of the city.

At the door of the apartment, Lu Xia, Wu Lu and Xiu Wen were already waiting there. As soon as they saw Yang Guang and Bai Ling arriving, they waved their hands in excitement.

"Why would you ever think of coming here to take photos?"

Yang Guang examined the apartment behind. It seemed to be built in the 90s. It was old and beyond repair, which gave it the creeps.

"Don't you know?"

Lu Xia appeared shocked. "This is a famous haunted house! The person who sold me the camera told me that this camera has a special function which allows it to capture paranormal presence. I want to try it out for myself too! Let's see if we can take any photo of ghosts or the likes."

Lu Xia was different from Yang Guang, who was an avid photographer. On the other hand, Lu Xia was fond of paranormal activities and his room was entirely decorated with paranormal sightings.

Yang Guang rolled his eyes. "But... those are rumours, right? I have never read any article about people dying in this apartment..."

In this realm, the richer one was, the more superstitious one would be. For the normal people, if they did not encounter any paranormal sightings, they would not pay attention to any news reports regarding these sightings.

Of course, Yang Guang was still right.

If it was something like the Chen Residences, there would already be police patrolling outside the perimeters to stop anyone who was trying to peek into the residences. They would also send scientists to conduct investigations within the residences.

Therefore, the claim that the apartment was haunted was most likely a baseless one.

"Alright, since I'm a bro, I shall accompany you this time. However, let me take a look at the camera..."

Yang Guang pointed at the black camera hung around Lu Xia's neck.

"No problem!"

Lu Xia passed the camera to Yang Guang and in no time, Yang Guang became completely obsessed with it.

This was an old school 'polaroid' and they could print the photograph immediately after taking it. There was a small flash mounted on the top of the camera as well.

"It's not bad! It's a really good deal!"

Yang Guang even felt a little jealous of Lu Xia when Lu Xia revealed the price of the camera.

"Haha, It's my natural luck!"

Lu Xia scratched his head. He was the most well-to-do among his friends. Even so, he had to think twice before making the purchase for the camera. However, after seeing the looks of admiration on his friends' faces, he felt that the purchase was totally worth it.

The group of them entered the apartment and it was exactly how they imagined it to be. Other than a few dark spots, there was trash everywhere and there was nothing special.

"Sigh... This is boring! So much for my imagination."

Lu Xia sighed as he gave a look of boredom.

"Regardless, in order to commemorate today, let's take a photo!"

Xiu Wen suggested a location. "How about there?"

"Hmm, alright!"

Yang Guang positioned the camera properly and set a timer. "3, 2, 1... Cheese!"

He quickly ran back to his friends to complete the group photograph.

The picture was printed out in no time and Yang Guang took it from the camera. "Eh?"

"What happened?"

Lu Xia started to pay more attention as he held the photograph in his hand. "It is a little overexposed. Why did my face become like this? Is this the camera's problem?"

In the black and white photograph, there were only 4 faces among the 5 of them. Lu Xia's face was blurred and even seemed a little ferocious, like an... evil ghost!

"Ahhhh!"

Yang Guang screamed as he threw the photograph onto the ground.

"What happened? Brother Yang"

Xiu Wen asked.

"Lu Xia's face smiled at me!"

Yang Guang started to shudder in fear. The dark spots in the apartment started to instil even more fear in him. "This place gives me the chills. Let's leave!"

"How can we leave? We need to at least take another picture!"

Lu Xia complained as he went to retrieve the camera which was positioned atop an old wooden box.

"Pa!"

At this point in time, a black hand appeared and slapped on the camera.

"This is..."

Yang Guang shivered and almost forgot to breathe. He saw... a charred silhouette climbing from the shadows, placing its hand on the camera!

"It's a ghost!"

The two girls shrieked, breaking the silence. Yang Guang and Lu Xia held them both and quickly left the apartment.

"Phew..."

Under the sunlight outside, the 5 of them were catching their breaths. "It's great that we are able to make it out!"

"Phew..."

Lu Xia took a deep breath and broke out into a cold sweat. "There... There's a real ghost! What the hell!"

Although he used to be obsessed with paranormal sightings, after seeing a real ghost, his heart was now filled with fear.

"Ahhh!"

Xiu Wen let out a piercing scream as he gazed at Lu Xia with a pale look. "Didn't you throw that photograph away?"

"I did!"

Lu Xia nodded his head. However, Xiu Wen slowly took a photograph out from his pocket, which utterly shocked Lu Xia.

"It... I didn't pick it up..."

Xiu Wen was on the verge of breaking down.

"Jerk!"

Yang Guang took a step forward, snatched the photograph and burnt the photograph to ashes with a lighter. "So what if its a ghost? The sun is shining brightly now..."

"Ahhhh!"

This time, it was Lu Xia who screamed. With a shivering hand, from his pocket, he took out another... black and white photograph! It was the group photo with the 5 of them!

However, this time, his facial features were even more blurred and he shuddered at the sight of it.

From that day onwards, the photograph became the ultimate nightmare for the 5 of them.

No matter how they tried to get rid of it by burning or tearing it, the photograph would miraculously appear in the hands of the 5 of them. With every new photograph, Lu Xia's body would slowly disappear and finally, all that was left was a white spot where he once stood.

On the day where Lu Xia had completely disappeared from the photograph, Yang Guang and the others had received news.

Lu Xia was dead!

He was burnt alive and it was due to the malfunctioning of an electrical appliance!

Their nightmares had arrived!

Chapter 510: The Next Death

The curriculum in university was not that stressful; with all that had happened to them, the few of them decided to skip classes and paid a visit to the respectable people which Xiu Wen had recommended.

"Andong Road... It is a very secluded street!"

When the bus finally came, Bai Ling examined her surroundings. "We are about to reach the outskirts of the city. Xiu Wen, is the master you are recommending able to help us?"

"Master Liu is a respectable man! At their status level, they will naturally stay away from the city, understand? It is already fortunate for us that he is not living in some cave in the mountains!"

As Xiu Wen spoke, his voice became softer and softer as though he had lost his breath.

"Regardless, let's pay him a visit! He might have his own style of doing things!"

Yang Guang was the basketball captain in university and was the leader among the few of them. Looking at the short buildings and smelly canals, he frowned.

The 4 of them walked through a few alleys and even got lost for a few times before finally arriving at their destination.

"Block 57, Andong Road, Unit no. 26. This is the place."

Xiu Wen examined the apartment before him. Would a real master really stay in this dilapidated place?

Mustering his courage, he looked for Unit no. 26 and knocked on the door. "Hello... Is Master Liu in?"

"Who's that?"

The door opened and an awful stench whiffed out of the unit. The two ladies quickly used their handkerchiefs to pinch their noses.

The unit was in a mess and there were a few altars lying around in a mess.

Of course, what had captured their attention was Liu Yuan.

The first time Yang Guan laid eyes on him, he thought he was looking at a wall of meat!

Liu Yuan was only wearing a pair of shorts. The fats on his body were folded in many layers as though he was a big fat pig!

"Are you Liu Yuan, Daoist Liu?"

Xiu Wen forced a smile.

"Oh, I recall. You have contacted me before. Are you looking to exorcise a ghost?"

The confused look on Liu Yuan's face disappeared and he became much more energetic. "Please come in!"

The few of them tiptoed into the apartment and opened a few windows before they could breathe normally.

"Haha... My place is in a mess. Please, make yourselves at home!"

Liu Yuan moved away a pile of dirty clothes from the sofa and invited them to sit.

"No, it's alright! We'll just stand!"

Wu Lu noticed the suspicious stains on the sofa and rejected the offer. Who would dare to sit on that sofa? Of course they would pass.

"Alright! I wonder what kind of ritual the few of you are interested in? The Middle Eastern one? Or the Western one? The daoist one? Or the Buddhist one? Or a mixed ritual?"

Liu Yuan rubbed his fists together and he resembled a butcher advertising his meat.

"Aren't you a daoist?"

Yang Guang looked around in confusion and realised that the several altars lying around were extremely mixed. There were daoist gods, Buddhist gods and even gods from the West.

"Sigh... This is for survival! I am well-versed in both Chinese and Western exorcism. Whatever type of service you are looking for, I will surely be able to satisfy you!"

Liu Yuan slapped his chest with confidence as he gave his assurance, but his pair of eyes always wandered to the two girls.

"Alright, if you are able to solve our problem, we will be willing to pay any price you ask for!"

Yang Guang slotted himself in front of Bai Ling and explained what had happened before taking out the photograph. "What do you think, Master?"

Although it was obvious that Liu Yuan was a conman, they were already too desperate. They were like drowning people. If they were to come across a strand of grass, they would still hold on to it tightly.

"Hmm... This is troublesome!"

Liu Yuan took the photograph over and examined it with a serious look.

"Do you think we have any hope?"

"The few of you... are being pestered by a ghost who was killed in a fire. In order to be saved, a Great Ritual Offering to the All-Embracing Heaven needs to be done!"

Liu Yuan shook his head. "We do not have enough materials here. I can only execute my version of it, known as the Small Ritual Offering to the All-Embracing Heaven. However, it will be enough to ensure your peace and survival for the entire year."

"Is that so? Quickly begin the ritual!"

Xiu Wen was getting impatient.

"No problem at all!"

Although Liu Yuan's room was dirty, it was still well-organised. Not long after, he was changed into a daoist costume and was wielding a wooden sword. The ritual began as he splattered water on the 4 of them:

"Disaster will be averted, the evil ghosts shall retreat as I order!"

"Rumble!"

As Liu Yuan executed his ritual, the flames on the candles in front started to grow bigger. Yang Guang and company started to feel hopeful.

"Master, how is it?"

"Don't worry!"

After the first round of ritual, Liu Yuan was heavily exhausted and was sweating profusely. "I have already engraved a daoist exorcism talisman on all of you! That evil ghost will no longer dare to approach you. Next up, as soon as you burn this photograph, you will be able to ensure peace for the following year!"

Liu Yuan gazed at the bronze basin before him and spoke in a serious tone.

"That's good!"

Yang Guang held the photograph and threw it in the fire basin forcefully.

"Whooo!"

The tongues of flame started to burn the photograph.

"It is finally over..."

Bai Ling and Wu Lu were on the verge of crying, while Liu Yuan was wiping away his sweat as he smiled at them. "Now, shall we discuss about the price?"

"Wait a minute!"

Xiu Wen screamed. "Look!"

Liu Yuan froze. Looking at the fire basin, the ashes slowly regrouped to form a new... photograph!

"You're a liar! Do you call this resolved?"

Yang Guang was enraged as he held his fists up high.

"Ghost... ghost!"

Liu Yuan was weaker than he thought. As soon as he witnessed this creepy scene, he froze on the floor and started to pee in his pants.

"Let's go!"

Bai Ling turned around. "He's a cheat!"

"Bang!"

"Bang! Bang!"

The door and windows slammed shut and the entire unit became dimmer.

"Whooooo!"

Under the glow of the candlelight, Bai Ling's body on the photograph started to blur up.

"Ah!"

The two girls screamed.

"Let's go!"

Yang Guang arrived at the door and realised that the doorknob was not working. Immediately, he started to kick at the door.

"No... save me!"

Behind him, Liu Yuan's cries were heard.

"Quick! Come on!"

Bai Ling's face was covered in tears and she was about to break down.

According to the signs on the photograph, she was the next victim the ghost would kill!

"Sha! Sha!"

"Sha! Sha!"

Behind, Liu Yuan's cries became softer and softer. A suspicious shuffling noise was heard as though something was crawling on the ground.

Wu Lu turned around. All she saw was a charred head reaching out from the darkness behind.

"Bang!"

Finally, after the two guys worked together, the door was kicked open, revealing a corridor.

"Let's go!"

Yang Guang held Bai Ling's hand and ran out of the unit before arriving at the stairs.

"Yang Guang! Save me! I don't want to die!"

Bai Ling started to sob.

"Don't worry, I will surely save you!"

The two of them held each other's hands and ran down, ignoring the cries for help behind them.

"Dong! Dong!"

"Dong! Dong!"

When they had arrived downstairs, they realised that it was no longer the entrance which they had come from, but an underground basement.

"What's happening?"

Bei Ling tightened her grip on Yang Guang's hand. "This was the path we took to come up!"

Looking at the dim surroundings around, she became increasingly frightened as she held on to Yang Guang's hand tightly and ran frantically.

...

"What happened?"

Xiu Wen, Wu Lu and Yang Guang ran out of the apartment and looked around.

"Where's Ling Ling? Where's Ling Ling?"

Yang Guang was starting to panic. When they first kicked the door down, Bai Ling became crazy as she ran out first with the rest following behind. However, they had lost her at the stairs.

"She was in front all along and should have come out first!"

Xiu Wen tried to comfort Wu Lu.

"Bai Ling! Bai Ling!"

Yang Guang shouted at the top of his lungs as his voice was filled with desolation.

...

"Wait a minute!"

Bai Ling could hear Yang Guang's voice from afar and felt confused. "Guang.... Guang is outside? Then who am I holding on to right now?"

After the brief period of confusion, she could feel a rough and burning sensation coming from her palm.

"You... you..."

Her body started to shiver as she tried to let go of the hand.

However, the other hand started to exert more strength and held on to her wrist tightly like a pair of handcuffs.

"No... Don't..."

Under extreme fear, Bai Ling turned around and all she could see was a charred corpse following closely behind her, holding her wrist tightly.

"Ahhh!!!"

...

"It's Ling Ling screaming!"

Outside, Yang Guang became mad. He ran up the stairs but soon after collapsed to the ground, paralyzed.

"Ah!"

Wu Lu and Xiu Wen followed closely behind. As they rounded the same corner, Wu Lu started to shriek and supported herself against the wall before gagging.

At that corner, a charred corpse quietly sat there and hugged its own legs.

From the appearance and the clothing of the corpse, it was Bai Ling!

"Let's go!"

Xiu Wen pulled Yang Guang along. "We cannot let others see this..."

They had already created a lot of commotion. If anyone were to come by to see this, they would surely call the cops!

If they were to be arrested and brought to the police station, even if they were not suspected of murder, they would still die anyway!

None of them felt that the police would be able to do anything against the ghost. If they were to be retained in the police station and were to encounter the ghost there, they would not be able to run away.

"Yang Guang, if you do not leave, how will you be able to avenge Bai Ling?"

Xiu Wen shouted in Yang Guang's ears.

"That's right! Avenge her!"

Flames of willpower erupted in Yang Guang's eyes. "I will avenge both Bai Ling and Lu Xia!"

He gritted his teeth as he stood up. "Let's leave this place now!"

"What do you intend to do?"

Wu Lu gazed at Yang Guang with a worried look.

"Will the next death be Wu Lu?"

Yang Guang felt his pocket and took out a photograph. Bai Ling's body was entirely white. Among the 3 of them remaining, Wu Lu's face started to blur up.

"The both of you, look for that detective!"

Yang Guang gritted his teeth. "I will return to the apartment to look for the camera and destroy it! It is the cause of all these!"