

Horrors 20

Chapter 20: Crime Scene

A mysterious fire, a disappeared killer, Chen Ge realized he had a talent for storytelling. He managed to summarize the many news articles he had read and combined them with his own hypotheses, creating a believable and intriguing tale for his viewers.

“That is what has happened. To search for inspiration for my Haunted House, I decided to stay overnight at this cursed apartment, but I came across a startling discovery: every single tenant of this apartment has something off about them, and I suspect that the murderer from years ago is masquerading as one of them!” Chen Ge snuffed his cigarette off and turned to address the camera.

“Interesting, so a real life murder mystery. Anyone have a brilliant idea as to who the real killer is?”

I’m a Little Green Worm mocked, “Host, you sure know how to bullsh*t, but we’re not that gullible!”

“Jiujiang City’s Fu An Apartments, I just looked it up on the internet; the host doesn’t seem like he’s lying.”

He San showed some support. “I believe the host.”

However, I’m a Little Green Worm was not easily convinced. “Even if the host isn’t lying about the case, how do we know that he is currently at the cursed apartment? As he said earlier, the place was burned down. But take a good look at the room he’s room. The wall is clean and painted, and all the furniture looks useable albeit a little bit old; does this look like a cursed apartment to any of you?”

“I won’t lie to you guys about that. You want proof? Easy.” Chen Ge moved the make-up counter away and pulled his penknife. He scratched away a small corner of the paint on the wall. “The name of a building can be changed, and the place can be refurnished and repainted, but certain things cannot be removed or hidden.”

He removed the freshest layer of wall paint to reveal the brickwork underneath, which was charred black. “This is evidence that this place was the crime scene of the fire.”

“No, I’m interested in why you would bring a mallet and a knife to stay at a hostel... for self-defense?” Death to all Man raised an obvious concern.

“Host is ruining the wall for no reason. One minute of silence for the poor landlord.”

“How much did you pay for a room like this? It doesn’t even have a television.”

Looking at the chat log, Chen Ge could not help but sigh. “Guys, can you not focus on the irrelevant points? How about some respect? I’m putting my life on the line to do this livestream for you!”

Death to All Man donated one dollar. “One-dollar donation as sign of respect.”

Chen Ge was helpless dealing with the online trolls, but at least they didn’t leave him. “Fine, let’s get back to business. I’ve met six different individuals since I arrived at this apartment. The first person I met was a woman who might have a little mental problem; when I arrived, she smiled wickedly at me

unprompted. This unhinged me slightly, but since I have had no further interaction with this woman, there's nothing else I can say..."

Chen Ge introduced all of the tenants to his viewers, and when he was done, he added his own analysis. "In terms of motive, the landlord is definitely the most suspicious, but his movement speed is hindered due to his limp. So, viewed from this perspective, the tattoo guy on first floor and the fat man on second floor have the greatest possibility of being the killer. Of course, one can't ignore the woman and the seemingly weak Wang Qi."

"Basically, you've come up with nothing," Death to All Man surmised. "Based on your analysis, I've further suspicion that the real killer is the old man in the wheelchair; after all, he stood to gain the most from the fire."

"That might not be that implausible. After all, the old man might be incapacitated now, but that doesn't mean that he was the same four years ago. Furthermore, the crime we're talking about is a fire; that doesn't require physical prowess, so the old man is a valid suspect."

"Also, have you considered the possibility of the old man faking his disability? Oftentimes, the most unlikely one is the killer."

"Actually, I have more suspicion toward the woman on the first floor. She smiled at the host, meaning she wanted to communicate something to the host. Host, can you still remember the curve of the woman's lips and the degree to which her mouth was open when she smiled at you? I'll help you analyze it from the perspective of psychology."

"I can't..."

As the interest of the viewers rose, so did the popularity of his livestream. Chen Ge looked at the busy chat log and sighed internally. He thought to himself, *These people are hopeless. Looks like I'll have to go out to look for more clues before I can come to any conclusion.*

He placed his phone before him, adding, "I did try to look around the building before starting the livestream. I discovered while most of the apartment's first and second floor has been fixed up, parts of the third floor have been left as they were four years ago. In a little bit, I will go up to conduct a closer examination; hopefully, we'll be able to come up with some useful clues."

"The place is kept like it was four years ago? That's kinda... sick."

"The ghosts of the families have been lingering because the case hasn't been solved?"

"Investigating a haunted apartment at night? The host sure is insane!"

"Of course, the host is the operator of a Haunted House after all! Let me tell you, last time a bunch of us visited his Haunted House to demand reparation for his scary video, but we got our backsides handed to us instead. Two of the bravest among our group went in; one came out crying inconsolably, and the other fainted on the spot."

"Wait, what happened to them? And what about those who are not as brave?"

"Have you lost your mind? Do you think the rest of us entered his Haunted House after we saw what happen?"

“That... You’re right.”

“LOL!” commented He San.

The chat had completely derailed, but Chen Ge didn’t mind it that much. He pocketed his penknife, and with one hand holding the phone, the other holding the mallet, he walked to his room door.

Learning from his previous lesson, Chen Ge squatted down to look at the shadows underneath the door and confirmed that there was no one standing on the other side, before lightly pushing the door open.

After he closed and locked the door, Chen Ge yanked one of his hairs out to stick it into the keyhole. This way, if someone entered his room when he was not there, he would know because the hair would have been pushed further into the keyhole.

After everything was prepared, Chen Ge walked to the stairwell.

His steps were light to not activate the light. The light on his phone guiding his every step. As he climbed up the stairs, the walls on each side became noticeably darker in color, and there was an indescribable smell in the air.

When he reached the third floor, Chen Ge turned on the flashlight function on his phone. He leaned against the wall and focused.

When he first accidentally walked up to the third floor, he had noticed a dark shadow flash before him. The shape of the shadow had looked like a human.

Be it a ghost or a man, I have to be careful. The flashlight revealed to Chen Ge the crime scene from four years ago. Looking at the scratch marks that seemed to embed themselves into the wall, Chen Ge’s grip around the mallet tightened.

Ping An Apartments had a unique architectural style. It only had one staircase, and it was on the right side of the building, giving the impression that the corridor leading to the left side was suspiciously long.

As he walked down the corridor, he felt a chilliness tingle his spine. Even with his back to the wall, Chen Ge felt weirdly exposed.

If the starting point of the fire was the third floor, then all this wouldn’t have been preserved, so the killer probably didn’t come up to the third floor at the time.

Chen Ge continued down the darkened corridor. The doors on his either side had been warped by fire, exposing singed and ruined rooms.

Navigating the trash that littered the floor, Chen Ge scurried into the closest room that he could get into.