

Horrors 1041

Chapter 1041: My Family

Luo Ruoyu was New Century Park's guardian angel and Chen Ge's playmate when he was small. They had grown up together, and Chen Ge's parents treated her as their own. This daughter that was not technically there received no less love than Chen Ge. Normally, Luo Ruoyu hid inside the doll that Chen Ge had made when he was small. She had helped Chen Ge to escape the wrath of the red house by the Eastern Jiujiang Dam once. That was when she was seriously injured. Once she left New Century Park, she would lose all her power. Chen Ge did not expect to see her behind the door, much less in this manner.

"Dinner's ready." The man placed the trotters on a plate, stir-fried some vegetables, and called for dinner. Initially, the atmosphere was rather tense, but it soon relaxed. Chen Ge and the man were both smiling. Perhaps that was what family felt like.

"Chen Ge, why did you come home so late today? Is it because you don't dare come home to face me due to another bad test result?" The man kept taking the vegetables and skipped the meat. He looked much older and ragged than his actual age.

"No." Chen Ge did not know how to explain himself. The closer they were, the harder he found it to explain the situation. He did not want to be treated like a monster by his own father, and it was not so bad to live in this false happiness. Working his muscles, Chen Ge looked around the house. He did not answer the man's question but asked one of his own. "Where's mom? How come I don't see her?"

After saying that, Chen Ge instantly regretted it because he saw the light go out of his father's eyes.

"Is that why you didn't come home?" The man obviously had misunderstood Chen Ge. "I miss her, too, but we have to move on after her death."

He did not continue the topic but finished the dinner and stood up to walk into the kitchen.

Sitting in the living room, Chen Ge assessed his current situation.

A single parent family, the only person important to me other than my family is a teacher. This is a complete replica of Yu Jian's story. Now, I can confirm he has imprinted my own memory into his history, so I have the chance to experience what he's gone through. But what is the purpose behind this? To get me to see his perspective? To force me to turn crazy, to become a recluse like him? The world behind Yu Jian's door is too normal and peaceful. Everything that I've experienced so far is warm and nice. But if it's someday taken away or torn apart, I'll be in such pain and despair.

When Chen Ge was thinking, he felt someone grab his hand. Luo Ruoyu leaned against the dining table, batting her eyes. Her clothes had dirty spots from the soup.

"Get up from the table."

"I... I miss mommy too, but... but I will not run anywhere. I... I will wait for her here."

"Yes, we will wait for her here." Chen Ge hugged Luo Ruoyu's head. This family was too warm, a memory that was deeply treasured in his heart. After dinner, Chen Ge cleared away the table, carried the backpack, and entered his room. He lay in bed and looked at the night sky outside the window. Even

at night, the sky was heavy with rain clouds. There was no moon or stars. All the lights came from the fire in his memory.

“I have a feeling something bad is going to happen.” Even though Chen Ge was sleepy, he was not brave enough to fall asleep behind the door. After the things outside the bedroom had quieted down, Chen Ge wrote a note down and then slipped out the door with the backpack. “I shan’t waste any more time. Yu Jian must be somewhere in this town. Perhaps he is watching me at this moment.”

The moment he made to step out of the house, the night faded away, and the sun rose. Chen Ge was stunned, holding the doorknob. He looked at the windows in the corridor. The sky outside was gray with layers of clouds.

“Why did it turn into morning when I opened the door? Does this mean it represents a new day whenever I open the door? Is this home where everything begins?”

“Huh. Why did you wake up so early today?” Chen Ge’s father was well-dressed and walked out from the house. He was surprised to see Chen Ge.

“Everyone wakes up early occasionally.” Chen Ge planned to make a test. He walked out the door and then stood for a while before returning to his home and closed the door. As the door clicked, Chen Ge turned to the window and the sky outside was dark. His father hadn’t left the house for that long but he looked so haggard and there were small dark spots under his skin.

When I am home and close the door, night will fall immediately, but when I push the door open and step out, a new day will begin.

Chen Ge pushed the door open again. His father said the same thing, but the tiredness on his face became more obvious, and the black spots became more numerous.

No! Even though it doesn’t affect me every time I close and open the door, it will impose some kind of injury on other people in the town. My time is limited. After a few repetitions of this, everything I value might be torn apart. I must find Yu Jian before that happens and get to the bottom of the mystery here!

The people at the town were people Chen Ge could not forget. They were all made from Chen Ge’s memory. If something happened to them, it might mean that Chen Ge’s memory of them would be wiped out.

“Why are you standing at the door? Don’t you have school to go to?” Chen Ge’s father walked out the door, but he was stopped by Chen Ge. “What’s wrong?”

“If you’re that person from my memory, you will trust me implicitly, right?” Chen Ge felt like he was talking to himself.

“What are you talking about?”

“In this small town, you must be careful around a person called Yu Jian. He is the source of all the misfortune and pain.”

“Yu Jian?”

"I might come home late for this period of time and might do things that no one understands, but I hope you will trust me, no matter what happens." Chen Ge grabbed the man by his arms heavily.

"Looks like something really did happen to you." The man patted Chen Ge on his shoulder. "I trust you, but you have to trust your family too. If you can't solve this problem, remember the family is always your sanctuary."

The voice, the touch, the sight, everything felt too real. Chen Ge's mind wavered for a moment into believing this was all real.

"Of course." Carrying the backpack, Chen Ge walked out from the house. He decided not to open that home door for a long time. That way, he would get as much time as he could.

"Li Wan City is not as small as I hope. A carpet search does not sound possible."

Chen Ge decided to start his search at the school. Yu Jian's change happened at the school, and it was where the iron door was. This pointed to the fact that the chance of Yu Jian hiding there was high.

Chapter 1042: What's in the Bag?

After he met Yu Jian, all the puzzles behind this door would be solved. But more importantly, Yu Jian once actively interacted with the ghost fetus before; they had shared the same body for a long time, and he understood the ghost fetus better than anyone else.

The moment he stepped into the school, Chen Ge used his Yin Yang Vision. He memorized the faces of all the students, not letting one slip from his eyes. The bell rang for class, and Chen Ge filed into class rather unwillingly.

"I heard you didn't return home yesterday. What happened? Ran away from home?" Du Ming passed him a note. Chen Ge looked at it and crumpled it up. Even now, he had not understood the habit of passing note with dudes. The kid waved his fist at Chen Ge, but the latter ignored him and lowered his head to focus on the timetable taped on the desk. "English class is the third class, so I will have to stay in class for the first two periods, huh? That is such a waste of time."

Chen Ge formulated a plan for himself. He tossed it over to iron out the details and loopholes. After he made sure he was ready, he glanced at the clock on the wall. "How come only ten minutes has passed?"

The world behind the door was made from his memories. Chen Ge suspected that this happened because he often spaced out in class and kept wishing for the school to end, so it created this impression of a long school day. That feeling that turned into reality behind the door.

"Does this mean that time will move faster once school is over?"

Carrying his backpack, Chen Ge wondered if the teacher would be angry if he just walked out like that. "There's no reason to get in trouble with the school. Next time, I should just find an excuse to take leave from school."

It was math class, but Chen Ge's table was filled with English homework. He was prepared for the third period already.

“Hey.” Du Ming passed him another note. “What kind of club do you plan to join? Both of us are loners, so why not we join the same club? With a club activity, I’m sure we won’t be completely isolated.”

“Club?”

“Yesterday, after school, I saw some seniors giving out flyers. Some of the clubs even came to individual classes to get more members.” Chen Ge attended a private high school, so the system was rather different from public schools.

“You can go to the classes if you’re promoting a club?” The fatty did not realize he had triggered an idea in Chen Ge’s mind. “I can use that as a cover to openly check every class then.”

“How about chess club? There’s no physical exercise, and you can sit there and space out—isn’t it perfect?” Du Ming was not on the same wavelength as Chen Ge, but somehow, they managed to keep the conversation going. Finally, the period was over. Chen Ge grabbed the backpack and rushed out from the classroom. “I mustn’t waste the time during break. For someone who doesn’t have many friends, Yu Jian wouldn’t go anywhere and most likely stayed in class.”

He ran through the first and second floor, but when he prepared to get up to the third floor, the bell rang. Chen Ge did not care for it and continued to look for Yu Jian. There were no students in the corridors. Chen Ge was like a teacher, carrying his bag, using his Yin Yang Vision, ‘floating’ through each classroom.

“Stop right there! Which class are you from?” When Chen Ge reached the fourth floor, he was stopped by a middle-aged man. The man appeared to be the discipline teacher. He was the one who had introduced Zhang Ya to the class.

“I am going to the toilet.”

“Why are you carrying your bag to the toilet? You’re thinking about skipping class again, aren’t you?” The middle-aged man had a stern face. “Wait, what is inside your bag? Why is there a sharp corner? Open it now and let me check!”

Chen Ge did not mind being caught being late, but he did not know how to explain the things in his backpack. The high heels were one thing. Even though they were bloodied, they looked expensive and sexy. Chen Ge could say that they were a gift; that should be a reasonable excuse. But how could he explain the hammer? A hobby? A way to defend himself? No matter how he looked at it, the explanation was lacking.

“Well? Quickly open it!” The middle-aged man felt he had caught Chen Ge. He reached out to grab the bag. Chen Ge stared at the man’s balding head, wondering if he should end this interaction with a whack of the hammer. After dealing with so many murderers, Chen Ge had mastered the tricks of hiding a body to a certain degree. “With this one whack, this high school romance drama will officially turn into a mystery thriller.”

Even though this was a world behind the door, Chen Ge had his own principles. He did not make his move but turned and ran. In a bizarre turn of events, Chen Ge, who was often chased by Red Specters behind the door, was now being chased by a balding middle-aged man.

"I can't resort to violence. Perhaps that is what the ghost fetus or Yu Jian want me to do. They wish to push me step by step toward the deep abyss." The more he thought about it, the more he believed that. Chen Ge ran very fast, but the middle-aged man was fitter than he looked. He was running up to a dead end when a familiar voice came from the corner.

"Chen Ge? Mr. Si?" Zhang Ya stood at the door to the teacher's lounge, her eyes were filled with surprise. "What are you guys doing?"

"Miss Zhang! Quick! Help me stop him! This is too much!" The middle-aged man gasped heavily for air. He held his back for support. It did not feel like much when he was doing the chasing, but when he stopped, it was as if his lungs were burning.

"He wants to check my bag." Chen Ge hid behind Zhang Ya. "I just wanted to go to the toilet, but he insisted on stopping me."

The middle-aged man heard Chen Ge. "You're at school to learn! There must be something unrelated to school in your bag! If you're innocent, let me check it!"

Neither backed down, and it placed Zhang Ya in an awkward situation. "Please calm down, both of you. Mr. Si, you'd better slow down and catch your breath. Chen Ge might be naughty, but he's not a bad kid."

Then she turned to Chen Ge. "You'd better go back to class now, and pay attention in class."

Zhang Ya was obviously giving Chen Ge a way out. This angered Mr. Si. "You're not going anywhere! What's inside your bag? How come you ran so fast once I said I wanted to check it?"

One could not say that Mr. Si was wrong. He was just a stern teacher and felt responsible to the students.

The atmosphere was tense. Zhang Ya did not know what to say. She whispered to Chen Ge, "Why don't you tell me honestly if there's anything illegal inside the bag?"

"Teacher Zhang! Stop wasting time! Based on my years of teaching experience, there must be cigarettes inside the bag. Search it. I swear you will find some!" Mr. Si was so angry that the little hair he had left was standing upright.

"I don't have any cigarettes on me! I'm not even a smoker!" Chen Ge whined.

"Why do you refuse to let me see it then?" Mr. Si walked toward him, and Zhang Ya turned toward Chen Ge.

"Fine, if you want to know to see it so badly, I'll let you see it!" Chen Ge pulled the zipper open and pulled out the red high heels and hugged it in his chest. "After my mom passed away. This is the only thing she left me. I just want to carry them with me because they remind me of her!"

Keeping his head lowered, Chen Ge hugged the heels tighter, and he continued in a shaking voice. "I know how strange this looks. I am afraid that the other kids will make fun of me, but I just want a piece of her by my side. Have I done anything wrong?"

Tears squeezed out from his eyes. Chen Ge shoved the heels back into his backpack and turned to run away. Zhang Ya and Mr. Si were frozen to the spot. They had complicated expressions, and neither chased after Chen Ge.

Chapter 1043: Who Can I Share This With?

Back in the classroom, Chen Ge returned to his seat.

“Bro, are your eyes red?” Du Ming noticed that Chen Ge was feeling rather down. “Were you dumped?”

“I understand why you are so unpopular even though your results are so good.” Chen Ge ignored Du Ming. He turned his head away and started to think about another problem. Even behind the door, Zhang Ya was still protecting him. In the situation earlier, a new teacher did not side with the head of discipline but protected her own student. That was quite touching.

“In Yu Jian’s world, other than his family, only that teacher was helping him. Now that I am going through his experiences, the only person that I can rely on the most is Zhang Ya.” Chen Ge tried to keep his head up. He was reliving Yu Jian’s life, but the people around him were not Yu Jian’s family but his family from his own memory. “A lucky person spends his whole life healed by his childhood. An unlucky person spend his whole life healing his childhood.

“Even though we’re going through the same thing, a different upbringing and environment can change a person’s future. He wants me to experience his despair, but I wish to show him that everything is possible with hope. Before the reality collapses and the sea of blood overwhelms everything, I will try my best to help him. The ghost fetus never intended to help him. I must instill that message into his mind.”

The second period was finally over. Chen Ge leaned on the desk, looking out at Li Wan City. His brain had split the town into four sections based on the four corners—north, south, east and west. If he could not find Yu Jian at the school, then he would search the city one corner after another. The bell rang again. Chen Ge finally straightened up. He opened the English textbook.

“Even after so many years, I still can’t understand a single sentence from this.”

With Zhang Ya’s voice filling his ears, Chen Ge held his chin in one hand, and for the first time, he did not think about escaping from school. The students could see quite clearly that Zhang Ya’s gaze kept wandering subconsciously over to Chen Ge’s seat. There was apology and worry in her eyes. Finally, the bell rang; it was lunch break. Chen Ge’s home was quite far away from school. When he was young, he did not have the habit of going home early for lunch, and he did not intend to change that. When the bell rang to announce the break, Chen Ge walked out from the classroom. He carried the backpack and walked down the corridor alone to head to the rooftop.

The sky in Yu Jian’s world was always covered in clouds, and there was never any sun. Chen Ge stood on the rooftop. He used Yin Yang Vision and studied all the students below him. “Where is he hiding? This is his world but he is nowhere to be seen.”

Chen Ge distinctly remembered the voice of a man when he first entered the door. That person should be Yu Jian. “Trapped in the abyss of despair, he should be desperate for a savior as well.”

When he was thinking, Chen Ge heard the door behind him open. Zhang Ya appeared at the door. She was surprised to see him. Then she walked over with a light yellow lunch box. "Aren't you going home?"

"Not so soon. What about you? Why are you here at noon?"

"The canteen is too noisy. I prefer to eat in silence. Besides, the scenery here is beautiful, and no one will come disturb me." Zhang Ya walked to his side, and her eyes trailed to his backpack. "Are you still thinking about what happened this morning? I apologize for that. We weren't being considerate. Sorry."

"It's fine. If anything, I need to thank you. If not for your help, I would be in that old baldie's claws already."

"Old baldie?" Zhang Ya did not expect such a colorful description of Mr. Si from Chen Ge. She almost burst out laughing, so she turned her head to the side. Chen Ge was not paying attention to Zhang Ya but focused on the students below, and his brows creased. The school was almost empty, but Yu Jian was not to be seen.

"You seem to have many things on your mind. If you don't mind, would you like to share some of them with me? You might feel better after sharing them with another person." Zhang Ya's voice was mellifluous, like a chime in the wind.

"Don't mind me. You'd better finish your food before it gets cold." Chen Ge turned back to look at Zhang Ya. She was kind and gentle. If that tragedy did not happen, she would have been living a happy life.

"Do you want some? The canteen auntie has given me too much. I can't finish it alone." Zhang Ya probably wanted to get to know Chen Ge better so that she could help him better.

"It's fine, don't mind me!" Chen Ge was acting like a child. He ran to the other side and looked down the roof. A common person would not understand Chen Ge. They would not know what he was doing. In other people's eyes, Chen Ge was filled with anxiety, and there was a maturity about him that did not fit his age. All the students had left. The school was empty, but Chen Ge still had not spotted Yu Jian.

"Where could he be hiding? Do I really need to turn Li Wan City upside down? Do I have enough time? The people around me are getting visibly tired as time passes. I'm sure bad things will happen soon." Chen Ge was worried, but that did not help at all.

He carried his backpack and turned around. He noticed Zhang Ya sitting on the chair by the wall and staring at him.

"Sorry for making you worried." Chen Ge would never hurt those who only wanted the best for him. He walked toward Zhang Ya and sat down beside her. The items left on the roof were mostly defective. That was why they had been moved there.

"If you have any trouble, you really can share it with me. Perhaps I can help you." Zhang Ya was being too kind. Such people existed in the real world, and they were often the first to get hurt. Being near Zhang Ya, even behind the door, Chen Ge felt weirdly safe. He put down the backpack that he had been carrying and sidled toward Zhang Ya.

"I'm looking for a person. His name is Yu Jian."

"Why are you looking for him?"

“Because he is the source of all the misfortune here, and I have some things to tell him.”

“The source of misfortune?” Zhang Ya did not get what Chen Ge was saying. “Has he done something to you or your family?”

“No, I just want to help him.” Chen Ge did not know how to explain it. He had met many such occasions in real life. He was the one who entered the world of the supernatural. He could not share what he saw with others; he had to carry the burden alone. Even now, even though he knew Zhang Ya was not real, he still could not bring himself to say anything.

“Actually, I am quite tired myself.” Chen Ge leaned on Zhang Ya’s shoulder and closed his eyes, feeling the wind on his face.

Zhang Ya initially wanted to move away, but seeing that strangely familiar face, she did not have the heart to do so.

Chapter 1044: The Two at the Stop

Translator: Lonelytree **Editor:** Millman97

He closed his eyes for a rest. This was the first time that Chen Ge had felt so safe behind a door. After a moment, he felt what he was doing was quite inappropriate. He sat upright and whispered, “I’m sorry.”

This was something he had not experienced before, and then he realized the burning sensation that he was feeling was ‘shyness’. Without waiting for Zhang Ya to reply, he grabbed his backpack and slipped away. Closing the door to the roof, Chen Ge jogged out of school. Perhaps because of the running, his heart was beating very fast. “Looks like the ghost fetus is giving me more pressure than I thought. I shouldn’t underestimate this door.”

Exiting the school, Chen Ge followed his plan and started to search from the eastern side of Li Wan City. He could not employ the help from his workers, so he needed to rely on his super senses to feel out the cold and eerie locales. Chen Ge did not find anything the whole afternoon. He did not have any keys to go into people’s home. He did consider breaking and entering, but once he caught sight of a passing police car, the thought was safely out of his mind. The ghost fetus and Yu Jian wanted him to experience despair and sink into the dark. If he used violence, it might bring the darkness closer.

“This world is too big. Li Wan City, which was transformed by the shadow, is a 3.5-star scenario, so a completed Li Wan City should be a four-star scenario...” Chen Ge was startled with this thought. “Well, it is true that Li Wan City is part of my memory, but it could be part of the ghost fetus’ memory too. After all, the shadow’s old lair was Li Wan City.”

Chen Ge did not have a deep impression of Li Wan City. He did not know the exact location of each building. “Yu Jian’s life does not cross with Li Wan City. I’ve only been to Li Wan City a few times myself... Is it possible that this world also combines the ghost fetus’ memory?”

He was frightened by this thought. If that was true, the chance of the ghost fetus hiding there had multiplied. “I still cannot contact my employees, not even for simple communication. Now it’s a race against time, seeing whether my employees will break through the limitation first or the tragedy of this world will arrive first.”

The sky started to rain, so Chen Ge returned to school. He tried to communicate with other students, but they seemed to hate him and purposely stay away from him.

“Was I this hated during high school?” Chen Ge tried to think back to that time of his life. He felt like this was something Yu Jian had added.

“Playing truant, coming late to school, bad results, lack of a smile for anyone, I’d advise you to accept your fate.” Du Ming twisted open his thermos. He blew on it and then took a sip. “Actually, it’s not that bad. Loneliness is a one-man party, they say.”

1Chen Ge ignored Du Ming. He was concentrating on how to solve this problem. If Yu Jian had locked himself inside a room somewhere, without his employees’ help, Chen Ge would not find the guy.

“Looks like I still need to focus on the important figures in this world. Perhaps I can find some clues from Zhang Ya, my dad, and Luo Ruoyu.” Chen Ge turned to look at Du Ming. Technically speaking, this deskmate was an important figure, too. At least he had a lasting impression of Du Ming for him to appear.

“Du Ming, I have something to discuss with you,” Chen Ge whispered.

“Which subject’s homework do you want to borrow?”

“It’s not that. Can I please go to your home after school?” Chen Ge wanted to look for clues. Perhaps he could find some at Du Ming’s home.

“Definitely not. If my mom knows I hang out with you, she will break my leg.”

“You’re exaggerating. Auntie has always been nice around me, and she’s kind to everyone.” Chen Ge tried to fight for it. “Just think of it as a favor. We can sneak in. I mean, you do remember the birthday present I gave you, right?”

“Don’t you even mention that. The prank box that you gave me had a clown jump out from it. My mom opened it and sent it to the temple to be exorcised.” Du Ming shook his head. “She even said that if I bring anything from you home in the future, she will toss it out immediately.”

1“For real?” Chen Ge widened his eyes. This was not part of his memory. He was not sure whether he had forgotten about these episodes or Du Ming was lying to him. The rain was getting heavier, and the sky was darkening. Time moved so slowly that Chen Ge started to while away time by doing his homework. He waited and waited, and finally, it was time for school to end.

“Late afternoon every day, it starts to rain until the next morning. From the weather pattern, it seems like this world is repeating the same day again and again.” Chen Ge looked out the window and watched the raindrops slide down the glass. “Perhaps when Yu Jian left school that one last time, this was the weather.”

The school was almost empty. Chen Ge walked to the exit and realized that he had forgotten to bring his umbrella again.

“Don’t you have an umbrella?” Du Ming walked from afar with his school bag.

"I came out in a blur this morning, so I must have left it at home. You also don't have an umbrella?" Chen Ge studied the pouring rain. He could not help but feel that it signified something.

"Yeah." Then Du Ming took out a folded raincoat from his bag. "But I have a raincoat. See you tomorrow."

"Did you just come to me to show off your raincoat? After I leave this world, I'll be sure to pay you a visit." Chen Ge wagged his fist. Du Ming suddenly coughed. He sucked in his stomach, puffed up his chest, and lifted his head.

"Is that fear I sense? You knew what I meant by 'after I leave this world'? Damn you! You really have something to do with Yu Jian!" Chen Ge was about to chase after Du Ming when he heard footsteps coming from behind him. He turned to see Zhang Ya standing beside him. "Zhang... Miss Zhang?"

"It's unwise to get into fights with your friend." Zhang Ya opened the umbrella. "You didn't bring an umbrella again? Come on, I'll walk you to the bus stop."

She stood next to Chen Ge and walked into the rain together. They left Du Ming in a bright yellow raincoat standing in the rain.

"What's this feeling?" Du Ming looked at his raincoat. "I've obviously won, but how come I feel so defeated?"

Chen Ge did not have time for Du Ming. He leaned closer to Zhang Ya. "How about I carry the umbrella?"

"No way, I'm the teacher. I should be the one looking after you. If I let you take the umbrella, it'll feel so strange." Zhang Ya rejected his offer with a smile. They walked to the bus stop like the previous day. Since they had missed the peak hour, they were the only two at the stop. Neither of them spoke; one looked at the falling rain, and the other studied the passing cars.

This time, the bus on Route 104 arrived first, but Chen Ge did not move.

"Your bus is here. Remember to bring an umbrella tomorrow," Zhang Ya reminded him, but Chen Ge stood where he was. "The bus is leaving. Chen Ge?"

"I'll leave after you get on your bus." Chen Ge looked at their reflections in the puddles. "This way, at least we'll be together a little bit longer."

Chapter 1045: Something I've Been Meaning to Do [2 in 1]

Translator: Lonelytree **Editor:** Millman97

The deep gray city was shrouded in heavy rain, the traffic on the road dwindled, and eventually, only the falling rain could be heard. Everyone on the street appeared to be rushing somewhere, and the small bus stop by the roadside was like an abandoned corner that had been forgotten by the world. Chen Ge held his backpack as he continued to study their reflections in the water puddle. Zhang Ya held the umbrella, and surprise crossed his eyes. She was obviously startled by the statement that Chen Ge had made.

As the bus on Route 104 slowly trundled off down the street, it was replaced at the stop by the bus from Route 4. "Miss Zhang, your bus is here. I will see you tomorrow."

Chen Ge waved his hands, and his face had a very happy smile on it. He watched as Zhang Ya walked toward the bus on Route 4 as he leaned against the bus stop sign, the smile on his face slowly disappearing as Zhang Ya walked away from him.

"I cannot go home. The minute I push open the door of my home, night will fall, and when I come out, it will be the beginning of a new day. When the city submerges into darkness, the dirtiness and evil hidden in the corners should be eager to reveal itself. Hopefully, I will gain something of value tonight."

Lifting his head, Chen Ge believed that he was the only one left at the bus stop. The bus whistled to announce its departure from the bus stop. The engine growled, and the bus soon departed from the stop. In the rain, Chen Ge stopped a woman holding a red umbrella.

"Zhang Ya?" The bus had already left the station, but Zhang Ya stood where she was. She did not get on the bus. "Why didn't you get on the bus? Wasn't that your bus?"

Chen Ge looked at Zhang Ya curiously. The woman held the umbrella and slowly walked back toward the bus stop.

"I've spent every day ever since I was here preparing my study material for the next day, and then I leave on the last bus of the day." Zhang Ya pointed at the sign that Chen Ge was leaning against. "The bus just now was supposed to be the last bus. You did not get on it, and you did not take an umbrella. I am afraid that you will not return home again, just like last time."

"I..." Chen Ge, who was always quick with words, found himself stammering at that moment. He did not know how to answer or how to come up with a reasonable excuse.

"It seems to me that you are afraid of going home." Zhang Ya walked to stand before Chen Ge. "Can you tell me why?"

"It is nothing important..."

"Did you get into an argument with your family, or have you run into actual trouble in your life?"

Concern was deep in Zhang Ya's voice. Her kindness and warmth were something innate, and that made it exceptionally difficult for one to purposely deceive her.

"I know that under that trouble-maker exterior, there is a kid with a good heart, but in that same heart, there appears to be many other things. I have noticed that you have never really smiled sincerely since I first met you."

Chen Ge did not respond. The rain continued to pour. Even though they were standing under the bus stop, the rain was so heavy that the splash was enough to make both of their clothes wet. Neither of them left. After a while, Zhang Ya opened the umbrella and looked at Chen Ge rather helplessly.

"If you are unwilling to share, I cannot force you to do so." She waved at Chen Ge. "Come on."

"Where are we going?" Chen Ge was startled. This time, he was truly surprised.

“We will go to my home so that we can get you a fresh change of clothes. You will get a cold wearing that set of wet clothes for so long.”

“Is that really a good idea?”

“It will be a worse idea for me to abandon you at this bus stop. The rain will not slow down anytime soon, and it is getting late. It is too dangerous for you to stay here alone.” Zhang Ya wiggled the umbrella, and the water droplets flung around. She was like the kind sister next door. Even when she pouted in helplessness, it did not detract from her natural beauty. “But you should really try to communicate with your family members. Through my experience, I’ve found that many problems can be solved through a good communication, especially when it is within a family. Anyway, that is enough lecturing for now. Stop hesitating, come with me.”

Chen Ge could not open the door of his own home, so to buy more time, he was half persuaded and half willing to follow behind Zhang Ya. The two walked down the street for quite some time before they spotted a taxi on the road. When they arrived at Zhang Ya’s home, the sky was already completely dark.

“Is this where you live?” Chen Ge did not have any memories of Zhang Ya’s house or room. In his mind, Zhang Ya had always stayed at the dormitory. When he pushed open the door, he found a small room of about sixty cubic meters. Even though the place was not big, it had everything that a person would need to survive and flourish.

“I used to live in the city, but after my parents got into an accident, staying in the old house kept reminding me of them. I would walk around the room and think that I saw them standing there. After a while, it took such a toll on me. Therefore, I had no choice but to sell that house, and I used the capital from that sale to purchase this small house in this city.”

Zhang Ya seemed to have emerged from the sadness already, judging from the calm tone that she employed to tell the story. Of course, she could have been just putting on the front for Chen Ge. That morning, after she found out why Chen Ge had been carrying the pair of high heels with him at all time, she had felt her heart giving slightly. Because she had been through the same experience, she was able to empathize with him.

Putting away the umbrella, Zhang Ya moved to switch on the light in the living room. “I did all the decoration and the purchasing of the furniture myself, so what do you think? It is not so bad for a non-professional, right?”

When Zhang Ya was speaking, Chen Ge looked around the room. His eyes travelled to the trash can, and he was surprised to notice a few empty cans of beer inside and peels of carrot skin that had gotten brown with spots.

“Teacher, you’re a drinker?” That was a habit of Zhang Ya’s that Chen Ge did not expect.

“You make it sound like I have a serious problem. I only drink once in a while.” Zhang Ya changed her shoes and went to tie up the plastic bag that held the trash inside the can. “I will go get you a set of dry clothes. Please wait here a moment.”

Seconds later, Chen Ge changed into the clothes that Zhang Ya offered her. It was a round-neck T-shirt that Zhang Ya herself wore.

"I hope you don't mind wearing that, but that is probably the only thing in my closet that will fit you. I don't think you'll be willing to try on my dresses, right?" She joked.

"No, this is fine." Chen Ge looked down and noticed that he was wearing the same t shirt as Zhang Ya, but the color was different.

"Give me your wet clothes. I will dry them off for you. In the meantime, you should go over to the couch and start working on your homework. It will be time for the mock exams soon. You should pay more attention to that. Perhaps some pressure would be able to help you." Zhang Ya took Chen Ge's and her own wet clothes and entered the bathroom. Chen Ge looked left and right. He placed the backpack that was half wet next to the couch and opened it to give its content an inspection.

"Thankfully, neither the comic nor Zhang Ya's storybook got wet." Chen Ge also felt like taking out his homework to make a good impression on Zhang Ya, but the problem was... he did not even bring his homework with him. Several minutes later, Zhang Ya came out from the bathroom. She took a glance at the clock on the wall. "You must be hungry. Let me see what's inside the fridge. I'm afraid it won't be anything fancy, but I am sure I can whip up something for us to eat."

"Teacher, how about I help?" Chen Ge looked at Zhang Ya, who moved around in the kitchen, and he could not help the smile that appeared on his face.

"You know how to cook?"

"Yes, you've had a long day at work. Let me cook for you. Consider it my appreciation for everything that you have done for me today." Chen Ge nudged Zhang Ya lightly but firmly to the side. He peered into the fridge and saw many common food ingredients. There were several tomatoes, a few carrots that looked so disfigured because the person who went at them with the peeler was so inexperienced, two cucumbers, a whole block of tofu, half a piece of chicken breast that had seen better days, a slice of lean meat, and half a bag of left over pickled mustard plant stem. "Huh, and I thought a Demon God's menu would be much different from us normal people."

"Do you need my help?" Zhang Ya was suspicious of Chen Ge's cooking ability. After all, there were not that many high schoolers who knew how to cook.

"Just take a seat on the couch and try to relax. A kitchen is where a man can work his magic." Chen Ge first pulled out two small bowls. In one bowl, he cracked an egg and seasoned it with salt and other condiments. He then took out the chicken breast and cut it into slices before tossing them into the bowl with the egg mixture to marinate. In the other small bowl, he poured some water and soaked the pickled mustard plant stem inside it.

Then, he opened the stove and drizzled some oil over the pan. He cut the block of tofu into smaller, edible pieces and then fried them until their surfaces were golden brown. He picked up the tofu and set it to the side. Using the residual oil that was left in the pan, he sautéed some garlic, spring onion, and ginger and poured in some sauce that he made earlier along with the tofu back into the pan to simmer.

Closing the lid over the pan, Chen Ge moved onto the next dish to prepare. He grabbed the knife and diced the tomatoes that Zhang Ya had started to cut earlier. Then he poured a generous amount of white sugar over them. He took out the cucumber, peeled the skin off, and took out the seeds. Similar to how he had prepared the tomatoes, he diced it and then seasoned it with salt and other seasoning. He

placed the vegetables on the same plate. On the left was the sugared diced tomato and on the right was tossed cucumber. One was sweet and the other salty, two flavors on one plate.

After he was done with that, Chen Ge took the lean meat and cut it into strips. He stir-fried the strips in the pan and then took out the pickled mustard plant stem that had been soaked in the water. He cut the it into smaller pieces and tossed it into the pan to fry together. Then he added seasoning.

By then, the braised tofu was ready. He took a bowl from the kitchenette and served it. After some cleaning up here and there, Chen Ge found a pot, filled it with water, and placed it on top of the stove. After the water boiled, he found a pack of leftover noodles in the fridge and dropped them inside the boiling pot. When the noodles were ready, the kitchen was already filled with the delicious smell of stir-fried mustard plant stem with meat strips. Chen Ge grabbed a colander to strain the noodles and then mixed it together with the stir-fried mustard plant stem with meat strips.

The rice cooker dinged.

Chen Ge looked at it and called out rather naturally, "Teacher, do you mind grabbing two bowls of rice for me?"

"For dinner, I have prepared golden tofu, noodles with pickled mustard plant stem, and some popcorn chicken that I will make in a minute. From the appearance, the chicken breast is going to spoil soon. I think we should finish it tonight."

Zhang Ya's eyes were as wide as they could be. Her kitchen had never smelled so delicious before.

The chicken breast had been marinating for quite some time already. The last step was very simple, which was to coat the cut chicken meat with starch powder and drop it into a boiling pot of cooking oil. The chicken bits came out glistening with oil, and the smell was heavenly, but Chen Ge still looked not quite satisfied.

"If only I have some breadcrumbs, the double-coating would make this much crispier."

All the dishes were served. They filled up the small dining table. Even then, Zhang Ya still could not believe that these dishes had been made from the leftovers that she had sitting inside her fridge.

"For the main meal, we have the noodles, tofu, and the chicken. If you think the chicken is too oily, there's the mixed cucumber to help balance out the oiliness. But if you do not prefer salty food, I have also prepared mixed tomato with white sugar. It is a salad with refreshing tartness from the tomato and a kick of sweetness from the sugar." Chen Ge saw Zhang Ya's eyes glowing, and her smile only grew bigger. He cleaned up the kitchen, but honestly, there was not much cleaning to be done because the man had been picking up his trash while he cooked. Finally, he joined Zhang Ya at the dining table. He saw that Zhang Ya had not moved her chopsticks. Obviously, she had been waiting for him to join her.

"Let's start." Zhang Ya took a bite of the tofu. It was crispy on the outside and tender of the inside. The frying was so well done that it secured the juices inside the tofu so that it would burst with liquid once one bit into it.

"So, what do you think?"

"It's wonderfully delicious!"

Chen Ge sat across the dining table from Zhang Ya and watched her eat. The corners of his lips could not help but turn upward on their own. "If only I could cook for you every day."

1 The storm was brewing outside. It was thundering. But inside the room, the two were enjoying a rare moment of peace, sharing a simple dinner together. Chen Ge wondered when and if they would have this chance again in the future. The dinner was quickly swept up. Zhang Ya volunteered to clean the table and ushered Chen Ge to take a seat at the couch. The latter tried to stop himself from staring at Zhang Ya, but for some reason, his eyes kept wandering over to her. As if feeling his eyes on her, when Zhang Ya put away the utensils, she lowered her head, and she happened to look into Chen Ge's eyes.

Chen Ge held her gaze for less than a second before he quickly lowered his eyes and pulled out Yan Danian's comic and pretended to pore over it.

"Are those your own drawings? They are very impressive!" Zhang Ya, who was done with the dishes, moved to the couch. The living room was not that big. With just the couch and the coffee table, there was not much space left.

"They were drawn by my friend." Chen Ge closed the comic, but it was clear the Zhang Ya did not believe him.

"Are you sure you're not lying to me? Actually, I admire those with artistic talent, especially when that is not the only talent they have."

"Alright, you got me. Actually, I drew them myself." Shamelessly, Chen Ge admitted it. After all, Yan Danian was unable to show up to reveal his lie at that moment.

"Jesus, I do not even know to deal with you anymore." Zhang Ya chuckled. She poured two cups of tea and placed them on the table. "How come I feel like you know pretty much everything other than studying and paying attention in class?"

"You are just about right there." Chen Ge thought about it. Indeed, it was true that he was multi-talented and was skilled at many different things.

"Well, someone sure is confident in himself." Zhang Ya shook her head. "But it is not bad to have one's own hobby and to focus on it. To train and channel one's energy into the interest, it's an empowering feeling..."

Chen Ge could pick up the traces of disappointment. He was suddenly reminded of something. In real life, Zhang Ya was studying to become a ballet dancer, and she even won first place at a big competition for it. But in this world, she had somehow turned into an English teacher, a career choice that had pretty much nothing to do with dancing.

He sidled closer to Zhang Ya, picked up the cup of hot tea, and handed it to her. "Actually, I can see that you have been trying to put on a strong and powerful front for the world to see. But from the first moment I saw you, I knew that you have many things hidden in your heart. You just could not find the avenue to share them, or perhaps you are too afraid to say them out loud."

The tea in the cup was wafting with vapor, and the two sat together. A home-cooked meal pulled them closer together. It should be Zhang Ya as the teacher who counsel Chen Ge, but from some indeterminate moment, it was Chen Ge who tried to open Zhang Ya's heart. "Other people only saw you

for your good personality, kindness, and gentleness, but I care whether you have been wronged or not. Has life been unfair to you?"

He had silently scooted close to Zhang Ya. Chen Ge picked up Zhang Ya's bedtime story. "I never had that concern about other people before, but after getting to know you, I have a feeling that I am close to someone who is covered in scars but tries her best to show the world that she is fine with a plastered smile on her face."

After a long time, Zhang Ya lifted her head. She looked at Chen Ge, and as per her habit, she tried to respond with her practiced smile. But she failed.

"Actually, I thought you felt familiar when I first saw you. Perhaps because we come from the same background." Zhang Ya took a sip from the tea. "You might not believe this, but I used to learn ballet. That was the love of my life. I loved it more than anything. When I was dancing, I could feel myself being one with the wind. I could fly, open my wings, and drift off from the earthly worries of this world."

"But what happened?"

"When I was at school, no one was willing to be my friend. My classmates all started this rumor that I was soliciting myself, and the rumors only got worse and worse. But none of those rumors stopped me from chasing after my dream." Zhang Ya put down the teacup. "One afternoon, something happened. I was practicing in the dance room, and a drunkard suddenly barged in, shouting. I was so scared. The only thing in my mind was to run away from him. I believe I screamed for help, but no one appeared to have heard me. Still in my dancing outfit, I ran downstairs and finally saw a teacher walking my way. I quickly hid behind him, and he helped me stop the drunkard from getting any closer.

"I thought that was the end of that horrible incident, but who knew it was just the start of a nightmare? The next day, when I came to school, everyone was whispering and pointing at me behind my back. Before the first period was even over, I was called to the office.

"To my surprise, the drunkard was also there. The man and the teacher who saved me ganged up together and said that I was trying to seduce the drunkard in the dance hall. I don't even know why they would do something like that. Perhaps the drunkard was afraid that I might press charges, so he struck at me first. As for the teacher, who knows why he chose to side with an outsider and not his own student? Perhaps he was bought out with money. In any case, no one was willing to stand on my side. Everyone at school took that as the truth."

Zhang Ya found it difficult to continue. "After that, I could not bring myself to enter the dance hall anymore, much less practice alone. In fact, I had a hard time being alone after that for a long time."

Chen Ge patted Zhang Ya's shivering shoulder and allowed her to lean on him.

"But everything is okay now. As I promised you, we'll be close to each other like a person and his shadow. You will never be alone again."

Chapter 1046: Tragedy Is Like a Pair of Invisible Hands [2 in 1]

Two lonely, gentle souls were comforting and curing each other. They sat in camaraderie on that stormy night. The rain lashed against the window, like a crazed drummer, but inside the house, it was like a completely different world. The storm was venting anger and dissatisfaction, but inside the room, it

radiated Zen and peace. The clock ticked rhythmically, and the teacups on the table were giving off steam. "It should be me who is supposed to comfort you, but once you got me to start bringing up these things. I could not help myself. I believe that I have already gotten past the ugly history, but I know I am just lying to myself."

At the end of the day, Zhang Ya was an adult, so she soon adjusted her emotions. Chen Ge also pulled his hands back. He knew how to gauge the situation and knew how to maintain a comfortable distance from each other so that it would not become too awkward between them. The distance was not too far, but it was not suffocatingly close.

"This rain is probably going to keep on going all night." Zhang Ya stood up to look out the window, and then she pulled back the curtains. She went back to sit on the other side of the couch. "Well, you now know about my past, but from today, I will stop running away from it. Promise me that you will try to do the same. Take the first step and try to move on."

As she said that, she took out her phone. "You need to give your father a call. I am sure he is worried sick about you. Other than that, I wish to have a brief talk with him. I do not wish for what happened to me to repeat itself with you. If you face any trouble in your life, trust that I will do everything within my power to help you overcome it."

Being the target of nasty rumors, being ostracized, being the butt of the joke, Zhang Ya had gone through all of that. She could identify and empathize with the victims, so she cared very much about her students. Despite, or rather, because of all the wounds on her body, it helped Zhang Ya evolve into a kind and gentle soul. She did not become a dancer like her dream, but she became a teacher. Perhaps at the back of her mind, if the teacher did not lie that day but came forth with the truth of the incident, everything might have gone down a different path. She could not change the past, so she chose a different path. At least in her class, she would not allow a similar tragedy to repeat itself.

Everything appeared to be going well, but Chen Ge could not stop the anxiety that was burgeoning in his heart. To have a person experience despair, one had to first give him a good taste of happiness before taking everything away from him.

"Do you still not trust me?"

With the encouragement from Zhang Ya, Chen Ge called his father's number, and the call was connected after it only rang twice. "I am now at my teacher's place..."

It was a simple, warm conversation between family members. There was nothing wrong with it. The father and son shared a friendly relationship. They respected and understood each other. There was no situation where the parent was placed on a higher hierarchy and the child had to listen to the orders of the parent no matter what simply because the parent was the parent.

After Chen Ge finished his part of the conversation, he handed the phone over to Zhang Ya. Zhang Ya and Chen Ge's father spent quite some time discussing Chen Ge's future and his education. At around 11 pm, Chen Ge carried Zhang Ya's sheets and lay down on the couch. He buried himself under the covers. "This is so soft."

"Be careful. Keep yourself tucked in, or you'll catch a cold." Zhang Ya stood at the bedroom door. Her place was not big—it only had one living room and one bedroom.

“You are the one that should be careful. Remember to lock the bedroom door.” Chen Ge waved at her.

“Haha. It’s not your place to remind me of that, but thank you anyway. Good night.”

“Good night, may you have a sweet dream tonight.”

After the bedroom door was closed, Chen Ge lay on the couch alone, and he found his brain was drawing a blank. “I have not had such a happy and easy dinner in such a long time already. Furthermore, this is the most relaxing rest I have had in an even longer time. I have a hard time believing I am currently in a world behind the door.”

His mind was completely relaxed, he might just drift off without him realizing it, and that would be extremely dangerous. “I cannot let my guard down because the ghost fetus and Yu Jian should be waiting for the moment to strike.”

He turned the light off and waited until midnight. He walked into the bathroom to change back into his own clothes. Even though they had not completely dried, it would do given the circumstances.

“It’s about time to leave. There are no clues about Yu Jian at Zhang Ya’s home. Staying any longer will just be a waste of time.” Rationality told Chen Ge that he should leave now and use the rest of the night to search Li Wan City, but when this thought entered his mind, his body tried its best to reject it. It was as if there was another voice in his head that was telling him to stay in this warm cocoon of comfort.

“The reason I am here is to search for clues in Zhang Ya’s home. I will not get another chance like this. In other words, this will be my last time here. In many ways, this will be the last time I ever do something like this.”

When he reached the door, Chen Ge stopped. He turned his head back to glance at the door to Zhang Ya’s bedroom. “At eighteen, Zhang Ya became a Red Specter, and at twenty-five, Zhang Ya became a responsible teacher. The combination of both should be the real Zhang Ya.”

Honestly, when Chen Ge first received Zhang Ya’s love letter, there was only fear in his heart, and death shrouded him like a heavy cloud. The first time Zhang Ya showed herself was during the livestream for Chen Ge’s search for the murderer during the Murder at Midnight Trial Mission. He encountered the murderer inside the small cabin in the woods, and it was Zhang Ya’s timely reminder that saved his life.

Then, he picked up his courage to visit Western Jiujiang Private Academy. After he found out about Zhang Ya’s story at the dance studio, even though he was still afraid of Zhang Ya, in that fear, there existed a trace of empathy. Due to this feeling, he voluntarily helped Zhang Ya search for the killer responsible for her death. He could still remember the details from their first meeting like it was yesterday.

Truthfully, that was not that long ago. But the things that they had experienced since then could not be summed up easily in one or two sentences. “Before this, I was only given the chance to meet Zhang Ya, who had become a Red Specter. This time, behind the door, I’ve been given the chance to get to know a different side of her.”

Chen Ge walked to the bedroom door and placed his palm lightly against the door. He had no idea whether Zhang Ya was already asleep or not. He hesitated for a long time before he whispered, “I’m so lucky to have met you in this life.”

Carrying his backpack, Chen Ge picked up the black umbrella under the table and left the red umbrella behind. He quietly opened the front door. Chen Ge did not fall to the desire to spend the night at Zhang Ya's. He hurried out into the rain. Following his initial plan, Chen Ge decided to continue his search at the eastern side of Li Wan City. The city in the rain was completely different from how it presented itself normally. There were no streetlights and no cars on the road. "It feels like I am the only one left in this world after the sun has fallen."

Chen Ge was a person of the dark. He inspected the buildings one by one, but his search led him to nothing. He did not spot anyone outside or inside the buildings. "The place is getting more and more oppressive, and I feel more and more uncomfortable, but the problem is that I cannot pinpoint where in lies the problem because there is no obvious change to the things and people around me."

The heavy rain finally petered off at dawn. Chen Ge arrived at the school early in the morning. He leaped over the fence and entered the school grounds. He opened the classroom window, jumped through it, and went to his seat. The students gradually filed into the class. The first class of the day was English. Before the teacher arrived, Chen Ge asked Du Ming for his homework and copied it under the record time of ten minutes.

"Thank you. In the future, I shall repay you by offering you a free ticket to my haunted house." Chen Ge returned Du Ming's homework. It was then that he noticed something was off. The boy who was normally such a chatterbox did not say anything this time. He seemed to be in a bad mood. "Are you okay?"

Du Ming still did not answer. He kept his head lowered like he was afraid to look at Chen Ge.

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After the morning classes, Chen Ge stretched lazily. He was about to have a chat with Du Ming, but the little fatty grabbed the schoolbag and left like he could not wait to get away from the class, or probably from Chen Ge.

"Something is not right. I have to get to the bottom of this." Chen Ge hurried after his deskmate. As he walked out the door, he bumped right into two other male students.

"I am so sorry." Chen Ge did not want to get into any unnecessary altercations, so he quickly apologized.

"Oi, look where you're going next time. This is such bad luck." One of the students patted his clothes like any contact with Chen Ge would leave traces of bad luck on him. He seemed to have unfettered hatred for Chen Ge and mumbled under his breath. His voice was low, but with his super hearing, Chen Ge could hear him clearly. Basically, he was using ad hominin against Chen Ge, calling him a b*stard for being raised by a single parent, how he was so unlucky that even his own mother had chosen to abandon him.

"My friend, it is not good to talk about another person like that. In the future, I will come and explain to you why it is not good to talk that way about another person," Chen Ge said with a smile on his face. He memorized the faces and voices of those two boys and then left in a hurry. It was not that Chen Ge was open-minded enough to not care about their comments—he simply thought that there was no reason to take things too seriously with people who were about to die.

The two male students thought that Chen Ge was afraid of them, so they grumbled behind him with derision. Chen Ge noticed something sinister from their behavior. Tragedy was about to arrive. The things in this world had started to target him personally. "Have the ghost fetus and Yu Jian finally lost their patience?"

Due to the interruption from the two students, Chen Ge failed to catch up to Du Ming. He took a detour around the education block before arriving at the rooftop with his backpack.

Opening the door, Zhang Ya was sitting alone where they had sat yesterday. There was a lunch box placed next to her. It was like she was waiting for someone.

"Miss Zhang?"

"I'm surprised that you came." Zhang Ya waved for him to come over. "When did you leave this morning?"

"I left once the rain stopped. That was the first time I spent the night at another person's house. It was quite embarrassing." Chen Ge sat down beside Zhang Ya, and for some reason, his heart started to race.

"Have you had your lunch?"

"No."

"It's not good for your development for you to keep skipping lunch like this." Zhang Ya opened the lunch boxes that were stacked together. "Coincidentally, I prepared another box today."

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After the lunch break, Chen Ge returned to the classroom, and Zhang Ya returned to the teacher's lounge. The second period after the lunch break was still Zhang Ya's class. Chen Ge was quite happy, but during that class, the classroom door was suddenly pulled open. Mr. Si waved at Zhang Ya from outside the door. It appeared that he had something important to tell her. Before she left, Zhang Ya had a smile on her face, but when she returned, her brows were creased deeply together. However, she soon reverted to her usually bubbly self. She knew better than to allow her personal emotions to affect her students.

After the class was over, Zhang Ya hurried out.

"Has something happened?" Chen Ge carried his backpack and chased after her. Once he got to the corridor, the whispering of two students travelled into his ears.

"I heard that the new teacher was just given a stern lecture by the discipline head. It was apparently because she got a bit too close with one of the students here."

"But that's probably just a teacher being concerned about her student, right? There is nothing wrong with that."

"Who knows what is happening behind closed doors? I heard that the new teacher already has a trail of bad history following her. She always gets into similar trouble, and that's why she was sent to a small town like ours to teach English."

“Are you being serious? This is some serious allegation.”

“Someone told me that, but I am sure it’s all true. I mean, just look at her.”

“You have a point there. Such a beautiful woman coming to a small town, I doubt it is for the meagre salary of an English teacher.”

“That’s right. These days, you can’t trust anyone, not even figures of authority who are supposed to protect you.”

Chen Ge had no idea where the rumors started, but he knew it would be pointless to tell the students to shut up because that would not stop the rumors from spreading like a pandemic.

“The ghost fetus and Yu Jian are probably waiting for me to make my move.”

After everyone had left, Chen Ge stood near the teacher’s lounge. The rain outside the window had started to fall again. Zhang Ya was once more the last to leave the teacher’s lounge. She spotted Chen Ge, who had been waiting for her, and Chen Ge noticed her at the same time. Chen Ge had no idea whether his presence would continue to bring trouble to Zhang Ya or not. After he ensured that there was no one else in the building, he chose to walk toward her.

“Why are you still at school? Shouldn’t you be at home already?” Zhang Ya asked with the usual smile on her face. She was adept at hiding her real emotions. Looking at her smiling face, one would not think that something was bothering her.

“Please don’t suffer being wronged just because of me. You can tell me anything. I will do anything for you.” Chen Ge took out the black umbrella that he had removed from Zhang Ya’s home. He did not return the umbrella to Zhang Ya. “You are the only person around me that I can share my feelings with so openly.”

“I know.” Zhang Ya walked closer to Chen Ge, and she repeated what Chen Ge said in a softer and gentler tone, “You are the only person around me that I can share my feelings with so openly.”

She opened the red umbrella with a ghost of a smile lingering on her face. “Actually, I need you to do many things for me. For example, I need you to pay more attention to your studies. Do not get into any fights with your family. Try to befriend the other students in your class.”

“I will try my best to do all those things. I will fulfill all the requests that you have for me, but in return, I need you to promise me one thing.” Chen Ge looked at Zhang Ya seriously.

“What is it?”

“If you one day feel like the pressure is too much for you to bear, before you leave, I hope that we will be able to see each other one last time.”

“Why do you think I’ll leave anytime soon?” Zhang Ya shook her head. “You are overthinking things.”

“That does not matter. Just promise me that you will do that.” Chen Ge pleaded like a child.

“Alright, I promise you. If the day comes that I feel like leaving this place, you will be the first to know,” Zhang Ya replied rather helplessly.

“Okay then.” Chen Ge’s face lit up like a child.

“You are such a kid sometimes.” This time, Zhang Ya’s smile did not feel so forced. It was a genuine smile. “Since you brought your umbrella today, you should go home now. Remember to send me a message when you reach home. If you find it difficult communicating with your family, you can give me a call any time. I will help you communicate with them.”

“Don’t worry about me.” Chen Ge lived up to his promise. He did not wander about the city that day. After Zhang Ya left, he left the school by leaping over the wall just in case the guards saw them and started yet another rumor. Chen Ge purposely tried to increase the distance between them, and he returned home early that day.

“Big... big brother...” When Luo Ruoyu saw Chen Ge, she happily came to the door to welcome him home, but Chen Ge did not step into it.

“Ruoyu, are you home alone?”

“Yes, yes. Daddy... daddy, still... work.” Luo Ruoyu looked at Chen Ge confusedly as if wondering why he was not stepping into the house. Her blinking eyes kept staring at Chen Ge.

“Then I will wait for him here.” Without closing the door, Chen Ge sat down. Luo Ruoyu followed him and leaned against him. With nothing better to do, Chen Ge decided to tell her some stories to pass the time. As the only member left in the Ghost Stories Society, Chen Ge had a library of stories to tell. However, in the stories that he told Luo Ruoyu, he purposely left out the darker parts and only told her the brighter parts of human nature.

After who knew how long, Chen Ge’s father finally returned. He looked even more tired than the day before, and the arms that carried the bags of vegetables had obvious black threads all over them.

Chapter 1047: You Have Her, I Have Sin [3 in 1]

“What are you doing standing outside? Why don’t you come in?” After seeing Chen Ge, the fatigue on his father’s face depleted slightly as the man forced himself to show his son a smile. “Also, how did you end up at your teacher’s house last night? Do you know how much trouble you might cause her?”

The familiar nagging came, but the man did not complain to Chen Ge about how difficult and tiring his job was, and he did not use that as an excuse to demand that Chen Ge do something for him. “Come on in then. It is great that you are home tonight. I will go and prepare dinner for you guys now. Come on.”

“I cannot go into our house.” Chen Ge stood at where he was. The previous night, he had inspected parts of the eastern side and western side of Li Wan City. With two more days, he would have completely searched the entirety of Li Wan City.

“What’s wrong?” The man obviously did not expect Chen Ge to refuse to go into the house even when they were already literally standing right before the doorstep already. He stopped moving and turned toward his son. “This is our home. It is the place that will give you comfort and rest when you are feeling down or tired. Why do you refuse to come home? Is there anything that you are afraid of? If there is, please tell me.”

Indeed, in Chen Ge's mind, his home was a place of warmth and comfort, but that was not the case in Yu Jian's mind. Once he stepped into the home, the night would fall, and the sun would only rise after he left the home. Chen Ge honestly had no idea why Yu Jian would have this kind of impression of his family and home. Even though he did not have a father, he had a mother that loved him aplenty.

Seeing Chen Ge standing on the spot and refusing to budge, the man sighed and relented. He was in no position to force his son to do things that he did not want to. "At least come back in to have some bites after I am done preparing dinner."

He let out a light sigh and walked into the kitchen. Soon, there came the sound of plates falling and shattering from inside the house. It sounded like Chen Ge's father had tripped and fallen. Chen Ge's body instinctually rushed into the room, and he ran to his father's side. The latter was leaning against the wall with his hands over his stomach and shattered pieces of china around him. "The medicine, the medicine is in the outer pocket of the jacket."

Chen Ge followed the instructions and jogged to find his father's jacket. In the pocket, Chen Ge found a small medicine bottle. The label had been torn off, so he could not tell what kind of medicine it was.

"I will prepare the dinner. You should go and get some rest." Chen Ge picked the man up from the ground. Luo Ruoyu leaned against the kitchen door to look into the room. Her eyes were filled concern. After dinner was ready, Chen Ge sent Luo Ruoyu back to her own room. After he tucked her in, he returned to the kitchen to pour two glasses of warm water and headed into his father's bedroom. Closing the door behind him, Chen Ge placed the water glasses on the bedside table and moved a chair to take a seat next to his father in bed.

He gripped his father's hand and looked at the tired and weak man who was wrapped up underneath the blanket. In his mind, his father was a mysterious, funny, knowledgeable, and interesting person who had the ability to solve any problem that came his way. His wide back had always stood before little Chen Ge, helping him block the wind and the sun. He had never imagined that he would one day be in this position, sitting by the bedside of his ailing father. The pain from his stomach caused Chen Ge's father to curl up in a fetal position. He arched his back and turned away from Chen Ge as if he was unwilling to let his son see him in this state.

"It has been almost twenty years already, we never had the chance to have a talk like this before. Life has been pushing me forward, and honestly, I have gotten used to the high pace. Before the day you guys left, I didn't realize that the independence that I knew was merely an independence in terms of a survival skill." Chen Ge had many things to say, things that he would have trouble sharing with others that were not those who were closest to him.

"What are you talking about?" The man's face was pale. He leaned against the pillow and hesitated for a long time. It appeared like he had something to tell Chen Ge, but in the end, he decided against it. "Who did you learn to cook with? Was it someone at school? That person is a good teacher. The dinner that you prepared was delicious."

"Perhaps it was from the good cooking genes that I have inherited." Chen Ge passed the warm water to his father. "What was the medicine that you took earlier?"

"It is just some medicine for the stomach. It is no big deal."

“If you are ill, you’d better focus on curing it. You know that you can let go of the responsibility you have toward the family temporarily. I will help you take care of Ruoyu.”

The man before him was a figment of Chen Ge’s imagination. In a way, Chen Ge was calmly having a conversation with his own ‘father’ in a very unique way. The two had a very long chat and unraveled the misunderstanding that could have existed between them. Chen Ge was most worried about the man’s physical body. He hoped that he would have an early rest, but the man stubbornly requested for Chen Ge to stay by his side and kept on impressing on him the responsibility of becoming the head of the family. The man was like a broken record, and the thing that he repeated the most was ‘take care of yourself and your little sister.’

When the sun was rising, the storm stopped. Chen Ge once again walked to the door. However, before he could step out, there came another sound from his father’s bedroom. He quickly ran over to check on his father. He saw the man sitting by the bed all dressed up with one hand on his stomach and the other rummaging through the drawer as if looking for something.

“You should skip work today if you are not feeling well.” Chen Ge helped him find the medicine. Looking at the black threads on the back of his father’s arms, Chen Ge was sure that that was not some kind of normal illness but a curse. The ghost fetus and Yu Jian were cursing Chen Ge’s memory. They were behind Chen Ge’s father’s weakening by the day. Chen Ge had seen through their plan. They were coming after the people that cared about Chen Ge. They wanted Chen Ge to experience the same despair as they did, watching the people that he loved leave him one by one.

Flipping through the comic, Chen Ge tried the call the many names, and a thin blood vessel appeared on the comic. “I still need more time.”

After ensuring that his father would take a day off work, Chen Ge grabbed his backpack and headed to school. When he passed through the school gates, he did not feel anything was particularly out of place. It felt like any other day.

When he came to the class, many students were already there. Some had their books open before them to prepare for the upcoming classes. Some were memorizing vocabulary. Others were hurrying to borrow homework from their friends to copy. Chen Ge walked to his seat. He glanced to his side. Du Ming had his head lowered while he was busy correcting something. His table that was next to Chen Ge was neatly stacked with the homework from many different subjects.

Even though Du Ming had not spoken a word to Chen Ge, the message that he was trying to send was obvious—If you need to borrow anything, just take it.

Compared to Du Ming, who was still a child, Chen Ge was practically a demon fox with thousands of years in training already. He knew that Du Ming had been paying attention to him. What has happened to this kid? Why did he suddenly decide to stop talking to me? Could he be the source of all the rumors that have been flying all over the school?

In his own memory, even though Du Ming could be categorized as a selfish person, he would never go around and spread rumors. The boy had no interest in the rumor mill. After all, he would rather spend the time studying. The boy might run his mouth occasionally, but his results always placed him in the top ten students in the school. He spent very little time on entertainment and was a model of self discipline.

Chen Ge did not reach over to grab any of Du Ming's homework. Instead, he took out the English textbook and started to work on the homework himself.

"I should start with the multiple choice questions. If only the Pen Spirit was here with me right now." The third period that afternoon would be the English class. When Zhang Ya entered the classroom, many students started whispering to each other. The rumors and ad hominen did not disrupt Zhang Ya's teaching condition. She led the class like normal. During the fourth period, Chen Ge was surprisingly paying attention in class when he suddenly received a call.

The call came from his father's colleague. The man said that his father had suddenly fainted at work and was being sent to the hospital. He told Chen Ge to hurry and get there as well. As the eldest son of the family, he felt that responsibility. After explaining the situation to the teacher briefly, he left the school in a hurry and rushed toward the hospital in Li Wan City. Pushing open the door to the sickroom, Chen Ge's father was still unconscious. "Doctor, what is wrong with my father? Why did he suddenly faint?"

"We are conducting the examination now. Please calm down. We need you to go and wait outside, or you might disrupt the patient's recovery." Chen Ge was chased out of the room by the doctor. He sat on the bench outside the hospital room, patiently waiting. Ten minutes later, he heard more footsteps from the corridor.

"Chen Ge, what did the doctor say?" Zhang Ya had hurried to the hospital. She knew about Chen Ge's family condition and was Chen Ge's class teacher. She felt that it was her responsibility to be there for him at this difficult time in his life.

Seeing Zhang Ya in person, Chen Ge felt slightly more comforted. "They are still conducting the examination, but I suspect with the town hospital's medical standard, even if they can discern the illness that he is suffering from, they are incapable of curing him."

Looking through the sickroom window, Chen Ge saw the black threads that had increased on the back of his father's hands. The black spots that represented the curse had spread all over his father's body.

"If you need any help from me, just tell me." Zhang Ya handed the lunch box over to Chen Ge. "I do not have any classes this afternoon. You should go back to school. I will wait here for you. If anything happens, I will call you at the first moment."

"No, I don't think I will leave this place. I have a bad feeling about this." Both Zhang Ya and Chen Ge skipped school that afternoon. It was when the sun had almost set that Chen Ge's father regained his consciousness, but his condition was very bad.

"Leave the family chores to me. You should focus on treating your sickness." Chen Ge called the red high heels' name in his heart, but he got no response. However, the page on the comic where the red high heels was hiding had a thin blood line that surfaced on it. The employees were close to breaking through their shackles. Chen Ge held his father's hand. Not many people would be able to share what he was feeling at that moment.

When all the Red Specters could break through the barrier, this world would shatter. He would return to the real world, but at the same time, he would lose everything that he had experienced in this made-up dream world.

Chen Ge returned home when the sky was already dark. He just got into the staircase when he heard the sound of Luo Ruoyu running to open the door. No matter how tired, how low one was feeling, when one got home to a warm light, and someone to open the door, that was a kind of simple happiness that many people would forget to appreciate.

“Big... big brother...”

“Daddy will stay outside for a few days, and he temporarily will not be home. I will cook dinner for you, okay?”

Luo Ruoyu had no idea what being hospitalized meant; she was just happy to see Chen Ge. Entering the house, Chen Ge prepared the dinner and served it on the dining table, but Luo Ruoyu did not move to take a bite.

“What’s wrong? Do you have no appetite?”

“Where... where is daddy?” Luo Ruoyu hugged the bowl. She wanted to wait for their father to come home before they started dinner.

“He has to stay at the hospital because he is sick. He will be back in a few days.” Chen Ge sat on the other side of the table. The room that was normally so cramped felt so empty and hollow that night. Chen Ge was sitting at the spot where his father usually sat. Perhaps when he was not home, this was how his father and Luo Ruoyu spent their nights together.

“But daddy...” Luo Ruoyu hugged the bowl and continued to stare at Chen Ge. She kept repeating the same words, and tears were threatening to flow out of her eyes. Chen Ge knew that a conventional explanation was not going to work. Chen Ge called his father on his cellphone and then placed the phone next to Luo Ruoyu’s ears.

After hearing her father’s voice, a smile immediately lit up the girl’s face. Chen Ge placed the phone on the table, and Luo Ruoyu finally started to have her dinner. Hearing the occasional hacking that came from the phone, Chen Ge found himself unable to move his chopsticks. He looked at Luo Ruoyu silently and the rather hollow home that they were sitting in.

The owner of this house is my father. If he leaves one day, I will take over everything and look after it for him. Now that I think about it, this old house is not that different from the haunted house.

At that moment, Chen Ge finally understand the meaning of Luo Ruoyu’s presence in the world behind this door. Luo Ruoyu was the first Specter that had appeared to accompany Chen Ge in his mind. This little sister represented the family other than his own biological father, and she also represented the employees that could not be wiped away from Chen Ge’s mind.

I swear I will not crumble so easily in protection of this family.

After putting Luo Ruoyu to bed that night, Chen Ge stayed inside the house. Once he pushed open the door, the next day would arrive. To delay the time as much as he could, he did not go anywhere. The blood vessels in the comic continued to increase in number, and the rain outside the window continued to become heavier and heavier.

Once dawn arrived, Chen Ge carried his backpack and went to school. He noticed quite visibly that people had started to toss strange looks at him. He did not mind these things. Attacks based on rumors and empty words would not affect his emotional level and mental stability.

When he arrived at the classroom, Chen Ge found Du Ming in a worse state compared to the previous day. There were black rings under his eyes, his lips were chapped, and he did everything he could to avoid meeting Chen Ge's eyes. Chen Ge still did not borrow Du Ming's homework to copy. He knew that Du Ming was hiding something in his heart.

During the lunch break, Chen Ge tried to talk to Du Ming, but the latter was acting very strangely. It appeared like he needed to make some kind of deep determination before he could even talk to Chen Ge.

"Did something happen to you?" Chen Ge did not think Du Ming would go around spreading those nasty rumors, but he had a feeling that Du Ming knew something about it. During the lunch break, Chen Ge first went to the hospital to buy some food for his father, and then he bought two packets of lunch and took them home for Luo Ruoyu. He could not step into the house, so he handed the lunch to Luo Ruoyu at the door. The brother and sister sat in the stairwell. As they had their lunch, Chen Ge told Luo Ruoyu stories.

After the many interactions, Chen Ge confirmed that Luo Ruoyu's presence was a representation of the workers at his haunted house. Initially, she was only willing to stay inside the house and would never step out of it. But with Chen Ge's aid and persuasion, she had started to open herself up to the outside world and enjoyed the air outside the house. After ensuring that Luo Ruoyu had finished her lunch, Chen Ge returned to school. He sent some messages to Zhang Ya. They always had something to talk about, and they would never run out of topics.

When he reached home that night, Chen Ge decided to teach Luo Ruoyu how to do some housework and teach her some simple life skills. Things that were like second nature for a normal person proved to be extremely difficult for Luo Ruoyu. She had trouble controlling her body, and she had a very hard time understanding simple language. One had to repeat things many times for her to get it. Chen Ge tried to educate her for a very long time, but the results were less than favorable. Even so, Chen Ge still lavished her with praise.

The night turned into day, and day into night. The days passed in a blur. Chen Ge had never once closed his eyes. His mental state had reached an extreme. On the ninth morning after Chen Ge entered this world behind the door, the comic in his backpack finally a few pages that were completely dyed red, and he finally could gain contact with his employees.

"The final showdown should happen anytime now."

Carrying the backpack, he pushed open the door of his family home. The gray clouds pressed low in the sky like they were trying to suffocate the people in the world. Not only the people at the school, even the neighbors had started to give Chen Ge and Luo Ruoyu strange looks. The rumors had spread that far. When he went to school, the first class of the day was English. Chen Ge was ready for it.

For the past few days, Du Ming did not utter a single word to him. The usual chatterbox had become so unusually quiet. He stopped communicating not to only Chen Ge but also everyone else around him. His

face blanched day after day like he was suffering from some illness. His results were affected. The small quiz that they had yesterday sent his placement back ten spots.

“Do you need any help?” After these nine days, Chen Ge had practically turned the whole of Li Wan City upside down. Even though he still had not found Yu Jian, through different clues and ideas, he had a general idea where Yu Jian was hiding. The competition started the moment he stepped through the door. Leaning on the table, Du Ming’s long sleeves accidentally scooted up his arms to reveal the bruises underneath them. He looked even more tired than Chen Ge.

“Your family beat you? Simply because you scored worse in the test yesterday?” Chen Ge’s voice was small, but Du Ming heard him clearly. The latter’s hands clenched together before they slowly loosened. The boy ignored Chen Ge and buried his face into the textbook. The class started, but halfway through the first class, Chen Ge and the rest of the class heard the sound of an argument coming from the corridor. The sound came from the teacher’s lounge. Instead of calling it an argument, it was more like the one-sided venting of a woman.

When he heard that voice, Du Ming’s face paled even further. The boy looked like he was in physical pain. There was some self-recrimination, some embarrassment, but more than that, there was an emotion that was hard to pinpoint.

They waited until the class was over. Chen Ge immediately grabbed his backpack and prepared to leave, but as he got up from his seat, Du Ming suddenly reached out to grab at his elbow. “What’s wrong?”

“I’m sorry.” After saying that, Du Ming let go of his elbow. By then, Chen Ge had a brief idea of what had happened. He took a deep breath and ran out of the classroom. The door to the teacher’s lounge was locked. Chen Ge pushed away the group of students who had gathered around the window, and he looked in through the window.

Four parents were surrounding a female teacher and scolding her rapidly and relentlessly. Their spit flew everywhere, and their faces were twisted in disgust and anger. Mr. Si tried his best to mediate and promise to the best he could by the parents. The argument in the teacher’s lounge went through the roof. The students outside the office treated this like some kind of concert. They were having the time of their lives. Some even cheered the parents on. Only Chen Ge stared at the female teacher quietly.

The questioning that came from nowhere, the sin that was pinned on her for no reason, and the rumors that became more and more ridiculous by the hours. Chen Ge felt the urge to blast into the room with Doctor Skull-cracker’s hammer and smash everything into pieces, but he did not do that. He asked himself, what would he do if this happened to him in real life? What would a boy at his age do when he experienced such a thing in his life? What could he do at this very moment? In reality, he could not do anything. He could only stand outside and watch because anything too obvious would only make a bad situation worse.

“Was Yu Jian feeling this helpless before? Being possessed by the ghost fetus, he was much stronger than me. He could have easily killed everyone in the room, but he did not do that. The ghost fetus would have continued to urge him to do so, to turn him into a demon who hated everything, but he went against the ghost fetus’ wishes. This should be when the separation between Yu Jian and the ghost fetus reached its limit.”

More and more students gathered outside the teacher's lounge, and finally, the teacher inside relented. The office door was pushed open. The person who led the heckling bunch of hens was a middle-aged woman. She looked very stern, and her face was still covered in anger. When she first stepped out of the teacher's lounge, her eyes seemed to zero in on Chen Ge, and her anger reached to the top of her head immediately. She was about to unload on Chen Ge when the female teacher whom they had been giving a dressing down earlier stepped forward to stand between the woman and Chen Ge.

"Whatever you have against me as a teacher has nothing to do with the innocent student." The female teacher did not say anything else, but her countenance was firm. She was unwilling to move even one step, completely different from how gentle she was normally. The woman called her something very nasty that would have gotten this book banned if it was written down before being pulled away by the other parents. They left the school compound with Mr. Si bowing and apologizing profusely to them.

"Go back to your classes now. There is nothing to see already." The female teacher urged the students to leave. Then she glanced at Chen Ge and whispered in the gentlest tone she could manage, "You should also return to class."

"I'll talk to you in the afternoon." That was all Chen Ge said. After the crowd dispersed, he walked away from the female teacher. He returned to the classroom and saw that Du Ming was leaning on the table, pretending to be asleep.

"Du Ming, why did your mother come to school today?"

Du Ming did not say anything in response. All Chen Ge heard was heavy breathing.

"She seemed to have misplaced all the wrongdoing and fault on Miss Zhang, but I am the one who was behind all those things." Chen Ge tightened the grip around the pen that he was holding, and his voice was getting louder and louder. "It was me who affected your studies, it was me who borrowed your homework, and it was me who interrupted you during your studying to chat every single day. The whole classroom would be able to be my witness, but they were all pointing their fingers at Miss Zhang. Why? Why did they do that when I am the one who made all the mistakes?"

"Stop! That's enough!" Du Ming finally shouted back at him. He was highly agitated. He seemed to be in a tenser situation than Chen Ge.

Seeing Du Ming in that state, Chen Ge did not wish to push him any further. He left the boy with one last statement. "The two of us are the recluses of the class. Neither of us has a friend. The only person that we can share our story with is each other. In a way, you are actually my only friend."

Hearing Chen Ge say that, Du Ming's breathing became very agitated like he was suffering from asthma. He appeared to be in great pain.

Chapter 1048: The Distance Between Life and Death [2 in 1]

Translator: Lonelytree **Editor:** Millman97

"Are you alright?" Chen Ge twisted open a bottle of water for Du Ming. "How about some water?"

Du Ming collapsed onto the table, buried his face into his textbook, and held his stomach with both hands. "I did not mean to do it. I did not expect it to turn into something like this."

“What exactly did you do?” Chen Ge did not get mad. If anything, the gaze that he had for Du Ming was filled with more pity than anything else. Du Ming did not respond. He merely shook his head lightly. His mental condition was stretched to its limit, in a way, rather similar to Chen Ge’s condition.

...

After the fourth class, when there was no one around, Chen Ge sneaked his way up to the rooftop of the education block. Zhang Ya was standing by the edge of the roof. He walked to stand beside her silently, the two of them watching Li Wan City expand below them. The education block was one of the taller buildings in the city, and this very moment could not help but remind Chen Ge of the incident that happened in the Li Wan City behind Xiao Bu’s door. At that time, Zhang Ya had accepted his request and become part of his shadow.

The wind carried the chilling raindrops that landed on their faces. Zhang Ya’s hair was blown aside by the wind behind her. Suddenly, she said, “I might be leaving after some time.”

“Is it because of me?” Chen Ge had predicted this outcome. He had spent the whole morning rehearsing this scenario in his mind, but when Zhang Ya laid it out in the open for him, the statements that he had practiced were lodged in his throat.

“It has nothing to do with you.” Zhang Ya shook her head rather resignedly. “The reason is because of me. I always assume that I have walked away from the past, and I can begin a new life with a smile, but I was only lying to myself. Working hard, keeping myself busy, everything that I have done is merely a reason for me to escape. Actually, it has been so many years now, but I still feel like I am trapped inside that dim dance hall.”

Standing next to Zhang Ya, Chen Ge gripped the rail tightly. He could empathize with her because he was the only person in this world who knew about Zhang Ya’s actual past. Be it in the real world or this made-up world behind the door, Zhang Ya had chosen to share her secret only with him.

“If anyone is in the wrong, it is those who began and spread the rumors. Give me some time. I will get to the bottom of everything and show everyone the truth.” Chen Ge had been wanting to do that. Even if this was just behind the door, even if everything that had happened was just derived from his own memory, he still had the urge to help Zhang Ya, to give this nightmare a brand new beginning.

“The truth does not matter. What really matters is you. I am afraid that what once happened to me will recur again with you.” Zhang Ya cared about Chen Ge. When the whole town was swirling with the rumors about them, Chen Ge still sided with her and trusted her implicitly. She had not experienced that before. Even with the age gap between them, there was one thing that was undeniable—she did sense something that was different about the young man beside her.

“I can leave, and I can try to run from everything, but you can’t.” Zhang Ya stood before Chen Ge and leaned in close. “Your father is still recovering at the hospital, and you have a little sister to take care of. In the future, these responsibilities will fall on your shoulder. You mustn’t let my issue affect your life.”

“I already have a general idea of who started the rumors. We can...”

“Chen Ge.” Zhang Ya raised her arm, and the slender finger pointed at the heavy and dark sky. “This separation does not mean that we will never see each other again.”

Zhang Ya seemed to have already made her decision. If she forced herself to stay, she would continue to be spoken about behind her back. Actually, Chen Ge knew that it was not easy for Zhang Ya to make this decision. She must have taken a long time to consider it again and again. His hands that gripped the rail had turned white, and blood vessels shot out beneath Chen Ge's eyes. He took a deep breath to steady himself. "Sometimes, I feel that this world is a very awful place. It will always reach out toward the kindest person to torture them."

"The world itself is not good or evil, but do not lose faith in the good people in the world. Once there are more good than evil people in the world, the world itself will change into a better place." Zhang Ya reached out to help Chen Ge adjust his hair that was blown disheveled by the wind. Her cold finger stopped at Chen Ge's cheeks. "So, in the future, you have to try to become someone good. It is time for you to go back. You still need to prepare lunch for your family. Do not waste too much time on me."

Taking back her hand, Zhang Ya turned around to look at the school compound that had become her second home for these past few days. It was hard to tell what was going through her mind.

Standing behind Zhang Ya, Chen Ge looked at her back. He raised both of his hands before putting them down again. He left the rooftop and the school to head to the hospital. After buying food for his father, he bought another lunch box by the roadside and returned home to meet Luo Ruoyu. When he reached his own residential area, Chen Ge stopped at the door. Normally, when his footsteps echoed down the corridor, Luo Ruoyu would run over to open the door for him, but that day, the little girl did not show up.

"Nothing will have happened, right?" Chen Ge called Luo Ruoyu's name out loud. He believed that he could hear the sound of suppressed crying coming from inside the house. "Ruoyu?"

Pushing the door open, Chen Ge was hit in the face by a horrible smell of leaked gas. Ignoring the rules, he dashed into the room. The kitchen was filled with puddles of water, and shattered pieces of the glass thermos littered the ground. He ran into the kitchen and saw Luo Ruoyu curl up at the corner with her hands covering her ears. Before her was a broken thermos. Her shirt was wet, and her neck, arms, and fingers had been scalded. Tears hung on her face.

"Who told you to use the stove!" Chen Ge kicked the broken thermos away. He had never been this mad in his life before. Hearing the roar from Chen Ge, Luo Ruoyu cried even harder. Her red and scalded hands shielded her face, and the tears kept on falling. Switching off the stove, Chen Ge did not give it another thought as he carried Luo Ruoyu and ran outside as fast as he could.

Once he stepped out from the door, it was already the beginning of a new day, but Chen Ge was not in the mindset to care about that. He carried Luo Ruoyu, called a cab, and rushed to the hospital.

Thankfully, only a small part of her body was burnt. The majority of it was centered around her arms. The doctor applied some ointment on Luo Ruoyu, but the girl was still like a doll whose soul had not returned. She appeared to have been severely traumatized by this incident.

"The condition is not as serious as it looks, but as her family member, you have to be careful. It is too dangerous for a mentally-challenged child to stay at home alone."

After the doctor left, only Chen Ge and Luo Ruoyu were left in the sickroom. When the ointment was still slathered on her skin, it would sting, but after a while, it would give off a chilling feeling. Luo Ruoyu

placed both of her arms beside her body. She did not dare look at Chen Ge. She kept her head lowered and wept as softly as she could.

After standing for a while inside the sickroom, Chen Ge placed his backpack down and sat beside her on the bed. He pulled her in for a hug. "I am sorry. I should not have shouted at you."

The girl in his embrace was shaking. A dam seemed to break inside her. She leaned against Chen Ge's shoulder and started to wail.

"I know you just wanted to help. You did not want to be a burden to others. I know you have tried your best. I can see that now." Chen Ge tightened his embrace around Luo Ruoyu. "After all, we are each other's most important family."

In this world behind the door, Luo Ruoyu represented his family and also represented the once homeless haunted house workers as well as the lingering spirits that were trapped inside the deepest abyss of despair before they were offered a home by Chen Ge. So, no matter what happened, Chen Ge would also stand at the forefront, overcoming the training of the night, and was never stingy with his encouragement. Chen Ge did not ask for anything in return; he did all that merely because he had treated them as part of his family.

After she cried for a while, Luo Ruoyu became tired and fell asleep. Even so, her hand was still clutching the edge of Chen Ge's shirt. After tucking Luo Ruoyu into bed, Chen Ge left the room silently. The blood vessels in his eyes were getting more and more pronounced, and the comic in his backpack had started to change.

"The tragedy is slowly approaching. Since this is a dream weaved from my own memory, I shall shatter it myself."

Since he had returned home in the afternoon, it was already a new day. When Chen Ge arrived at school, they were already halfway through the first period. He went to his seat and noticed that Du Ming, who was never late, did not go to class that day. When the first period was almost over, the teacher even went over to Chen Ge to ask if he knew why Du Ming had skipped class that day.

Du Ming, who was a well-recognized studious person, skipping class was something that Chen Ge did not expect. The second period only began for ten minutes when a shrill woman's voice came from the corridor. "What else do you wish to do if not come to school? What else can you do? Go back to class immediately!"

The woman sounded like she was lecturing someone, but the voice of the person being lectured was not heard. This was a one-sided altercation. The voice slowly approached the classroom, then the door was pulled open. A woman appeared at the door. She was as angry as she could be. The expression on her face was scary. "Well, are you coming over here or not?"

She dragged the thing behind her rather harshly, and Du Ming was shoved into the classroom. The little fatty looked worse for wear. He kept his head lowered and did not dare to look at anyone.

"Well, get to your seat!" After saying that, the woman turned to the teacher who was conducting the class and bowed slightly. She added in a much softer tone, "The kid overslept, but he was afraid of being punished, so he did not dare come to school."

"It alright, Du Ming. Please just take your seat." The teacher seemed to be slightly afraid of the woman himself.

"So sorry for bringing so much trouble for you, sir." The woman's face changed as quickly as the actors from Chinese Opera. She plastered on a very fake smile and then left in a hurry. After she was gone, the students in the class started to churn the rumor mill again.

"That was Du Ming's mother? She is so strict. No wonder Du Ming's results are so good."

"I thought his mother would be as fat as he is."

"You know what, she looks rather familiar. I remember it now! Wasn't she the parent who led a group of other parents and made a scene in the teacher's lounge that other day?"

"I think you are right. She is so ferocious. Even Miss Si did not dare speak too loud in her presence."

"Actually, if you think about it, being under such a mother must be quite scary. The fact that Du Ming is so reticent and has such a nasty attitude probably has a lot to do with his family."

The words of the rumors travelled into Du Ming's ears. He lowered his head even further. He did not dare look at anyone. He was afraid that once he lifted his head, he would realize that everyone was staring at him.

"Don't mind what these people say. These people will only dare talk behind your back. If you stand before them and look them in the eyes, none of them will say a negative word about you."

Different from the whispering of the other students, Chen Ge voiced his opinion loudly, so loud that even the teacher could hear him clearly. Perhaps it was the effect of the statement or perhaps they were shocked by the fact that Chen Ge would come to Du Ming's defense—in any case, the classroom quieted down again.

The class resumed. Chen Ge did not ask Du Ming why he was late that day. After coming to his rescue that one time, the interaction between them stopped. Chen Ge stopped paying Du Ming any attention. If anything, it was the latter who kept sneaking glances at Chen Ge, like he had something to tell him but failed to gather the courage to say anything. The bell rang. The third period was English class. Like usual, Du Ming took out the English textbook, but Chen Ge was just leaning against the wall, spacing out.

Chen Ge was usually so excited when it was English period. This anomalous behavior from Chen Ge gave Du Ming a very bad feeling. The bell rang again. Five minutes passed, but the teacher still did not show up. Chen Ge seemed to have known this would happen. He turned his head to look out the window.

"Chen Ge..." After who knew how many days, Du Ming finally spoke to Chen Ge again. "Has anything happened to Miss Zhang? Normally, she arrives at class five minutes before the period officially begins."

"Zhang Ya has already been fired by the school." Chen Ge pulled his gaze back from the window and whipped his head around to stare at Du Ming. "She will not be coming to teach us anymore."

"Has been fired?" Du Ming jumped up from his seat. Everyone in the class was focusing on their studying. It was very quiet, so everyone heard Du Ming clearly.

"It was all my fault, but she was the one who was forced to keep apologizing. But in the end, her apology was not accepted." Chen Ge glared at Du Ming, challenging him to hold his gaze. "I tried to complain to her, asking her why this world would always pick on those who are kind. She told me the world itself is not purely good or evil. When there are more good people in the world, the world itself will be a kinder place, and it will learn to treat people kinder."

"Why didn't you tell me this sooner? Did you know this would happen already?" Du Ming's eyes were bulging, and his face was red.

"I found out yesterday." Chen Ge paused for a moment. "But what was the point of telling you?"

"She is leaving, and you are just going to sit here just like that? Didn't you like her? Shouldn't you have stepped forth and done something for her?" Du Ming was getting agitated. He grabbed Chen Ge by his collar. "Why didn't you stop her? You..."

Bang!

Before Du Ming could finish, Chen Ge delivered a heavy left hook on his face. Before the boy could react, Chen Ge launched yet another powerful kick at his stomach, causing the boy to crumble to the ground. "Who is the class monitor? I need you to watch over the class and ensure that everyone pays attention to their homework."

Chen Ge grabbed his backpack with one hand and dragged Du Ming by his collar out of the classroom with the other.

"Do you know who that teacher is? Do you know what she represents to me? Do you know what she has experienced in the past?" Chen Ge's punches fell on Du Ming like rain. "You do not know anything."

Pushing open the iron door on the rooftop, Chen Ge flung Du Ming onto the ground. "She trapped herself willingly inside that blood red world filled with despair. She has not seen the light for so long already that perhaps she has even forgotten who she is anymore. And because of that, I wish desperately to leave a good memory for her. Even though I know very well this is just a dream, I tried my best to make this dream as beautiful as it possibly could be."

Chen Ge grabbed Du Ming by his shoulders and slammed him against the wall. "But you guys did not even deign to give me a chance to weave a dream for her."

"I have no idea what you are talking about. All I know is that you keep on saying you care about her, but you have not done anything for her! You do not love her at all! You are just lying to her, using her as a scapegoat so that she will volunteer to take on all the pain on your behalf!" Du Ming growled in a horrible grimace. He waved his arms and tried to hit Chen Ge.

"Is that what love is in your eyes?" Chen Ge did not retaliate. "Do you understand that love is conditioned. For a student at seventeen, no matter how enamored he is, no matter how much he wants to get close to her, you have to understand one thing, your adoration might become her burden. Love is a weight. It could be a pair of wings that allow a person to soar, and it could be a stone that pulls one down into the abyss of despair. If I were you, I would maintain a suitable distance until the day I could shoulder the responsibility for both myself and for her before I dared search for her again."

Du Ming's emotions were getting frayed. He had gotten completely out of control. It was as if the secret deep inside his heart was being peeled out into the open for everyone to see. "You are not me. You will never understand it."

He struggled to get loose, but this time, Chen Ge knocked at him heavily and dropped him to the ground.

When Du Ming slipped to the ground, his phone fell out. The screen broke, and through the shattered screen, one could see that background picture of the scene was a picture of Zhang Ya. The picture appeared like it was taken when Zhang Ya did not notice it. In the picture, Zhang Ya had a faded smile on her face, and it appeared that she was conversing with someone.

"You also like her?" Chen Ge looked at the broken phone screen and took out the hammer from his backpack.

"Do not use the term 'also'. You do not deserve it. When she was being pointed at and scolded by everyone, where were you? When she was tortured by the rumors, what did you do for her?" Du Ming wiped away the blood from his face and climbed up from the ground. "You have done nothing for her. If anything, because you are a student and she is a teacher, due to this distance that cannot be breached, you do not even have the courage to step forward to stay something to defend her!"

Du Ming shouted from the bottom of his soul, but it sounded like he was not scolding Chen Ge but the person that he once was.

"Perhaps from your perspective, the distance between a student and a teacher is far enough for you to feel despair, but have you considered this? There is a distance in this world that is the difference between living and dead." When Chen Ge saw Du Ming's phone, he understood everything. "You like your teacher, but you can use everything in your power to try to close the distance. Take three years or five years to work on yourself until you are capable of taking that step to go and find her. But the distance between life and death, that might not be crossed even in a lifetime."

Picking up the phone from the ground, Chen Ge looked at Zhang Ya in the picture. "Love will never stop from the moment it flares up until death. It will only end when one party chooses to leave."

Chapter 1049: Love Taken by the Ghost Fetus [3 in 1]

Translator: Lonelytree **Editor:** Millman97

"So, this is love..."

Chen Ge did not hold back. Du Ming was beaten into a pulp, and he had trouble standing up. He touched the wounds on his face and appeared like he had finally calmed down. The words that Chen Ge said were finally getting through his skull, and he was slowly digesting them.

"Your mother keeps a very close and watchful eye over you, but she did not seem to have tell you what love is, or rather, she has not taught you how to correctly love someone. Love is an ability, love is a responsibility, but love does not equal bliss. It is not only an adoration and admiration you have toward the person you have a crush on, but it includes your attitude toward your family, your friends, and the world at large. Those who understand what love is have kindness running through their veins and a

warm glow suffusing their hearts. Even when they are walking in the dark or through a fog, they will not get lost.”

Du Ming came from a very strict family. The way his mother treated him was similar to a military-like education. Of course, if this was allowed to continue, in the future, Du Ming would have no choice but to become a good contributing member of society, but it was destined that there would be a part of him that was missing. The wind howled on the rooftop. Chen Ge gave Du Ming enough time to think about what he had said, then he picked up the phone and squatted next to Du Ming. “Was it you who started the rumors around the school about Miss Zhang?”

Chen Ge clicked open the phone’s photo album. Most of the pictures had been deleted. There were only two pictures left that were saved in the album. One was the picture of Zhang Ya that was taken when she was not paying attention, and the other was the picture of Zhang Ya and Chen Ge walking out from the school sharing the same umbrella. The second picture was taken from the back. From that perspective, it appeared like it had been taken without the subject’s knowledge as well.

“It was not me.” Du Ming took a long time before he uttered that. He raised his bruised face. “My mother went through my phone without me knowing one day. She discovered the pictures and asked me who the woman in the picture was, so I told her that she was the new teacher.”

“But what does that have to do with the rumors?”

“After she saw the picture of you sharing an umbrella with her seemingly going home together, she had a very bad impression of this intern teacher, so she spread the news among the parent’s group.” Du Ming’s eyes were filled self-recrimination and guilt. He hated how helpless and worthless he was at that moment.

“A parent’s group? When did this happen? Did my father know about it?”

“It was on the day you left the school with Miss Zhang. Your father should have known about it. At the time, the people in the group managed to recognize you from your back, and many of them went after your father to demand an explanation. Your father tried his best to come to your defense, but I believe no one was paying him any attention. They merely continued to pile on him until he was kicked out of the group. I thought he would have told you that already.”

“My dad has known about this all along?” Chen Ge adjusted the timeline in his mind. That was the day he spent the night at Zhang Ya’s home and did not go back home. His father did not blame him or get angry at him but used his actual action to prove his trust in his son.

“The parents all thought this kind of teacher would not be able to be a good model for the students. They all thought she has a reputation problem, so they came to school to find a solution. Some of the parents told their children about this and warned them to stay away from predatory adults like Miss Zhang.” Du Ming had known everything all along, but he did not say anything. No wonder he could not gather the courage to speak or even meet Chen Ge’s eyes. He merely placed his homework on the table, as if he was using this kind of method to express his apology.

“Zhang Ya’s written test and interview score was the highest among all the intern teachers, so naturally, the school would not fire her for just a few pictures. The stalemate between the school and the parents continued for a few days.”

At this point, Du Ming's voice took on a deeper shade of guilt. "Because of this, I started to feel dissatisfied with my parents. I have never resisted them before, but on this issue, I refused to budge, but my resistance did not gain the understanding of my family. If anything, my mother thought the time that she had spent years teaching was being spoilt and negatively influenced by the new teacher."

"In other words, your mother had pinned the failure to her own education onto Zhang Ya?" Chen Ge realized before this he had completely forgotten about a crucial person in this story, and that was Du Ming's mother. The woman was the person who cared about Du Ming the most in the world, but at the same time, she was also the one who harmed him the deepest. Before this, it eluded Chen Ge why Du Ming was so unpopular with his good results, and sometimes, he would appear to be so selfish and cold. People would come to talk to him, and the boy would freeze them out. Now Chen Ge could see why.

"The real explosion of the conflict happened a few days ago when I came home with a less than satisfactory test result. My mother thought that it had to be because of Zhang Ya, and if she left me in the hands of this new teacher, it would have ruined my future." Du Ming's expression was a mixture of bitterness and pain. He was like a bird trapped inside a gilded cage. The people outside the cage admired his 'singing', and they all praised his trainer for it, but they had never considered the internal feeling of the bird before.

"That night, my mother shared the story with the rest of the parents in the group. Many of the parents stepped forward to show her their support. Since this was related to their children's education, they couldn't be too careful about it, so they decided to gang up together and go to the school to ask for a discussion." Du Ming's voice was getting weaker, like his strength was draining as the cooped up story left his body.

"You know about what happened later. The 'discussion' turned into an argument. My mother never takes no for an answer. The parents never really understood their children. My mother believed that I should understand the things that she had done for me was for my own good. She truly believed that by making a scene at the teacher's lounge, she would somehow help me and the other students. But once I heard her shrill voice echoing through the hall, I just wanted to find a small space to curl up and hide. I know that she loves me, but now I am afraid of letting people even know that she is my own mother."

Du Ming's mother's education had some problems. Chen Ge felt like he should find a chance to have a meeting with her. "I believe that you should sit down and have a good conversation with your mother. Never admitting her mistake and a strict requirement as well as holding her child under a high moral standard is not a good form of education."

Du Ming could be communicated with normally. Chen Ge gave him a helping hand as he dragged the boy up from the ground. Both of their eyes were bloodshot. "Now, I need you to listen to me. There is one more chance that we have that we will be able to make Miss Zhang Ya stay, but I do not know whether you have the courage to do that or not."

"Me?"

"Yes, all you need to do is to take your phone into the teacher's lounge and tell everyone the truth behind the pictures. There is nothing inappropriate between me and Zhang Ya. That day, we shared an umbrella because I forgot to bring my own, and she loaned me hers. You know about all that. You can be

the witness. You can be the one who stops all the rumors.” Chen Ge shoved the phone back into Du Ming’s hands. “But the question is whether you have the courage to do that or not.”

Holding the phone whose screen had broken, Du Ming stood there for a long time and did not speak.

“Tell me when you come to a decision.” Chen Ge did not force Du Ming. He looked at Du Ming quietly, but in his mind, it was Yu Jian’s shadow that was overlapping the boy’s body.

“I...” Du Ming’s fingers tightened, and his eyes were red. After a long time, he slowly opened his lips. “I cannot do that.”

“How did you interrogate me earlier? Your pain is no lesser than mine, so why don’t you have the courage to face it? Actually, you wish to sink in this abyss, don’t you?” Chen Ge wanted to help Zhang Ya, but at the same time, he was helping Du Ming. If Zhang Ya really left just like that, Du Ming would live with the guilt forever, and that would become a knot in his heart that would never be unraveled.

“If I go there and explain everything, my mother will be so mad. After all, she did all those things because of me. It was how she showed her love toward me.” Du Ming put away his phone. Grayness started to appear at the bottom of his eyes, and the color drained from his face. He appeared suddenly lifeless. It was not easy for him to come to this decision. “Miss Zhang still has you, but my mother’s only rock in the world is me. My father left when I was still very young. She is being so strict on me because she has placed all her hopes and dreams in me.”

“Is it for your own good that she has turned into a selfish monster? Taking away your happiness, taking away your ability and capability to love others, does your mother often remind you how difficult it is for her, how hard she has to work, how much she has invested and sacrificed for you?” Chen Ge could understand, but he could not approve of it. “Your mother is not raising you as a son; she is raising you into a version that she hopes you will become. I do not deny that she loves you deeply, but that love should not be built on the basis of voiding a person of his personality. Love is mutual. Yes, it is rare that a balance can always be achieved, but most of the time, it should be equal and fair.”

Du Ming heard Chen Ge’s words and gritted his teeth. Chen Ge did not disturb Du Ming and allowed his words to settle while he studied the little fatty who stood before him. Physically, Du Ming was not disformed in any way, but psychologically, he was missing something important, something that a human being should be born with. That thing was ‘love’.

“I will go with you and explain everything to the school.” Chen Ge grabbed Du Ming by his shoulder. “I do not mind being expelled. I can give up everything because this is my mistake. I should be the one being punished, not Zhang Ya.”

With Chen Ge’s continual persuasion, Du Ming finally gave a nod. Seeing Du Ming change his mind, Chen Ge sighed in relief. He accompanied Du Ming, and they left the rooftop together. They knocked on the door to the teacher’s lounge. Chen Ge and Du Ming, who were covered in bruises, walked to Mr. Si’s table.

“What happened to you two? Did you get into a fight?” When Mr. Si saw Du Ming, he was given the shock of his life. After all, Chen Ge had given the boy quite a beating. He had knocked the boy literally off his feet before he could knock some literal sense into him.

“Mr. Si, actually, Miss Zhang is nothing like the rumors say. She did not do anything that violates the rule of her career and being a teacher.” Du Ming took out his phone. “The picture that was first shared among the parent’s group is this picture. The real incident that happened that day was Chen Ge forgot to bring his umbrella, and Miss Zhang was afraid that he would get wet in the rain, so she told him to get under the umbrella with her. That was the whole truth. I was just standing beside them at the time, and I heard everything.”

“But when your mother came yesterday, that was not what she said. Didn’t you tell her about this?”

“I did, but she refused to believe me.” Du Ming placed his phone on Teacher Si’s table.

“So, it is all a misunderstanding. Look at how this thing has blown up. I need you to call your mother and tell her to come to school now. We will need to explain this all in the open.” Mr. Si wanted to resolve this problem. Zhang Ya was the best teacher that he had ever had the privilege to interview. To fire a valuable talent like that because of a mere misunderstanding, it did not feel right to him. Du Ming called his mother, and his mother promised to arrive soon. Mr. Si also gave Zhang Ya a call, but the call was not connected.

“Will something has happened to Miss Zhang?” Chen Ge wanted to go to Zhang Ya’s home to check, but Mr. Si did not allow him to leave. According to the discipline head, he was one of the main characters, so he had to be there as a witness for Zhang Ya.

They waited for about half an hour when they heard rushing footsteps coming from the corridor. Without knocking on the door, the door to the teacher’s lounge was pushed open, and a middle-aged woman strode in. Her face was already carved with impatience and annoyance, but when she saw the condition Du Ming was in, her expression changed immediately, and she quickly jogged to Du Ming’s side.

“What happened? Who did this? Was it him?” The woman glared at Chen Ge. “How many times I have told you not to hang out with people like him? He is a bad student, so why do you insist on spending time with him? Since I am already here, Mr. Si, I demand that you change my son’s seat. I want him to be away from this bad influence, as far away as possible.”

“Madam, you have been called here because we need to discuss the thing that you told us earlier. The parents have misunderstood Miss Zhang.” Mr. Si took out Du Ming’s phone. “Miss Zhang did not do anything inappropriate with any of the students. They shared an umbrella because Chen Ge forgot to bring his umbrella that day.”

“Who told you that?” The middle-aged woman’s face darkened almost instantly.

“It was Du Ming who told me that. Even if you do not believe Miss Zhang, don’t tell me you do not trust the words of your own son?” Mr. Si assumed that it would be easy to convince Du Ming’s mother, but he did not expect the woman to be so determined and desperate for Zhang Ya to leave.

“Impossible! Someone must have forced him to tell this horrible lie!” The middle-aged woman whipped her head around to glare at Chen Ge. “How did my boy get all these wounds? It must be you, right? It was you who forced him to tell these horrible lies! Admit it!”

Du Ming's mother was like an angered lioness, and her voice kept on raising. The sound of the argument attracted the attention of all the other teachers in the room. Du Ming lowered in head, but his mother was impervious to the scene that she was causing. If anything, she only raised her voice louder and louder.

"Madam, you must calm down. I was the one who interviewed Miss Zhang. She is really a good teacher. She would never do the things that you have insinuated she has done."

"How can you even guarantee something like that?" The middle-aged woman slammed her bag on the table. "From her looks, I know that she is a good for a nothing girl. I sent my child here because I trusted your school, and this is how you treat me?"

"Madam, you are being a little bit unreasonable." Mr. Si was cornered. He had said everything he could, but he could not change the middle-aged woman's mind. He thus turned to Du Ming. "Du Ming, tell me the truth. Did Chen Ge force you to say those things?"

With his head lowered, Du Ming gripped his shirt with his hands, and his face was blanched.

"Du Ming, tell us how Chen Ge forced you to say those false statements! Don't you be afraid of a ruffian like him. I will protect you!" The middle-aged woman was practically ordering Du Ming to do so.

A palpable silence fell over the office. Du Ming did not say a thing. His mother's expression was getting more and more desperate and agitated. Just as she was about to explode, Du Ming finally opened his mouth. "No one forced me to say anything."

Both Mr. Si and Chen Ge sighed in relief, but Du Ming's mother refused to accept this. She gripped Du Ming by his shoulders. "Son, don't be afraid. Be a good boy and tell the truth. You are being threatened by this nasty piece of work to say all these things, aren't you? They are all lies, aren't they?"

"What I said was the truth. Miss Zhang did not do anything inappropriate with Chen Ge. You merely saw the pictures of Miss Zhang in my phone and tried to chase Miss Zhang away because you are afraid that she might affect my school results!" Du Ming had held this in for a long time, and this time, the words burst out from him like a fountain.

"Du Ming?" The middle-aged woman's face clouded over. Her teeth clattered noisily, and her breath was coming uneasily through her nostrils. She did not expect Du Ming to say something like that. The fury and sense of betrayal fired up her mind. "All I ever did was for you own good! Why can't you ever see that?"

Du Ming did not dare reply. At that moment, the bell rang. Many students ran out from the classroom and gathered at the corridor.

"I have to carry out the roles of both a father and a mother at the same time. Do you think it is easy for me to raise you all by myself? Do you the amount of pressure that I am under?" The middle-aged woman practically hissed through her teeth. "I have placed all my hopes and dreams in you, and this is how you repay me?"

Du Ming's mother's voice was getting louder and louder. The students gathered in the corridor could hear her clearly. More of the students started to gather. They leaned against the window to enjoy the show.

"I am talking to you! What is in that mind of yours! For that filthy woman, you do not even want to listen to my words anymore, huh? What has she done to charm you like this?" The middle-aged woman grabbed Du Ming by his shoulders. "After your father left us, I am the person who has been the kindest toward you. Everything I did was for your own good. As long as you are well, I will be happy. Why can't you understand that?"

"In this whole world, I am the single person who loves and cares for you unconditionally! Du Ming! You disappoint me so much!"

The words were like knives cutting into Du Ming's heart. The blood leaked out from the wound, and they were all in the name of love. He gasped hungrily for air. His hands held his clothes tightly until his fingers snapped, and his knuckles turned white. The sound of the argument was getting so loud that the students who were not gathered in the corridor could hear it clearly.

The students' faces appeared on the window, one head piling over another like a wall of strange, inhuman faces. Many eyes wandered all over the room, scanning the figures who were gathered inside the teacher's lounge. Du Ming felt like he was being stripped and left naked on a stage with the spotlight gathered on him. He tried to cover up his privates and desperately sought somewhere to hide.

"Du Ming's mother has come to school again?"

"I could hear her during class."

"Du Ming's mother sure has a temper."

"Quick, this is a good show! They have gotten into another argument."

"Du Ming comes from a single-parent family? His father abandoned them?"

"No wonder he is always acting the way he does. He stutters when he is called to speak in class..."

The words travelled into Du Ming's ears, torturing his mind. The very last shred of pride that he tried to protect was trampled on. His chest rose and fell unevenly. He covered his hands over his ears. He just wanted to run away from this place. His pupils darted about anxiously. His mother's interrogation and scolding fell on him like a waterfall. The strange looks and remarks of the students from the corridor rushed into and overwhelmed his mind.

"Stop, stop talking. Please stop talking. I'm begging you..." His mouth opened and closed like a goldfish. His body was shivering. His legs buckled and staggered backward. They carried him to the edge of the window. His fingers that had gotten numb fell on the edge of the windowsill. Du Ming was like a drowning victim who finally found a pocket of air. His hands shoved the window angrily open. His leg leaped over the window, and it was as if the weight was lifting away from his body. The wind blew into his fall. As his world turned upside down, a pair of hands grabbed him firmly.

"Have you lost your mind?" What Du Ming saw was Chen Ge's blurry face. It all felt like a dream. "Death is not going to solve any problem!"

Using all the strength in his body, Chen Ge managed to yank Du Ming back to safety. Since Du Ming's mother entered the picture, Chen Ge had noticed the boy's emotions beginning to fray. That was why he had kept his guard next to him, afraid that some accident might happen. His precaution was right.

Everyone in the room was shocked. No one expected Du Ming to do something like this, and that included his mother. All the teachers in the room turned to look at Du Ming. There was not a peep from the students outside the teacher's lounge. The world seemed to have frozen in that moment.

"Why did you do that?" Du Ming's mother was the one who broke the silence after a long time. There was an obvious change to her voice. It was as if there was another person speaking from inside her.

"Why would you choose to die rather than to listen to my words? It has been proven again and again that I am the person who cares the most about you in this world. I am the one who truly understands you and loves you."

Black stains started to surface on the middle-aged woman's face. This world behind the door that mimicked the real world the most started to change. Black threads surged out from the corners, and a horrible stench started to rush in from all sides.

The heavy clouds pressed even lower from the sky. The rain unloaded on the world, washing away the layer of disguise that had covered the small town. The black rain, red rain, gray buildings, and curses weaved together to form this nightmare.

"We are kindred spirits. In this world, only I will be able to understand you; only I can help you. I am the only one who cares about you sincerely. So, why did you choose to die rather than listen to me? All I ever wanted was for you to become a better person, to become someone like me." The middle-aged woman raised her head. The black curse dispersed to reveal a baby face.

The ghost fetus!

When this face appeared, Du Ming's body started to change. The rolls of fat were like a cage made from a curse, and it was entrapping a boy who was as thin as a stick figure.

Du Ming's phone fell to the ground. The woman on the screensaver was no longer an image of Zhang Ya but an unfamiliar woman who was wearing a pair of spectacles.

Chapter 1050: Red Spectre Zhang Ya [2 in 1]

Translator: Lonelytree **Editor:** Millman97

All the illusions faded away. This small town was nothing but a nightmare used to trap Yu Jian. In this nightmare, Yu Jian was wrapped up in a thick shell, and the ghost fetus became his own mother, the person that was supposed to be closest to him. Perhaps the ghost fetus wanted to use this method to get Yu Jian to understand him, to have the boy see the effort that he had made for him. After all, they shared the same perspective and background; they were both 'monsters' that emanated evilness from the bottom of their hearts.

The ghost fetus believed that Yu Jian was the same kind of person as him; Yu Jian believed that the ghost fetus could help him accomplish many things. They were like the shark and the remora, feeding off each other and committing multiple crimes.

But one day, Yu Jian found the teacher that would change his life. He started to go against the ghost fetus and violate his order.

When Chen Ge saw Yu Jian trapped inside Du Ming's body, all the questions that he had so far were cleared up and answered. He was thankful that he did not resort to violence the moment he entered this world. If he had gone against his principles and ruined this small town, he might become one of the bargaining chips the ghost fetus would use to convince Yu Jian. The ghost fetus would definitely have told Yu Jian that everyone had a demon living inside their heart, that it was something normal. Everyone would go for destruction and despair—that was human nature. There was no need to follow what the female teacher said.

The ghost fetus would manage to convince Yu Jian, and if the ghost fetus succeeded, Chen Ge would not only need to face the ghost fetus but also Yu Jian, who was empowered and taken over by the ghost fetus.

"The worst situation has not appeared. My effort so far has not been wasted." Chen Ge used actual actions to give Yu Jian a lesson that he would never forget. If meeting that teacher was the only stroke of light in Yu Jian life, a light that granted him a glimpse into the real world beyond the despairing mist, then Chen Ge offered him a pair of hands, wanting to pull him out of the devouring mist. The ghost fetus ultimately failed to gain Yu Jian's approval. Everything he did, if anything, only caused Yu Jian to resist him even further and harder. The black threads that were pulsing with curses crawled all over his body. The ghost fetus could not understand it. The eyes that looked at Yu Jian started to take on the flavor of evil and resentment.

"I've treated you so well and given so much to help you, and this is how you treat me?" The baby's face was twisted. The hatred in his heart was at its maximum. He could not understand why this would be the result after he had done so much for Yu Jian. He kept saying these things like a broken record. It felt as if he had repeated these exact words to another person before. He repeated them again and again. The pressure that pulsed around him became scarier and scarier. Soon, he became more terrifying than a normal Red Specter.

"This isn't the real ghost fetus, right? Has he been hiding behind this door all along?" Chen Ge could not really tell. One thing that he could not rely on was his luck. After all, during the spinning of the Wheel of Misfortune, he always got the unluckiest prizes. He would always form these unbreakable bonds with unknown Specters and Red Specters.

Yu Jian had lost consciousness, wrapped in layers of curses. Chen Ge was unable to shatter the shell of curses, but leaving him there alone would not be a good idea. After giving it some thought, Chen Ge took out the comic from his backpack. Whether the ghost fetus before him was real or not, he decided to deal with the ghost fetus here and now. This time, he had spent too much time submerged in the world behind the door. His mental state was strained to the maximum. Both of his eyes were bloodshot, and the man himself was about to collapse.

"It's time to call an end to this." Flipping through the comic, Chen Ge called the names of his employees. The pages of the blood-stained comic fluttered like a bloody sea. The heavy scent of blood powerfully overwhelmed the horrible stench that previously occupied the room. The Red Specters were fighting the curse inside the teacher's lounge. Two terrifying forces collided. This sight would have snapped the mind of a normal person.

“Du Ming’s mother is much stronger than the woman from Wu Sheng’s world. They are not even on the same level.” There was no place to hide in the enclosed space. As more and more blood red figures appeared, this curious world took on a sheen of redness. Blood flowed. A pair of pale hands pierced through the cage weaved by the curse and attempted to pull Yu Jian out.

“Xu Yin and Ol’ Bai, I need you two to stay beside me. Temporarily, don’t go anywhere.” He had been calling them for almost ten days before the defense of the world behind the door was broken. As the employees appeared, it also pointed at the final collapse of this false world behind the door. The scenario that was weaved from Chen Ge, the ghost fetus, and Yu Jian’s memories was about to collapse, and it was Chen Ge himself who was going to shatter it with his own power.

“The two of you should go and give it a test.” Chen Ge summoned the Stage Costume Red Specter and the water ghost that he had met in Jiang Yuan Apartments. They had been locked inside the comic for a long time. This was their first time in the open, but the first thing that they saw was the ghost fetus who was getting stronger. The increasingly scary presence added a lot of pressure to the two Red Specters.

“The snail behind Jiang Ming’s world had a tough shell, and it needed the cooperation of ten Red Specters to break through it. The faceless woman behind Wu Sheng’s world knew how to control blood, and she could perform multiple task very well. The ghost fetus behind Fang Yu’s door was very calm and collected; she was an expert at setting traps and controlling curses. Every variation of the ghost fetus behind each door possesses different talents. The ghost fetus before us now has an indeterminate power. I should use the Stage Costume Red Specter and the water ghost Red Specter to feel him out first.”

Chen Ge was very cautious. He had held on for so long behind the door. He would not allow himself to make a careless mistake at the last moment.

“Xiao Bu, watch for the opening and aim for the kill whenever you can!” Of all the Red Specters that Chen Ge had, the strongest one currently was Xiao Bu. After becoming the real door pusher of the door in Li Wan City, this little girl had not really shown her true strength. After all the Red Specters showed up, Chen Ge could not try to communicate with them during the brief moments when they were not fighting. The battle between Red Specters was extremely gory and cruel. They were entities wrapped within layers of resentment. Unless there was a serious imbalance in power level, once they started fighting, no one would be able to pull them apart until one of the parties was killed and consumed.

A Red Specter with rationality and reasoning like Men Nan was an exception.

The water ghost Red Specter and Stage Costume Red Specters appeared before Du Ming’s mother. They had to attack. If they don’t, they would be attacked by Du Ming’s mother. They had no other choice. The Stage Costume Red Specter did not mind it that much. She possessed a great resentment toward the ghost fetus. After all, it was the latter who had forcibly occupied her altar.

The water ghost, though, even thought of abandoning Chen Ge to join the ghost fetus. This was different from what he had imagined.

“Chen Ge, our promise did not include a fight with another Red Specter, right?” He wanted to stay out of it. After all, Du Ming’s mother who was actually the ghost fetus gave him a very dangerous feeling.

“No, it is hundred percent within our promise. Did you not ask me to find the door pusher of the door at Jiang Yuan Apartments for you? The ghost fetus is the door pusher. After you kill him, you will be the real door pusher.” Chen Ge did not lie, or at least, he believed he had not said a single statement that was false before.

“Our promise was that we would kill the door pusher together!” The water ghost Red Specter was only powerful in water. He was unable to gather his full strength on dry land. Soon, his body was cut and wounded by the curse. “Help me! Help me!”

1“That given by others is called charity. That fought for and earned by oneself is called dignity.” Chen Ge kept his eyes on the water ghost Red Specter. The black thread of the curse slipped through the water ghost’s body through the open wounds, and it made its way to his heart. The water ghost slowly lost his rationality. All the negative emotions in his mind were amplified. If this continued, he would turn into a collection of negative emotions that could not be communicated with. Other than hatred, murder, and resentment, he could not feel any other emotions.

“The ghost fetus behind this door can use the curse to corrupt others, huh? To pollute the other Red Specters’ hearts?”

The heart of the Red Specter was the basis for their existence. It was an object crystallized from their last wish and resentment. Chen Ge did not expect the curse of this ghost fetus to be so powerful.

“We need to end this battle as soon as possible! Work together! Be careful of being injured by his curse!”

After getting to know the ghost fetus’ power, Chen Ge stopped holding back. The ghost fetus’ curse was too scary. With this kind of power, if the ghost fetus managed to survive the initial onslaught, after the curse took effect, Chen Ge would lose its advantage in numbers. Red Specters who had their hearts corrupted would destroy everything before them, including their former colleagues and even their boss.

“So far, I have found out so many powers that the ghost fetus boasts. The more I discover, the scarier he becomes in my mind.”

None of the red Specters held back. They attacked at full force. The ghost fetus’ body was mangled and weakened. He barely looked human, but he still hung on for dear life. He did not disappear. The black threads that were hidden in various spots behind the door crawled into his body to help him recover.

“The world behind Yu Jian’s door is helping him?” Chen Ge knew that he did not have much time left. He grabbed the shoulders of the boy who was lying on the ground. “Yu Jian, can you hear me? Your resistance and determination has paid off. I am here to bring you home! Wake up! The mother in your heart is a version that has been maligned by the ghost fetus. She is not your real mother!

“Have you really lost all hope in this world? Do you not wish to see your own teacher one last time? There are many people like her in this world. The ghost fetus hid them away from you. He only showed you the darkest side of the world. But you must understand that with darkness comes light. Without the light to shine, where does the shadow come from!”

1As if hearing the term teacher, Yu Jian’s eyelids flickered slightly. His brows slowly moved into a V. He seemed to be struggling in a nightmare.

“Yu Jian, if you really believe that you have encountered love, it is time to stop letting yourself sink behind the door. Do not let her down and use every inch of power that you have to change yourself into someone that would make her proud.” Chen Ge picked Yu Jian up from the ground and gave him a powerful slap. “Snap out of it! Perhaps she is just waiting for you on the other side of the door!”

The flesh that caved in slowly recovered. Yu Jian’s eyelids moved slightly, and then he slowly opened his eyes. Chen Ge picked up the phone from the ground and showed the picture of the screensaver to Yu Jian. “Live! I beg you to give life another chance! It is not that hard. In the future, you might have a chance to see her again!”

The fuzzy eyes started to focus. The past incidents crossed Yu Jian’s mind. The boy’s hands reached out to grab the broken phone, and his expression stopped being so blank. Chen Ge removed his jacket and placed it around Yu Jian. The boy was a prideful man, but he was completely naked behind the door. This was probably a symbol of his once state of mind.

“The ghost fetus infested himself inside you and kept luring you to the edge of the darkness. He blotted out all the light and only allowed you the glimpse of darkness and despair. Thankfully, you ran into that teacher.”

“Miss Zhang...” Light started to gather at the bottom of Yu Jian’s eyes. The connection between the ghost fetus and the world behind the door was weakening. He found it more and more difficult to summon energy from Yu Jian’s world.

“Yu Jian!” The ghost fetus’ body was disformed and covered in wounds. He was wailing like a wounded animal. “It was me who accompanied you when you were all alone! It was me who stood by your side when your father abandoned you and your mother blamed you! When the adults were fighting and shouting in the name of ‘love’, it was also me who was shielding you from all the pain!”

A shrill voice was coming out from the ghost fetus’ lips. He had shed the disguise of Du Ming’s mother but started to remind Yu Jian of the things that they had gone through together. From what Chen Ge gathered, Yu Jian appeared to be a bastard son. His mother fell in love with a man who already had a wife. The argument between his parents and the whisperings of the neighbors twisted Yu Jian’s understanding of ‘love’ from the moment he was born. Combined with the influence of the ghost fetus, Yu Jian gradually lost the power of love.

“He was not protecting you. He merely wanted to turn you into his tool, to turn you into a machine who would not know what love is.” Chen Ge guarded Yu Jian behind him. “If you still retain the memory of the period after I entered your door, you should think about it. What is love? What should you do when you really love a person?”

The ghost fetus was unable to get any more help from the world behind the door. At that moment, he looked aggressive, mad, and crazed. Compared to the physical wounds on his body, he was more angered by Yu Jian’s attitude toward him.

Seeing the ghost fetus in this state, Yu Jian’s lips were pressed in a thin line. His hands that were raised earlier were finally lowered again.

“Yu Jian! Yu Jian!” The ghost fetus’ body was torn into pieces by the Red Specters. All the black threads were washed away by the wave of blood. Du Ming’s mother, who was disguised by the ghost fetus,

disappeared, and what remained on the terrifying distortion of a mother's love was a watercolor painting of a child.

A family of three stood before a haunted house with happy smiles on their faces. In the sky was a sun that was painted red. Around the house were green trees with brown trunks. The family wore colorful clothes, and the whole picture was filled with various bright colors. Chen Ge remembered painting this when he was young. In fact, he noticed his name was signed in his still untrained handwriting in one corner of the painting. It was a homework assignment that had been given by the teacher. It was to draw a painting with theme of family.

"The ghost fetus is also in possession of this drawing?" The painting looked normal, but after Chen Ge studied it closer, he noticed that something was off. There was a small part on the painting that he did not remember putting in. The family of three stood before the haunted house happily. Under the blazing glaze of the sun, behind the caricature that represented Chen Ge, there was a dark shadow that was added by someone other than Chen Ge.

"The shadow?" Chen Ge placed the painting inside his backpack. He carried Yu Jian, and with the accompaniment of the Red Specters, they walked out from the teacher's lounge.

"It is time for us to leave this place." The small town no longer looked like the idyllic place that it appeared to be. The dream had turned into a nightmare. Chen Ge looked blankly out the window as if looking for someone. The streets were filled with cracks, and the rain continued to pour. This world was about to collapse. Chen Ge still did not see the person that he was looking for. He walked to the black door that was in the school's equipment room.

Just as he was about to push the door open with the rest of his employees, his phone suddenly rang. Chen Ge did not hesitate and answered it immediately. He placed the phone next to his ear and held his breath. Moments later, Zhang Ya's voice came through the phone. "I promised you that I would definitely tell you before I leave, Chen Ge..."

"Where are you now?" Chen Ge grabbed the phone and ran to the nearest window. "I will meet you now!"

Without taking the umbrella, Chen Ge grabbed the backpack and rushed into the pouring rain while holding the phone. He ran down the cracked street, flying through the crumbling world. Finally, he saw that lonely shadow standing at the crossroad. Zhang Ya stood by the road, holding a red umbrella. She still had not hung up the phone that she was holding. Gasping for air, Chen Ge's body was soaked by the rain.

"I did not want to call you, lest I interrupted your study, but once I have decided to leave, I seemed unable to control myself." Zhang Ya pushed the red umbrella over Chen Ge's head and stood beside him. "Will you ever forgive my selfishness?"

The gray town started to crumble and fall. The black cracks were tearing through the world. Chen Ge did not answer Zhang Ya. This was the first time that he had been able to be so close to her. "If the incident at the dance studio did not happen, if we were not teacher and student, if you were just Zhang Ya and I was just Chen Ge, how good would that be?"

Zhang Ya did not say anything once she heard Chen Ge. She took another step forward. She stood on her tiptoes and leaned lightly against Chen Ge. Raising both of her hands, Zhang Ya whispered in Chen Ge's ears, "Hug me."

Under the red umbrella, before Chen Ge could raise his hands, Zhang Ya's body had started to turn illusory. The red umbrella tumbled to the ground. Chen Ge hugged nothing but air. He stood alone silently as the rain poured down around him.

The world behind the door collapsed. The Red Specters herded Yu Jian and Chen Ge to the iron door, and they worked together to push it open. Just as they left the world, droplets of red rain fell on Chen Ge's backpack. They seeped through the material and finally dyed Zhang Ya's book red.

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COMMENT

After stepping out from the iron door, gravity pulled him sideways, and he stumbled into Yu Jian's bedroom. His eyes were red. Without missing a beat, he pulled open his backpack and took out Zhang Ya's bedtime story. He flipped through the many pages until he found the last page.

"X Year X Month X Day, I had a dream today. In the dream, I was a teacher, and he became my student.

"I dreamed that we shared the same umbrella going home. I dreamed that we stood at the bus stop waiting for the bus together. I dreamed that we were living and cooking together.

"I dreamed that I hugged him, and he returned a tight embrace."