

Horrors 15

Chapter 15: Landlord

Chen Ge's first impression of Wang Qi was 'weary, torpid, and weak'. As they brushed past each other, Chen Ge handed the other man back the notice he had picked up earlier, and Wang Qi thanked him with a wavering voice. This was the first time Chen Ge had heard the man speak. It sounded gravelly, which gave Chen Ge some trouble in understanding him.

"You're welcome," Chen Ge responded with a smile before he turned to follow the limping man up the stairs.

The second floor was even more dilapidated than the first floor. The place was dark and humid, the corners were filled with uncleaned spider webs, and the walls looked like they had been slashed with knives. The limping man led Chen Ge to the very end of the long corridor. He opened the last room before coming out with a long chain of keys. "One night is fifty dollars, take a pick of any room you like on this floor."

"50 dollars? That's too expensive!"

"My apartment is the only place to stay within several kilometers; you should be thankful I only charge you fifty." When the man was talking, his eyes kept unconsciously moving to look behind him like he was checking out something.

"Fine, but why must I stay on the second floor, is the room on first or third floor not available?"

"Why do you have no many damn questions? They're off the limits, that's why!" The limping man grabbed the fifty away from Chen Ge and shoved a random key in his hand. "The room number is written on the key, go look for it yourself."

Then, he rushed back into the room. The moment the door closed, Chen Ge could hear the muffled croak of an old man coming from inside the room, like the sound one would make when one had food stuck in one's throat. Frowning with suspicion, Chen Ge placed his palm on the door, saying, "Wait a minute."

"What now?" the limping man asked with annoyance.

Chen Ge glanced through the slight opening of the door. The space within looked small. Other than the limping man that stood at the door, there was an old man reclining in a wheelchair that was facing away from the door. He was probably the source of the noise Chen Ge heard earlier.

"I'm rather thirsty, does your establishment provide a vending machine or things like that?"

"No!"

"Man, is this how you treat your customer..."

The door slammed in his face, leaving Chen Ge in the corridor with a heavier suspicion brewing in his heart.

For a normal apartment building, the reception is normally at the front door, but for this building, the reception is not only on the second floor but at the very end of the second-floor corridor. Looking at the key in his hand, many questions appeared in his mind. Why are the first and third floors off limits? And who is the old man living with the landlord?

The number 208 was written on the key, and coincidentally enough, the room was just next to the landlord's.

Regardless, let me go put down my stuff first. After two hours of travelling, Chen Ge was indeed more than a bit tired. As he opened the door, the smell of mildew hit him in the nose. The room had probably been vacant for a long time because the place was covered with dust, and the bed was overgrown with some mysterious looking fungus. It felt strange under Chen Ge's touch.

Is this bed even usable? Before Chen Ge even placed his backpack down, he heard a loud crash coming from next door. It sounded like a plate had fallen and shattered. Chen Ge closed the door and stuck his ear to the wall, trying to eavesdrop. Soon enough, the sound of the limping man cursing came. In his anger, he let out several foreign curses, and based on his accent, the man sounded like he was not a local.

The old man mumbled weakly in reply. The limping man continued scolding for several minutes before he stopped, but what happened next confused Chen Ge. The volume of the television was increased.

What's going on? What is he doing? Why did he increase the television's volume? Chen Ge tried to listen for more clues, but all he could hear was the television. He soon gave up. *So be it. In any case, I should be more worried about myself; I doubt I'll be able to get any sleep tonight.*

Chen Ge placed his backpack on the table and took out the penknife, placing it in his pocket. *The online complaint mentioned the existence of blood stains behind the paint and the presence of a horrible smell at night. However, I've searched all the information available on Ping An Apartments online, and there was no mention of any murders that happened here.*

Then again, there had to be some kind of secret hidden at Ping An Apartments for it to have been selected as the mission venue by the black phone. He pulled out the multi-purpose hammer to knock and inspect every corner of the room; he came up with nothing. This was a very normal guest room; other than the sorry state it was in, there was nothing out of ordinary about it.

Since the landlord only allowed me to pick a room on the second floor, this means that the rooms on the second floor are mostly fine, or else he wouldn't have opened it up for rent. Therefore, to get to the bottom of this, I have to go take a look on the first or third floor. The Trial Mission was supposed to start at 11 pm. There were still three hours until then. Chen Ge did not want to waste time. He put the hammer away and slunk toward the door.

With his hand on the doorknob, he pushed it open. However, he stopped half-way. His palm started to sweat, and a chill ran down his spin.

The limping man was standing just outside his door; God only knew how long for!

The man also did not expect that Chen Ge would suddenly open the door. Both parties on either side of the door were equally shocked.

“Landlord, why are you standing at my door?” Chen Ge narrowed his eyes at the man; the more time he spent with the limping man, the uneasier he felt.

“Didn’t you say you were thirsty? I came to give you this.” The limping man placed the warm water bottle in his hands by Chen Ge’s door, and his expression was as unnatural as it could be.

“Thank you.” Chen Ge did not point out how weird he was acting and pulled the bottle into the room. “Is there anything else?”

“No, that’s all. Do rest early.” The limping man glanced inside the room and added as if to himself, “The corridors are not fitted with lights, so they’re very dark at night; you’d better stay in your room after the sun sets.”

He turned to leave. Chen Ge sighed in relief when the door next to him closed.

This landlord is easily angered and socially inept. Even though he has a limp, that doesn’t mean that he’s physically weak. He managed to shove the man earlier to the ground with just one kick; if anything, he should be quite powerful.

Chen Ge wasn’t a particularly good sleuth; the only thing he could do was try to fit the situation at the apartments into the plot of all the past murder mysteries he had seen. *Born with a disability might have caused him to be bullied from a young age, and that corrupted his innocence. That could easily evolve into a mental sickness. F*ck, it sounds like he’s the perfect candidate for a crazed murderer!*

Chen Ge put the bottle away, and a pressing question came into his mind. *If the landlord is the murderer, then doesn’t this mean I’m going to have to spend the whole night next to a murderer?*

This thought made Chen Ge’s skin crawl. Who knew, the man might spend the whole night standing outside his door, waiting to entrap him! To make matters worse, since he was the landlord, he had access to the space keys, which enable him to enter any room as he wished!