

Horrors 351

Chapter 351: I Was So Scared!

“Xiao Lan? Say something! What’s happening over there?” Sister Mao screamed into the phone. However, there was no answer but the sound of chaos.

“Mr. Zhou! Come save me!” Xiao Lan screamed before the call got cut off. Sister Mao put down the phone with a worried expression. “Xiao Lan said Bai Qiulin is a crazy person? The five of them are together, Huang Xing has already been taken down, and now we’ve lost contact with Xiao Lan as well. What is happening over there?”

“Didn’t Xiao Lan call for Mr. Zhou to come save her at the last minute? Looks like Mr. Zhou and his wife are also victims. We should go find the couple, and then we’ll know for sure,” Ma Tian suggested. “But we need to hurry before Bai Qiulin harms them.”

“I don’t care about that Mr. Zhou and his wife, nor do I care about your teammates. I’ve paid my money, so you have to help me finish my mission.” The one who spoke was Brother Wong. He held his phone and kept recording everything, ignoring the rules of the Haunted House.

“You...” Ma Tian was about to say something when Sister Mao stopped him. “Brother Wong, the situation has changed. There appear to be employees from the Haunted House mixed in with the visitors. We need to clarify this first.”

“What kind of danger can happen in a Haunted House?” Brother Wong used his phone to record everything inside the Haunted House. Sister Mao knew that she would not be able to persuade Brother Wong, so she said, “In that case, why don’t you wait here? We’ll be back in a bit.”

“Before coming here, your group kept gloating, saying that going to a Haunted House is like returning home. Now we’re just halfway through, and you’re this panicked already? Looks like my money was spent at the wrong place.” Brother Wong’s identity was rather unique.

Sister Mao did not dare counter, so she nodded and said, “That is our fault. Brother Wong, just give us three minutes. If we cannot find Huang Xing and Xiao Lan, we’ll come back to get you.”

“Never mind, I’ll go with you.” Brother Wong turned and inspected the video he had just recorded.

“Thank you, Brother Wong.” Sister Mao dragged Ma Tian out of the old home and said, “We’ll wait for you outside.”

Once they were out the door, Ma Tian could not help but grumble, “This Ol’ Wong really think we’re his bodyguards.”

“Just focus on our work.” Sister Mao patted Ma Tian’s hand lightly. “Calm down.”

“Sister Mao, actually, I’m curious—what is this man’s identity? It’s true that we did take his money, but that doesn’t mean we need to be so servile toward him; we don’t owe him anything.”

“He is one of the top brass at the futuristic theme park. He’s well connected in the business, so there’s no reason for us to offend him.” Sister Mao turned to look back into the house.

“In that case, why did he come to New Century Park personally? Why didn’t he just send a lackey?” Ma Tian was confused. He thought that the man’s actions were unreasonable.

“This is a matter between the two large theme parks; it’s none of our business.”

When Brother Wong came out, he had already pocketed his phone. “Let’s go.”

The three returned to the center of the village where they had separated from Huang Xing’s group.

“There’re so many houses. Where should we start looking?”

“On the phone, Xiao Lan said that she was inside a house with a sedan. We should follow the route that they used when they left.” The three were about to head down that way when footsteps echoed down the streets. A man and woman ran their way with fear on their faces.

“Mr. Zhou?” Ma Tian realized something and immediately went to meet up with them. Before he could say anything, he heard Mr. Zhou’s urgent calls. “You have to go save Xiao Lan! That Bai Qiulin is a monster!”

Even from a far, Sister Mao and Ma Tian could hear the panic in Mr. Zhou’s voice. “Monster?”

Mr. Zhou gasped for air as he held Duan Yue’s hand. His eyes were filled with terror, and his hair was shaking from fear. “Huang Xing suggested that we split up so we could find the wedding dress faster. He went alone with Bai Qiulin, and the two of us stayed with Zhang Lan. It didn’t take long for us to hear Huang Xing scream!”

Mr. Zhou’s voice was shaking like he had just been through a traumatic event.

“We also heard Huang Xing’s scream. What happened next?” Sister Mao urged him to continue.

“Zhang Lan had a suspicion that something was off about Bai Qiulin; she said there are internet rumors that this place is really haunted! This Bai Qiulin is either an employee, a madman, or an actual ghost.” Mr. Zhou took a deep breath. “Initially, we didn’t believe Zhang Lan, but what happened next was too weird.”

“Tell us, what happened!”

“When the three of us arrived, we saw Bai Qiulin come out from one of the old houses. Xiao Lan got into an argument with him then.” Mr. Zhou took out his left hand. “All of you still remember Bai Qiulin kept his left hand inside his pocket, right?”

“Xiao Lan thought he was an employee and believed his left hand that was hidden must be controlling the mechanism inside the Haunted House. However, when Bai Qiulin took out his left hand, all three of us were shocked!” Mr. Zhou’s voice was agitated. He shook his hand a bit dramatically. “That Bai Qiulin has no left hand; the wound was clean, like it had been chopped off by a knife!”

Based on Mr. Zhou’s description, Sister Mao’s group was feeling unsettled already.

“The scarier thing happened later. Me and Duan Yue tried to persuade Xiao Lan to leave this man, but Xiao Lan insisted on going into the house. She believed that Huang Xing was inside the house somewhere.”

“So, the three of you entered the house?”

“The place was big; Duan Yue and myself went to the bedroom on the right. Worried about Huang Xing’s safety, Xiao Lan entered the bedroom on the left alone. Less than one minute later, I heard Zhang Lan’s scream!” Mr. Zhou’s face was filled with guilt. “I rushed toward her, but when I arrived, she had already disappeared from the room.”

His fingers seemed to be shaking from fear. “Then we saw the scariest thing. That Bai Qiulin walked out from behind the bed carrying his broken hand. His face was twisted and his body broken, just... just like he had been in a car accident!”

Mr. Zhou was babbling. It was obvious that the man was traumatized.

“Don’t panic, calm down, we’re here with you!” Ma Tian tried to console Mr. Zhou.

“It was too scary...” Mr. Zhou seemed to be caught in the fear. How he looked made Sister Mao and Ma Tian worried as well.

“Then the five of us should stick together and go back to the house.” Ma Tian was the first one to calm down. “Mr. Zhou, you lead the way.”

After some hesitation, Mr. Zhou nodded. “It’s my fault for not looking after Zhang Lan. Alright, come with me.”

Chapter 352: It’s Not the Worst Situation Yet

Mr. Zhou and Duan Yue walked in front, Ma Tian stayed in the middle, and Sister Mao accompanied Brother Wong at the back.

“Brother Wong, you have to stay close to me,” Sister Mao said softly. “This Haunted House has a very high review online; even the 50-cent army I hired barely managed to knock its review down. Therefore, there has to be something unique about it.”

“We’ve been here for about ten minutes already. We’ve not run into any actors or scary props. I wonder how this Haunted House operates. Do they just allow their visitors to wander about on their own?” Brother Wong used his phone to record everything along the way but did not find anything that was particularly scary. “The three-star scenario should be the most difficult and thus have the best design, but so far, the only thing I’m feeling is boredom.”

“His old Haunted House cannot rival the Haunted House that you’ve designed, but we still mustn’t let our guard down.” Sister Mao smiled and did not dare say anything against Brother Wong.

“Recently, New Century Park has been showing signs of recovering, and it is all thanks to this Haunted House, but I cannot understand how a Haunted House is going to revive an entire park.” Brother Wong walked slowly, so Sister Mao did not dare walk too fast.

The group was either worried about Zhang Lan and Huang Xing's safety or concerned about something else, so they did not notice the doors of the houses on the side of the street creak open, nor did they notice the shadows that crossed the wall. In fact, none of them noticed the shadow that hung from the rooftop that trailed behind them. The good actor, Mr. Zhou, slowly led them into the grasp of the ghosts.

Funeral music appeared in their ears, and the white lanterns swayed, causing the light to flicker.

"Wait, something is not right!" Ma Tian signaled for them to stop. "The atmosphere is different from before; it feels like many pairs of eyes are staring at us."

"In that case, we better get out of here first." Mr. Zhou was even more of a scaredy cat than Ma Tian. "I really don't want to go any further!"

"We haven't found the wedding dress, and we've lost our teammates. The time limit is forty minutes, and we're leaving in less than ten minutes? If this is heard by other people, how are we going to continue to survive as Haunted House reviewers?" Sister Mao took a step forward. "We'll keep moving on. At the very least, we have to see what's happening in front."

After that, she turned to smile apologetically at Mr. Zhou. "Please continue to lead the way, but don't worry, as long as you're with us, you'll be fine."

After a little more persuasion, Mr. Zhou finally relented. "Then, we'd better get a move on. I'll lead you to the place, and then we'll leave on our own."

He and Duan Yue picked up speed, and Ma Tian followed close behind. The paper money on the ground flew up into the air, and there was the sound of crying. There were children giggling, and the lanterns at the end of the street were moving on their own. They moved another few meters, and footsteps came from the other street. Mr. Zhou and Duan Yue acted like they did not hear anything and continued to move forward. Ma Tian followed without paying attention.

However, after they crossed the street, the funeral music sounded, and two men with their heads lowered, carrying a broken coffin between them, walked out from the other street. The coffin blocked the road. Sister Mao and Brother Wong were separated from the three by the coffin.

"This is?" They finally saw the Haunted House's actors, but both Sister Mao and Brother Wong were unsettled. The two men were not wearing make-up, but how come they... looked just like dead people?

The air froze, and Sister Mao pulled on Brother Wong's sleeves as she took a step back. She felt like she had knocked into something. She turned and saw a boy with a painted face smiling right at her. Before the fear in her heart exploded, Mr. Zhou, who was at the front of the group, suddenly screamed, "There he is! He killed Zhang Lan!"

In the middle of the courtyard stood Bai Qiulin with his spine broken and his face mangled. His body covered with blood, he ran at them waving his hand madly!

"I'm not a killer! I'm not a killer!" he screamed, but there was a hole on his throat, and his voice came out together with gushing blood. Mr. Zhou, who stood at the start of the group, turned and ran. Fear spread through the group. Ma Tian only saw Bai Qiulin's look before he also joined Mr. Zhou and ran. It was too scary! That was more than make-up; Bai Qiulin's head was almost falling off!

“Run!” Mr. Zhou cried out, but a coffin blocked their way. The two pallbearers seemed to hear their signal and let go of the coffin together before they reached for Sister Mao and Brother Wong.

BANG!

The coffin crashed to the ground, and the coffin lid slid off. A red set of graveclothes stood up on its own!

Brother Wong and Sister Mao could not get a good look at what was happening in front. She barely had the chance to recover from the fright given by the boy before the world changed. The dead people charged at them, and the graveclothes inside the coffin jumped out and walked toward them!

She was not a particularly courageous person. Normally, she depended on Ma Tian and Huang Xing. This sudden accident had spooked her too much. She grabbed Brother Wong, found the closest street, and ran down it.

“Sister Mao!” Ma Tian cried, but Sister Mao had already run away. The coffin sat between them, and the graveclothes now climbed back to stand on the coffin. Given this situation, the man did not dare get close to the coffin.

Without any options, he followed Mr. Zhou and Duan Yue and ran into another street. Human faces appeared on the walls. Ma Tian did not dare to stop; the bloodied Bai Qiulin was right behind him!

He really looks like he has killed someone!

When that thought flashed in his mind, Ma Tian’s heart could not stop shaking. He had just come to visit a Haunted House; how come such an unfortunate thing happened to him?

“A madman hid inside a Haunted House and chopped off his own hand. This is insane!”

“Don’t run away! I’m not a killer! I swear!” Bai Qiulin’s voice came from behind him, and it was getting closer to Ma Tian. He did not dare turn back and run full speed ahead. His heart raced, and he made sure to stay close to Mr. Zhou. He soon reached his limit, and his speed slowed down. Mr. Zhou, who was in front, screamed at the top of his lungs at Ma Tian, “Quick! Don’t stop!”

After turning another corner, Mr. Zhou pushed open the door to one of the homes, and he waved at Ma Tian. “This way!”

Ma Tian followed Mr. Zhou into the room, but after closing the door, he started to regret it. “Mr. Zhou! This is a dead end!”

“My wife cannot run anymore! You want me to abandon her?” Mr. Zhou helped Duan Yue into the inner room. “We’ll hide here for now.”

The urgency of the moment made Ma Tian miss the change in Mr. Zhou’s reference toward Duan Yue, which had changed from girlfriend to wife. He followed them into the inner room. “But there’s no place to hide in here!”

“Come, we’ll hide inside the dresser!” Mr. Zhou pulled the bedroom dresser open, and the three crawled into it. The door closed. There were three people inside the small space, but Ma Tian did not feel warmth. If anything, it felt like he had fallen into an icy cave.

“Something’s not right...”

“Shush!” Mr. Zhou glared at Ma Tian. “I’ve closed the front door; the madman probably won’t know we’re hiding here.”

The moment he finished, the front door creaked open. The sound was close to shattering Ma Tian’s heart.

“How can the monster know we’re in here?” Mr. Zhou’s face was filled with terror, but he soon recovered. “He probably just came in here to take a look.”

This time, before he even finished, the door of the inner room was pushed open. Ma Tian’s heart went to his throat, and his breathing became uneven.

“Don’t panic! He definitely wouldn’t know we’re hiding here!” Mr. Zhou was like a fortune teller because Bai Qiulin was heard stepping into the bedroom and stopped before the dresser. Ma Tian’s face blanched, and he held his breath from fear of being discovered.

“Don’t be scared. Now is not the worst situation. At least there are three of us humans visitors facing one ghost.” Mr. Zhou’s voice changed. “But if there were three ghosts chasing one human visitor, then you should be afraid.”

Hearing that, a thought crossed Ma Tian’s mind. How did Mr. Zhou know there was a wooden dress in this bedroom?

Other houses did not have dressers, and this was the only exception!

An indescribable terror filled his head, and it made every hair on his body stand on end.

Chapter 353: Ball Blowing Bubbles

His calves weakened, and he felt like his energy was drained from his body. Ma Tian did not dare move his gaze as he felt the two visitors beside him changing. The footsteps got closer. He looked through the gap, and the teetering Bai Qiulin used his hand to press against the dresser door.

Just as Ma Tian thought Bai Qiulin would open the dresser, Bai Qiulin took out a key and took his time to lock the dresser!

Seeing this, Ma Tian understood everything before he fainted. “The three of you... are all ghosts!”

His scream echoed through Coffin Village, and Brother Wong as well as Sister Mao heard it as they raced down the street. “Ma Tian is the most stable of us all. To be able to make him scream like that, it must have been something really scary.”

Sister Mao’s heart fell. Five of them had entered, and in less than fifteen minutes, three of them had already disappeared. The scariest thing was, even now, she had no idea what had happened to her partners. Cold sweat ran down her forehead. She was different from Ye Xiaoxin. She was not that courageous a person, which was why she formed a Haunted House reviewer group.

“Your friends don’t seem that reliable.” Brother Wong was not that physically fit, so he stopped running after a while.

“It’s this Haunted House that’s too scary!” Sister Mao dropped her disguise. She stopped wasting energy to pretend to be cute. It was hard when her mind was filled with various scary images.

“Let’s leave this place first. There’s no need to sacrifice our lives for the sake of face.”

“Agreed.”

Sister Mao held Brother Wong as they returned to the center of the village. Looking at the branching paths, they were stunned.

“Which is the road that we took when we arrived?”

“Brother Wong, that’s not the problem! When we arrived, there weren’t so many paths!” Sister Mao felt like crying.

“Calm down, don’t forget what you do for a living.” Brother Wong took out his phone. “Thankfully, I took those pictures and videos.”

He looked through the files and found the road that looked rather similar to the one they had taken when they arrived. “Should be this one.”

The two walked down that road, but the further they walked, the more they felt it was not right.

“When we entered the village, it only took us several minutes to reach the center of the village. How come it feels like now we’re walking deeper into the village?” Sister Mao looked at Brother Wong’s phone. “Are we on the correct path?”

As time went on, the pure terror of Coffin Village slowly revealed itself. The white lanterns released a faded red light, and things started to change.

“We’re really on the wrong path?” Brother Wong compared the road to his video. The path really did look to the one on his phone initially, but the more they walked down it, the more different it became. “We should turn back to the village center and select another path.”

“That might not be such a good idea.” Sister Mao grabbed Brother Wong’s hand and led him into a nearby courtyard. They had just hidden themselves when children could be heard singing. Two boys with blood red mask ran past the front door. They looked to be seven or eight, and they sounded like innocent boys. However, put in this environment, it just felt creepy.

“They seem to have left.”

Sister Mao wanted to look outside but was stopped by Brother Wong. “Don’t do it! What if the two boys are hiding behind the door? If this place is as immoral as you said, they might do something like that.”

“But we cannot stay here forever?” Sister Mao tightened her clothes. “Brother Wong, have you noticed the temperature dropping?”

“Not really, you’re probably too nervous.” Brother Wong was very careful. He used his phone to look around. “We should inspect this courtyard to make sure it’s safe.”

The white lanterns gave off a red light, and there was a strange smell in the air. The soil was moving, and the dead locust trees swayed lightly.

“Is this some kind of mechanism?” Brother Wong looked at the locust tree and used his hand to push it. He just wanted to see what kind of mechanism was responsible for moving it, but the locust tree fell with a slight push. “The material used for the prop sure is unreliable.”

The moment Brother Wong finished, Sister Mao pulled him back. “Brother Wong, look under the tree!”

There was a hole underneath the dead locust tree, and a body’s legs were poking out.

“What kind of design is this?” Brother Wong and Sister Mao did not expect something to be buried underneath the tree.

“The tree is just a normal locust tree; there’s no mechanism connected to it. Was it the legs that caused the tree to move? So, the mechanism is this body that is buried under the tree?” Brother Wong looked at the mannequin buried in the hole, and his curiosity to inspect it closer was silenced. He walked away from the hole. “This is such mad design.”

Sister Mao followed behind Brother Wong, holding his arm. “Should we enter the house?”

“Let me think.” Brother Wong gripped the phone, feeling afraid. The two stopped in the middle of the courtyard when they suddenly heard a splash, like a fish jumping out of the water. The surroundings had been so quiet that it was difficult for them to not notice this.

“The sound seems to have come from the water barrel.” Sister Mao hid behind Brother Wong. She seemed to have forgotten her identity as a Haunted House reviewer, and given the fact that her make-up had already been ruined, she just looked slightly better than a ghost.

“Come, let’s go take a look.” Brother Wong neared the water barrel, and even when he got closer, he could not spot anything weird; it just looked like a normal water receptacle. However, there was a white ball floating on the surface.

“I don’t remember anything floating on the water when we came in!” Brother Wong was confused. “Where did the ball come from?”

The light was too dim for him to see clearly. It was not until they were standing next to the water barrel that they heard something that sounded like bubbles.

“The ball is making bubbles in the water?” Brother Wong leaned forward and turned on the flashlight on his phone. He shone it at the water barrel. The light cut through the water and lit up the round ‘ball’.

Their mouths fell open. It was not a ball but a human head soaked in the water until it had become white!

With a splash, the ghost jumped out from the barrel. The sudden light from the phone seemed to give him plenty of displeasure. The bloated face rushed toward the two visitors. Brother Wong was so spooked that he turned and ran. However, he only took several steps before he tripped on something.

He looked at the ground, and the body that originally had its leg up now had its head upwards, poking through the soil!

The face smiled at him like it was trying to crawl out from the hole. Brother Wong crawled toward the front door like his life depended on it. But at this moment, the sound of children singing came from the front door.

“Little old mister, sitting before the funeral, his face stern. Adults and babies sat watching. The son’s legs were sore from kneeling.”

Chapter 354: They Are the Ghosts!

The red door was pushed open, and the two boys bounded into the courtyard. They continued to sing their weird lullaby, and blood slid down their faces. When they got closer, Brother Wong realized that the red was not from paint but a mask that was carved into their faces.

“Don’t come any closer!” Brother Wong collapsed to the ground. His hands reached back, hoping to grab something to use as a shield. His fingertips touched something cold. He turned back to look, and the mannequin that had been half-buried in the ground earlier had crawled out and was resting beside him!

Brother Wong called for Sister Mao to help him, but Sister Mao was facing quite a big problem herself. The bloated ghost had climbed out of the water barrel, and water dripped to the ground, his swollen face staring at the two visitors inside the courtyard. A shrill female scream escaped her throat. Sister Mao was scared until she lost her rationality. She abandoned Brother Wong and raced out of the house like crazy.

The lanterns on the side of the street elicited a red light. The originally-creepy village changed in several minutes; it felt like she had arrived at hell!

Two boys ran out from the courtyard. The eerie lullaby filled her ears, and Sister Mao raced for her life. “Help!”

As a Haunted House reviewer, she was screaming for help inside a Haunted House—that was something Sister Mao had not expected before she arrived. Her speed slowed down, and the Sedan Kids caught up to her. Despair almost swallowed her whole. “How come this road is so unending? Someone come and help me!”

After turning the corner, Sister Mao saw the red graveclothes standing in the middle of the road. The clothes stood upright, and when it discovered Sister Mao, it chased after her without warning. Her throat was raw from screaming. Sister Mao focused on running.

Fortunately, the Lord rewards hard work.

Sister Mao saw light at the end of the road!

At the end of the other street, there were several dim oil lamps. Even though the light was weak, they managed to chase the darkness away. “That should be the exit!”

Sister Mao tried her best to run toward the light, but as she ran, she realized that something was wrong. Those lights did not seem fixed to anything; they seemed to be moving on their own!

“The lights are floating in the air?”

With monster chasing behind her, Sister Mao did not have the time to consider these details. She ran another few meters before she saw the lights for what they were!

Pale faces floated behind the lights—each oil lamp was hanging from the mouth of a floating human head!

Sister Mao's brain had gone into shutdown. Her body continued to move for several meters due to inertia. Just as she was about to charge into the group of Skull Lanterns, a hand reached out to grab her.

"Follow me!" the man said harshly. He pulled Sister Mao into one of the old homes and led her to jump through the window.

"Who are you?"

"Shush, it's very dangerous here." The voice was rather familiar, so Sister Mao allowed him to drag her for two streets. After they ran away from the monsters, they finally stopped. They hid behind the door, and Sister Mao turned to look at the man who saved her from certain death. Her gaze moved up, but when she saw that face, her face quivered. "Bai Qiulin?"

"Will you please quiet down?" Bai Qiulin hissed at her. "Why? Is it that surprising to see me?"

Sister Mao's brain was a puddle, and she staggered back. "But Xiao Lan said on the phone..."

"It was me who hurt her, right?" Bai Qiulin said coldly. "You've all been tricked by the dirty things inside this Haunted House."

"Dirty things?" Sister Mao looked at Bai Qiulin with suspicion. When the five of them had gone to find Zhang Lan earlier, the pallbearers had left the coffin in the middle of the road, splitting the group in two. At the time, Sister Mao's attention had been focused on the pallbearers and the Sedan Kids, so she did not know what happened on the other side of the street.

"You might not believe what I have to say next, but it's all true." Bai Qiulin's throaty voice made her uncomfortable. "The couple with you are ghosts!"

"You're saying Mr. Zhou and Duan Yue are ghosts?" Sister Mao widened her eyes, having trouble believing it.

"This Haunted House has been in operation for many years already, and there have always been rumors of ghost hauntings." Bai Qiulin's pupils shook. "Several months ago, a couple decided to commit a suicide pact since their love wasn't blessed by their families. The location was this Haunted House."

"Suicide pact?" Sister Mao leaned against the wall—her legs could no longer support her body.

"Initially, everything was fine, but slowly, more and more visitors had visions of that couple. It appears like their souls have stuck around the Haunted House after they died!" Bai Qiulin's voice was scary.

"Huang Xing was tricked by that couple. I wanted to save him, but I was too late."

"But on the phone, Zhang Lan said you're the one who harmed her, and she asked Mr. Zhou for help before the call was cut off..."

Before Sister Mao could finish, Bai Qiulin interrupted her. “You people are so dumb! Don’t you know how to use your brain when you receive her call? Why would the call be ended right after Zhang Lan called for Mr. Zhou’s help? Why didn’t they end the call earlier? They had to wait until Zhang Lan pointed me as the murderer first. Why is that?” The more Bai Qiulin argued, the louder he became. Sister Mao was led in circles by Bai Qiulin, and she started to buy his story.

“At the time, I just wanted to tell Zhang Lan everything. I purposely avoided the couple, but Zhang Lan misunderstood me, thinking I wanted to harm her.” Bai Qiulin’s expression was serious. “All I wanted to do was help, but my good intentions were taken advantage of by that ghost couple!”

Every time Bai Qiulin spoke, it heightened the terror in Sister Mao’s heart. Her conviction started to shake. “So, those two are the real ghosts.”

“It’s unsafe here; I’ll lead you out.”

Before giving Sister Mao any chance to think, Bai Qiulin opened the front door. The two ran down the street, and when they reached the end of the street, two figures turned the corner and stood under the light of the red lantern.

Mr. Zhou and Duan Yue!

“Sister Mao?” Mr. Zhou was stunned, and his expression changed within seconds. With his finger pointing at Bai Qiulin, he pleaded, “Get away from him! You’re standing next to a ghost!”

The desperation in Mr. Zhou’s voice unsettled Sister Mao. Both parties said that the other was the ghost—who was she going to believe?

Her footsteps moved involuntarily forward. Sister Mao still believed Mr. Zhou a bit more.

“Don’t go! The ghost couple are lying to you.” Bai Qiulin stood where he was. His tone was sharp but shaking like he too was afraid. Hearing that, Sister Mao started to hesitate.

“Sister Mao, come over here!” Mr. Zhou screamed at the top of his lungs. Then he suddenly remembered something. “That madman ran out from the mental hospital! He chopped off his left hand! Tell him to show you his left arm!”

One side was a couple that committed suicide inside a Haunted House, the other was the convicted patient who chopped out his hand, and Sister Mao stood in the middle. She did not know who to trust. *Who among them is lying? Who should I believe?*

Chapter 355: They Fell Before I Did Anything

“Believe me, they are both ghosts. Don’t go over there!” Bai Qiulin moved one step forward. “Come with me before it’s too late!”

“Sister Mao, you have to think this through! He was around when the accidents happened to Zhang Lan and Huang Xing!” Mr. Zhou’s face was covered with fear. “Quickly come to us!”

Sister Mao was tormented by the opposing voices coming from both sides! This was more than just simple fear. Terror had seeped into her bones—just the thought of it sent chills up her spine. “Heaven on one side and hell on the other, one wrong step and everything’s over.”

She gritted his teeth and finally came to her decision. Perhaps because Mr. Zhou had said more words and was the friendlier party before all hell broke loose, Sister Mao chose to nudge toward Mr. Zhou and Duan Yue.

“You will regret this.” Bai Qiulin moved backward like he was ready to run. Seeing how determined Bai Qiulin was to leave, Sister Mao’s heart started to shake again. “If he wants to harm me, he wouldn’t leave like this. Am I really making the wrong choice?”

Sister Mao looked at Mr. Zhou and his wife, and she suddenly remembered that both Bai Qiulin and Mr. Zhou were there when accidents happened to Huang Xing and Xiao Lan, but when Ma Tian was caught, only Mr. Zhou and his wife were with him!

“I know the truth already!” Sister Mao was covered with cold sweat; it felt like she had just taken a jaunt around the gate of hell.

“Wait a minute!” Sister Mao ran to Bai Qiulin. “I’m going with you!”

“Now you choose to believe me?” Bai Qiulin did not turn around, and his voice was cold.

“I’ve always believed you!” Sister Mao tried to argue to regain Bai Qiulin’s confidence.

Bai Qiulin slowed down but still did not turn around. “Aren’t you afraid that I’m a crazy murderer?”

“Now is not the time for that; they’ll catch up soon!” Sister Mao had tears in her eyes. “I really believe you. Please, take me to the exit. Earlier I must have been possessed by the ghosts—that’s the only reason I hesitated.”

“Possessed by the ghosts?” Bai Qiulin stopped. Sister Mao finally caught up to him, and he slowly turned around. His neck snapped, mouth and nose bleeding, Bai Qiulin had a twisted smile on his face. “Are you talking about a ghost like myself?”

Sister Mao forced out a scream from her sore throat. She had lost her soul, and her body turned to run toward Mr. Zhou. “Save me! Save me!”

Sister Mao rushed toward Mr. Zhou and Duan Yue, her mind completely blank.

“I told you he’s a ghost, but you refused to listen. Come with us!” Mr. Zhou and Duan Yue led Sister Mao into an alley. They ran for a while before Sister Mao saw the end of the road—it was a wall!

“Wait, is this a dead end?” She turned to look at Mr. Zhou and Duan Yue beside her, and she lost the ability to speak.

“Of course, where else would dead people lead you but a dead end?” Mr. Zhou’s black shirt started to leak with blood, forming floral patterns. Duan Yue was even scarier; her body split into blocks like she could shatter at any moment. “I only said Bai Qiulin was a ghost, but have I said that we aren’t?”

Her eyes rolled backward, and Sister Mao felt it was a nice thing to faint.

...

Inspecting the make-up on his face, Chen Ge, who was waiting at the entrance of Coffin Village, finally entered the scenario. "It's time to add some pressure now that twenty minutes have passed."

Boss Chen decided to do this personally, but once he stepped into the village, several shadows crawled out and entered the comic. "What happened?"

He flipped open the comic, and Uncle Yan drew five spots on the black paper, signaling the five locations where the group had fainted. "It has already ended? All five of them got taken down already?"

Chen Ge ran into the nearest old home in Uncle Yan's drawing. He first pulled out Zhang Lan and Huang Xing before finding the unconscious Ma Tian with foam on his lips. Then, at the end of the alley, he found Sister Mao, who had lost her fake eyelashes.

"But only twenty minutes have passed, right? What the f*ck happened?" When Chen Ge visited the old building, he did not think that the three ghosts were that scary, even though they were exceptional actors.

"The three of them definitely could manage a whole scenario on their own, but pretending to be visitors can't be repeated too often. I'll consider this a special experience for the first batch of visitors." Putting away the comic, Chen Ge found the place where Brother Wong lied unconscious. Different from other visitors, the phone beside Brother Wong was still replaying the video. When he and Sister Mao were trying to escape, they had used the recording to find the way back. "Another content stealer."

Initially, Chen Ge did not pay much attention, but after Director Luo put out the 200,000 reward, there had been people paying for information on his Haunted House online. The newer the information, the higher the price. However, there were not many who had the guts to enter a three-star scenario. After all, even if they earned the money, they had to be alive to enjoy it.

Picking up the phone, Chen Ge deleted the video. Just as he was ready to place the phone back in Brother Wong's pocket, he noticed the many videos and pictures of a different theme park. The theme park's design was futuristic, and in comparison, New Century Park was old and traditional.

"Isn't this the futuristic theme park? Why would the man have the designs of a theme park on his phone?" Chen Ge glanced at Brother Wong. "Be it from age group or presence, this man is different from the other members of the reviewer group. He should be someone from the futuristic theme park!"

"Looks like the Haunted House has gotten famous enough to attract the attention of competition. New Century Park was on its last legs—even Director Luo planned to close the place—but recently, due to the existence of the Haunted House, the theme park is experiencing its second wind. It's understandable for them to come to feel out the competition."

Chen Ge came to this conclusion after looking through a few more videos. "Good idea, but you started with a three-star scenario. You sure don't value your life."

Chen Ge took out his phone and aimed it at Brother Wong's screen. He took down everything that he could use in the future.

“Sister Mao hired a 50-cent army to bring the rating of the Haunted House down, and there are groups bringing up discussion of New Century Park online. Could the culprit be the people from the futuristic theme park?” Chen Ge knew fairly well that Jiujiang was only so big, so the two large theme parks would have to fight for visitors.

“Based on current situation, New Century Park is still on the losing end, but thankfully, there’s one more month until the official opening of their park.”

After Chen Ge removed all the pictures, he returned the phone to brother Wong and dragged him out of the scenario. “I’ll need to report this to Director Luo. He probably also realized that someone has been trying to bring theme park down.”

All five visitors had fainted, and Chen Ge could not haul all of them out at once. So, he could only drag Sister Mao and Zhang Lan out with him first. “They’re so heavy. Looks like, in the future, I’ll scare them until they’re half-unconscious so that they can still walk out on their own.”

When Uncle Xu saw Chen Ge come out dragging two women with him, his eyes twitched. He stopped selling tickets and ran over to help.

“Get the stretchers from the resting tent! Where is the doctor on standby? Go get the man! Just tell them there’s another accident at the Haunted House. They know what to do!”

Uncle Xu and the workers helped Sister Mao and Zhang Lan get onto the stretcher. They were about to leave when Chen Ge suddenly grabbed Uncle Xu’s shoulders.

“What is it?” Uncle Xu’s forehead was covered with sweat. He was in the hurry to send the visitors to the doctor.

“Are there more stretchers in the resting tent?” Chen Ge raised three fingers.

“Three people fainted?” Uncle Xu’s expression fell; he was about to say something when he was stopped by Chen Ge.

“I mean, I need three more stretchers.”

Chapter 356: Promise Me Something

Uncle Xu’s hands shook, and he almost dropped Sister Mao. “Three more stretchers? But only five visitors entered the scenario!”

Not only Uncle Xu, but all the nearby visitors took a step back.

“I also didn’t expect Haunted House reviewers to be so easily scared.” Chen Ge shrugged helplessly. “Help me get the stretchers here and I’ll go get the rest of the visitors.”

After saying that, Chen Ge turned to walk into the Haunted House, leaving a group of visitors that were stunned.

“Five people entered, and all five fainted, meaning that the three-star scenario has a 100 percent chance of making people faint.” The team who planned to challenge the Third Sick Hall stopped to have a

discussion. Without refunding the ticket, they ran to the spot in the sunlight. They formed a circle and started to reassess the danger of challenging Third Sick Hall.

“Both the Third Sick Hall and Coffin Village are three-star scenarios, so I think we need to reconsider this.” The one who spoke was Yang Chen, who had met Chen Ge before. This student from Jiujiang’s Medical University seemed to be the core member of the team. “All the information on the Third Sick Hall was mostly rumors. Apparently, they were claimed to be testimonies from visitors who had visited the Third Sick Hall themselves, but the authenticity can be challenged. I just asked an insurance company—there’s no claim for accidents that happen inside the Haunted House.

“The risk is still too high, we haven’t even cleared the two-star scenario perfectly, so I personally suggested that we finish the two-star scenario before we even consider three-star scenario.”

“But someone has to take the first step. We stayed up late until three am to discuss this last night to come up with eleven emergency plans. Are you willing to give up now that we’re at the door?”

“Let’s have a vote.” Yang Chen raised his arm. “I don’t agree that we should challenge a three-star scenario today.”

“I support you.” The group of thirteen formed a circle under the sun. They seemed like they were discussing something important, and the nearby visitors thought they were quite mysterious.

“Seven votes for no, two surrendered their votes, four yes. Majority wins, so I announce that we’ll be giving up on this challenge for today!”

The team members returned to the resting tent to discuss the next course of action. Other people had no idea what they were up to, but they felt the group look rather impressive.

By then, the five visitors had been retrieved from the Haunted House. They were hauled onto the stretchers and sent to the medical room by the park workers. “The park workers are getting more and more professional. Last time, when Fei Youliang fainted, it took them more than half an hour to send him to the hospital. They’re much faster now.”

Chen Ge saw the fear on the other visitors’ faces as they saw the workers walk away with the stretchers, so he consoled them. “Don’t worry, our Haunted House come with full medical protection. We’ve already come to an agreement with a famed hospital, so you can visit without worry. It’ll be fine.”

Part of the visitors did feel better hearing that, but others were confused. Why would a Haunted House have an agreement with a hospital? These were not supposed to be places that were related!

After the promotion done by the five reviewers, many visitors who intended to visit a three-star scenarios all retreated, and the terror of three-star scenarios rose in their heart once more. That was probably human nature. Thing that they could not get, they wanted it the most; places that they could not go to, they were curious about it.

After making sure there were no visitors, Chen Ge returned to the Haunted House to look through the pictures on his phone. As he looked through them, his eyes turned serious.

...

Gu Feiyu and Xu Wan were each responsible for a one-star scenario, and the two-star scenario had the twenty or so mannequins. Only when visitors wanted to challenge three-star scenario would Chen Ge follow behind them to protect them from the shadows. The afternoon flew by. It was six pm, but there were still many visitors at the Haunted House.

In comparison to the service provided by the Haunted House, the ticket price was not expensive, so some of the visitors wanted to try out other scenarios after they finished one. This was one of the reasons the lines in front of the Haunted House had not reduced.

The Haunted House operated until 6.30 pm, and Chen Ge stopped selling tickets due to security concerns. After sending away the last batch of visitors, Xu Wan and Gu Feiyu strode out from their scenarios.

“Nice work today.” Chen Ge helped Xu Wan remove her make-up and called the two workers to join them in the dressing room. “We’ll have a short meeting. Starting with Xiao Gu, today, you’ve done a wonderful job. I didn’t receive any complaint from the visitors, meaning you have talent for this job.”

“It’s because I have a good boss who knows how to teach.” Xiao Gu removed the Doctor Skull-cracker’s outfit and placed it neatly back at the corner of the room.

“Playing a ghost for a long time inside a Haunted House may take a toll on your psyche, so stay away from oily food and depressing movies or drama. Let yourself get used to the environment first.”

“Yes, boss.”

“Okay, you can go now. If you come across any problem in your life, you can come to me. I hope you won’t treat the Haunted House only as a working space; this is also a home that you can come back to,” Chen Ge said flatly, but it was filled with warmth and strength.

Xiao Gu nodded heavily, feeling truly touched.

After Gu Feiyu left, Chen Ge started to remove his own make-up. “Xiao Wan, have you noticed any changes in the Haunted House recently?”

“No, but...” Xu Wan sat beside Chen Ge. “Boss, I feel the biggest change has happened to you.”

“Me?” Chen Ge turned to look at Xu Wan. “What kind of changes you’re talking about.”

“I can’t put my finger on it.” Xu Wan passed a make-up sponge to Chen Ge and sat quietly. “For some reason, I feel like you’re different from before.”

“Perhaps I’m getting older.” Chen Ge smiled as he continued to take off the make-up. He looked at himself in the mirror and suddenly said, “Xiao Wan, on the off chance that the Haunted House closes down, will you promise me one thing?”

“What is it?”

“I’ll tell you when the day comes.” Chen Ge let Xu Wan go, and he cleaned up the Haunted House. When he was done, it was seven pm. He locked the door to the Haunted House and headed for theme park’s office building. Due to the recent business at the park, Director Luo had moved into the place.

He knocked on the door and realized that Director Luo was skyping with someone. He was in formal wear and sounded like he was discussing something very important. After several minutes, the meeting stopped. Director Luo waved at Chen Ge. "Xiao Chen, are you here for those few visitors? I've handled that for you. Just be more careful in the future."

"It's about something else." Chen Ge took out his own phone and showed Director Luo the pictures that he had taken.

Chapter 357: Who Are You?

"Of the five who fainted, one of them participated in the design of the futuristic theme park." Chen Ge closed the door and gave his phone to Director Luo. "After some comparison, it's quite obvious that a third-generation theme park like our own is still lacking."

Every picture featured a different scene that combined imagination and incredible settings. Director Luo gasped with surprise when he saw the pictures. Honestly, if he was given a choice, he would also visit the futuristic theme park.

"Did you knock them out after discovering this man's real identity?" Director Luo asked without taking his eyes from the phone.

"That was just an accident."

"I'm not trying to accuse you. In fact, I think you've done a great job. However, I'm worried you didn't consider the consequences of your actions." Director Luo put down the phone. "After all, every single picture in here can be considered business secrets."

"Don't worry, I took the picture on my phone, so there won't be any data trace. Plus, I grabbed his phone through the protection of my sleeve, so even if he goes to the police, there will not be actual proof." Chen Ge sounded like this was everyday stuff for him.

Director Zhou was silent. Since Chen Ge had even considered his fingerprints, what else could he say?

"Lately, there has been an online presence trying to slander the Haunted House by hiring people to leave fake reviews. Initially, I didn't think too much of it until the appearance of this man." Chen Ge moved the slideshow forward. "Look at these messages. They're behind it."

Director Luo nodded. "The futuristic theme park has several shareholders. I believe one of them realized our threat and thus come up with these underhanded tactics. Don't you worry about this, I'll take care of it. You just focus on building your Haunted House."

"Director Luo, there're a few more pictures. Perhaps due to popularity of our Haunted House, they decided to add their own Haunted House—the Authentic 4D Haunted House."

It was at this point that Director Luo's face shifted. "They also wanted to open a Haunted House?"

"That's right. They plan to build a Haunted House that combines virtual reality and true reality. I've seen the preview online; the visitors claim it was like living in a horror movie."

“How does it compare to your own Haunted House?” Chen Ge’s Haunted House was New Century Park’s main attraction, so if it lost by comparison, New Century Park had nothing to compete with.

“Those things are ultimately fake; mine is one hundred percent real.” Chen Ge’s Haunted House would never shy from comparison.

“I feel like you’re hiding something behind your words, but never mind, just give it your all. I’ll support you.” Director Luo continued to flip through the pictures. When he saw the last one, his brows slightly creased, but they quickly relaxed. “You also took this picture from his phone?”

The picture was of a staff gathering. When Chen Ge took the picture, it had been for the benefit of his own employees. If they saw these faces, there was no need to hold back. “Yes, is there anything wrong with the picture?”

“Just saw an old friend.” Director Luo returned the phone to Chen Ge. “As long as you have confidence in your Haunted House, there’s no reason for us to be afraid of them. Don’t need to worry about the visitor number because we have something they don’t.”

He stood up to look out the window at the park. “We shouldn’t limit ourselves to Jiujiang. The uniqueness of your Haunted House will carry us forward. With enough promotion, everywhere that has access to the internet will have potential customers.”

In terms of business management, Director Luo was much more experienced than Chen Ge. “They can shift according to the trend, but that doesn’t mean that we have to stand still either. I have something for you to see.”

Director Luo turned the laptop around, signaling for Chen Ge to scan the QR code that appeared on-screen.

“What’s this?” After scanning, Chen Ge realized his phone had downloaded an app called Haunted House. After clicking on it, it provided a small description of each scenario with the number of visitors that had tried it, the pass rate, and the time limit.

“This is the app that I asked people to design for you.” Director Luo pulled out a wristband from the drawer. “Put this on.”

Chen Ge put on the band and paired it with the app. He opened the personal page, and it revealed his heartrate, blood pressure, and many more statistics.

“The data might not be a hundred percent accurate, but at least it will be able to fool many people. The real purpose of the wrist band is digital location. Each band has its own code, and if a visitor faints inside your Haunted House, you only need to click on the computer to find them.” Director Luo was probably afraid of how Chen Ge was going about doing things, so he stressed the importance of the digital location.

“The app can be used on its own or bound with the wrist band. How to operate it, I’ll discuss with Ol’ Xu. We’ll come to a decision within three days.”

This app that was designed for the haunted House had many uses. The visitors could use it to check the ranking and the latest clear rate. There were also previews for new scenarios and inside guides. This app was more like a community project for all Haunted House lovers.

“Director Luo, you’ve read my mind. I’ve thought about designing something like this for my Haunted House.” Chen Ge had big ambitions. The three-star scenario was just the beginning; his goal was to build the first terror-themed theme park in the country.

“In that case, I’ll give you that wrist band—the code is 000.” Director Luo smiled. Perhaps it was Chen Ge’s influence, but he had felt younger in spirit recently. Chen Ge left Director Luo’s office at eight pm. With Director Luo’s full support, he did not have anything to worry about.

The futuristic park will open in a month; I don’t have that much time left.

Chen Ge returned to the Haunted House to move the recorder, hammer, and comic into his backpack before calling Gao Ru Xue. He planned to meet Gao Ru Xue that night, and perhaps he might discover a clue related to Jiujiang Medical University’s underground morgue. The phone rang for several seconds, but no one answered. Chen Ge hung up and tried again.

I did promise to meet her tonight; did something happen to her?

There was still no answer. Chen Ge called for the third time. If there was still no answer, he would call He San and Gao Ru Xue’s father.

Did something really happen to her?

Chen Ge waited for nine seconds. Just as he wanted to give up, the call connected. He held his breath but did not say anything. He waited for the other person to speak first.

After one second, an unfamiliar female voice said, “Who are you?”

Chapter 358: Their Real Purpose

Chen Ge heard this female voice for the first time—it sounded almost the same age as Gao Ru Xue. The tone was laced with impatience and a very well-hidden resentment.

“I’m Gao Ru Xue’s friend. I wish to ask her out for dinner tonight,” Chen Ge said randomly. “Where is she?”

“She’s washing her hair. I’ll have her call you back later.”

“Thank you.” After hanging up, Chen Ge lay on his bed.

If this was a normal date, then it’s understandable for Gao Ru Xue to prepare, but she was obviously in a panic, and asking me out is to resolve the issue with her roommate. Under this circumstances, with her personality, she wouldn’t have wasted time with her appearance. Chen Ge had a feeling something bad had happened to Gao Ru Xue.

Five minutes later, Gao Ru Xue’s call came. After picking up, the girl’s familiar voice said, “I’m preparing to leave now.”

The door closed, and she sounded like she was in the corridor. The amount of background noise had decreased. "Where shall we meet tonight?"

"Name a place, I'll go there now." Chen Ge relaxed slightly when he heard it was Gao Ru Xue's voice. She sounded fine.

"Why don't you come to our school? Come in from the western gate. It normally isn't guarded. We'll meet behind the old education block." Gao Ru Xue seemed to have walked into the bathroom. "Come quick, I keep finding weird stuff about that two roommates."

"What happened?"

"During school, Liu Xianxian collapsed on the table and slept for the whole afternoon."

"She explored the underground building at night, so it's normal for her to sleep in the day." Chen Ge did not think there was any problem with that.

"If she was just sleeping, I wouldn't have been so worried." Gao Ru Xue lowered her voice, feeling very unsafe. "During the second class, my pen fell to the ground. Just as I bent down to pick it up, I accidentally saw that Liu Xianxian wasn't actually sleeping; her eyes were wide open, staring at the mirror inside her drawer."

"A mirror?"

"Yes, to be precise, she was looking at herself inside the mirror." Gao Ru Xue reconstructed the situation for Chen Ge. "Her eyes were bloodshot like she hated the person in the mirror very much, but wasn't it herself inside the mirror?"

"Your roommates sound like they are possessed. Why don't you move back home for now?"

"Okay, but I'll meet you at school first. I still have many things to inform you."

After the call was ended, Chen Ge was about to leave when his phone rang again. This time, it was from Captain Yan. "Such a coincidence? At a time like this."

Chen Ge accepted the call, and before he could say anything, he heard Captain Yan say, "Come to the police station now. I have something very important to tell you."

"Now?"

"Yes! It's very important!"

Captain Yan sounded very serious, so Chen Ge promised, "I'll be there in a minute, but I have something else to do tonight. I cannot stay for long."

"It won't take too much of your time."

After ending the call, Chen Ge called for a taxi to get to the police station. He called Gao Ru Xue on his way there, but this time, there was no answer.

Chen Ge reached that station at around 8 pm, and once he stepped through the door, he realized that the atmosphere was wrong. The officer on duty recognized Chen Ge and led him directly to Captain

Yan's office. He pushed the door open, and other than Captain Yan, there were two other people in the room—Ol' Wei and Master Bai.

The door closed, and Captain Yan signaled for Chen Ge to take a seat. "Last night, the three of you entered the mountain to find the two kids, but when my men went into the mountains this morning, they followed your directions, but they could not find that village after searching for six hours."

"Last night, it was Master Bai who led the way. You will have to ask him about this." Coffin Village had been unlocked, and Chen Ge temporarily had no reason to return to the ghost village.

"My directions are correct." Master Bai leaned against the chair, feeling better after a good night's sleep. "I saw the pictures taken by the other officers. The route is correct; Coffin Village is just beyond that valley."

"But the problem is there is no village after crossing that valley." Captain Yan sat at the table. "What happened to the three of you last night?"

"I cannot remember clearly, but there is indeed a village," Ol' Wei said with his head lowered. He had done a good deed, but he looked so despondent.

"The children have been saved. There's no rush to find that village." Chen Ge stood to the side. He did not even sit because he wanted to leave as soon as possible.

"If it was just that, then we could have investigated slowly, but the issue is..." Captain Yan took out an evidence bag from his drawer; it had a gun inside it. "Ol' Wei's gun had a shot missing. According to ballistics, the gun was used last night, but Ol' Wei has no memory of it. Do you know what this means?"

Chen Ge shook his head. He understood it was Ol' Wei who fired the gun, but as for why he fired and what happened then, Chen Ge had no idea.

"Ol' Wei is an experienced officer; something must have been intense to make him shoot the gun! Did you guys encounter such danger last night?" Captain Yan kept his eyes on Chen Ge, waiting for him to answer.

Chen Ge glanced at Master Bai and said, "No."

Hearing him, Master Bai's tightened fists slowly relaxed.

"Then do you have any memory of Ol' Wei firing this gun?"

"I did hear the gunshot when I was at the village, but at the time, I wasn't with Ol' Wei and Master Bai."

"The gun is the most important to an officer; it cannot be touched by outsiders. Now, we can confirm the gun was shot once. Whether the shooter was Ol' Wei or not, this is serious business. If you have any clues, you have to tell us." Captain Yan looked at Ol' Wei, who had his face lowered, and sighed. "The doctor said that Ol' Wei is suffering from temporary memory loss due to trauma, but no matter what, I'll get to the bottom of this."

"Understood." Chen Ge nodded, and after some hesitation, he added, "Captain Yan, Jiujiang's Children's Home's Doctor Chen was also at the village. He had been following us. This might be related to him."

“A BOLO ¹ is out on the man. The result should be coming back soon.”

As he said so, Captain Yan rummaged through the drawer, and seconds later, he took out a map with pictures pasted on it. “Actually, there’s a second reason I called for you.”

Chen Ge examined the map, and his pupils narrowed. There had been five eye-gauging cases around Jiujiang over the past two days, and if the crime scenes were all joined together, they aligned with New Century Park at the center!

“All the cases are surrounding my Haunted House? Is this some kind of ritual by the ghost stories society?”

Chapter 359: The Phone

Chen Ge had run into two ghost stories society’s members at Coffin Village. This meant that one last member remained in Jiujiang to toy with the police. Initially, Chen Ge thought the cases were related to Coffin Village, but it looked like the society’s real target was him all along.

Zhang Ya and Xu Yin were both asleep, so the only Specter Chen Ge had left was the Lesser Red Specter Yan Danian, but technically speaking, Uncle Yan could only use support skills. *The society realized my limit at Coffin Village. They now know that Zhang Ya is asleep; this situation is very bad for me.*

Chen Ge looked at the map on the table silently. The situation was bad for him, but it was worse for the ghost stories society. Wu Fei had been killed by the ghost inside the door, but the black phone did not show that he had died. This was probably due to the detail where the ghost appeared to be quite excited after she picked up the black robes that Wu Fei wore.

After some consideration, Chen Ge suspected that Wu Fei had hidden a part of his consciousness on a scapegoat and then placed that scapegoat somewhere else. The female ghost was so happy after she found the black robe, which meant that the robe was hiding something important. If it was a scapegoat then, falling into the hands of that female ghost would be a fate worse than death for Wu Fei.

The society’s plan at Coffin Village had failed completely, and they had lost a member. There were two members left. One of them was under great investigation by the police, and the other had gotten into a fierce fight with Doctor Chen at Coffin Village. Chen Ge knew that the days of the ghost stories society were numbered, but he was afraid that they might do something drastic when cornered. After all, these were crazies; they would do anything.

“Five murders surrounding New Century Park, this isn’t an accident. You might be their next target.” Captain Yan put the map aside. “We’ve found the killer and will capture him in about three days. During this time, you’d better not stay at the park at night.”

“Understood.” Chen Ge realized this was the real reason Captain Yan called him to the station—he wanted to protect him. Captain Yan asked Chen Ge some questions, and during that process, the captain kept releasing information on the cases consciously and subconsciously. Chen Ge remembered these details in his heart. Captain Yan allowed him to leave at 9 pm.

When he exited the station, Chen Ge took out his phone; there was no record of a call or message from Gao Ru Xue.

I've made her wait for so long, but she didn't once call me. Did something happen to her?

Chen Ge felt like the Gao Ru Xue on the phone had acted rather weird. He hopped into the taxi and rushed to Jiujiang Medical University. Inside the cab, Chen Ge called Gao Ru Xue. Similar to before, there was no answer the first two times, and it connected on the third ring. "Sorry to keep you waiting."

"I'm at the old education block. Come quick, my roommates are getting more and more abnormal." Gao Ru Xue's voice sounded urgent like she was running to find a place to hide.

"If you're running into any danger, I advise you call the police immediately. The police will be able to do more for you than me." Chen Ge urged the driver to drive faster.

"My worry is my roommates are being possessed. Do you think the police will believe that? My two roommates are not who they were." Gao Ru Xue seemed to know many things, which was obvious from her tone.

"Put the police on speed dial and go somewhere crowded. I'll be there in half an hour."

After hanging up, Chen Ge grabbed the phone and started to think. *Whenever I call Gao Ru Xue, it'll be put through on the third ring. Also, on the phone, she was somewhere quiet. If she was in danger, why would she purposely go somewhere quiet?*

Sitting inside the taxi, Chen Ge called Doctor Gao and He San.

...

At 9:30 pm, Gao Ru Xue looked at the self-study room that had become increasingly deserted, and she called Chen Ge one more time. "I'm sorry, but the number you're calling is currently busy..."

This was the twenty-third time that she had called Chen Ge, but every time the line was busy. *Did something happen to him?*

Gao Ru Xue borrowed her friend's phone to make the call, but there was still no answer, like the number was cursed.

"Last night, when the three shadows came in, I called everyone, and only Chen Ge's reply was different, but how come it has turned around completely today? Everyone else's number is fine, but only his is busy. Who is he on the phone with?" Gao Ru Xue was spacing out holding the phone when someone patted her on her shoulder.

"Xiao Xue, let's go. It's time to go back to the bedroom." Liu Xianxian called Gao Ru Xue to come with her. She looked just like normal, be it her mannerisms or actions; even her tone and habits were perfect. However, this was the thing that scared Gao Ru Xue the most. She knew for a fact that this was not her roommate.

"You can go first. I still want to stay back to study." Gao Ru Xue pocketed her phone and flipped through the book on the table.

“You look so distracted lately. You really have a new boyfriend, don’t you?” Liu Xianxian sidled up to Gao Ru Xue, a familiar action—even the joke was similar to how the girl would do it normally. Her best friend sat beside her, but when Liu Xianxian neared Gao Ru Xue, her body froze involuntarily.

“Then, go back to the bedroom when you’re done studying. I’ll go back first.” Liu Xianxian grabbed her book and left. When she disappeared from the room, Gao Ru Xue sighed in relief.

“I cannot stay at the bedroom tonight.” Gao Ru Xue took out her phone to call Doctor Gao. “Dad, are you home tonight? I want to come home for the night.”

“I’m still at the hospital. I’ll probably reach home at 12. Why are you suddenly coming home?”

“My roommates have been acting strange recently. I’ll tell you all about it when I reach home.”

“Okay.” Gao Ru Xue grabbed her book and water bottle as she left the room. She saw Liu Xianxian and Ma Xin talking at the stairs. It looked like they were waiting for her. Avoiding them, Gao Ru Xue took the stairs at the other end of the corridor. She did not return to the bedroom but hailed a taxi to head home.

This is weird, how come only Chen Ge’s number is unavailable? Gao Ru Xue took out her phone and called Chen Ge for the twenty-fourth time.

“I’m sorry, but the number you’re calling is currently busy...”

Chapter 360: Open the Door

There’s still no answer. Never mind, I’ll leave school for now.

A weird feeling was crawling out of Gao Ru Xue’s heart. She was very nervous and saw everything as suspicious. “Sir, will you drive faster? I’m in a hurry.”

The enclosed space caused Gao Ru Xue’s breath to come short. She rolled the window down, and the wind tussled her hair. There were crowds outside milling about the street, but she did not feel one bit comforted; she kept feeling like someone was watching her from somewhere.

“You’re a student at Jiujiang’s Medical University, right? Better not go out alone at night, it’s rather chaotic lately.” The driver held the steering wheel and said, “There have been quite a number of murders around the area recently, and the victims were found in poor state. I hear their eyes were all gouged out. I’m not trying to scare you, but before the killer is caught, you’d better stay in your school dormitory at night.”

The driver probably meant well, but it sounded different to Gao Ru Xue’s ears. She could not stop her mind from wandering. Murders? Multiple murders? Why would he ask me to go back to the dormitory? Is he the killer?

In Gao Ru Xue’s eyes, the driver’s normal face turned dark, and his every movement seemed to be hiding some sinister intention. Gao Ru Xue did not reply as she grabbed her phone and turned to look out the window. However, she would surreptitiously glance at the driver once in a while.

Twenty minutes later, the taxi arrived at Xi Xia Hu Residence. Doctor Gao had bought a home here two years ago. After paying the fare, Gao Ru Xue got out of the car quickly. It was about ten pm, and there were not that many people around the area. Xi Xia Hu Residence could be considered a silk-stocking district at Jiujiang. The environment was nice, and Xi Xia Lake was just next to it. However, the place was rather isolated from the city.

After entering the residential area, Gao Ru Xue moved forward with her head lowered. The streetlight released pale light, and she did not dare look into the forest to the side because the green looked rather creepy at night.

Damn, I left my book and water bottle in the taxi.

She had left in such a hurry that she had accidentally left her stuff in the taxi. The water bottle was fine, but she needed that textbook for her class. Thinking about that, Gao Ru Xue felt more agitated. The taxi had already left, so it was too late for her to go and grab it.

She glanced at the time on her phone. It was about ten pm, and the residential area was practically abandoned. However, the lights of the building faraway was still on, which gave Gao Ru Xue some semblance of comfort. Xi Xia Hu had its own garden. Crossing through it, Gao Ru Xue came to the third building. Her home was on the 13th floor of the third building.

It sure is quiet tonight.

After entering the corridor, Gao Ru Xue's exposed arms felt cold. She clapped, and after the voice-activated lights came on, she did not move forward. Compared to before, nothing seemed to have changed, but Gao Ru Xue just felt something was not right.

The words that the driver had told her inside the car kept flashing through her mind. Murder, eye-gouging, they were like a rope slowly tightened around her neck. Is that driver the killer?

His tone was extremely weird. The serial murders happened across town, which means that the killer had to be able to move around town quickly. They have to have access to easy transport, so it's not impossible for the killer to be a taxi driver. Did I just sit where a dead body once lay? Could the trunk be filled with bloodied murder weapons?

The more she thought about it, the more afraid she became. She would turn back to look every few steps, afraid that people might just appear behind her. She walked to the elevator and pressed the button. When the door opened, the voice-activated lights went out in unison. Darkness fell, and Gao Ru Xue's body froze. She saw a dark human shape walking out from the elevator!

Gao Ru Xue bumped into the man, and she realized he was wearing a raincoat. He did not apologize and strode quickly down the corridor. "A raincoat? But it's not raining."

The hood blocked the man's face from view. He was not tall, and the large raincoat covered his legs and shoes. The man left in a hurry, but Gao Ru Xue did not notice anything suspicious like blood on the raincoat.

Will it rain later tonight? Gao Ru Xue glanced at the weather forecast on her phone. There was a chance that it would rain later in the night. What a weird man.

Gao Ru Xue waited for the man to disappear around the corner before she got into the elevator. The lights were on in the corridor. She watched as the elevator doors closed, and an indescribable pressure surfaced. She felt like a hooked fish, having trouble even breathing.

Maybe I shouldn't take the elevator.

She reached out to stop the closing door and stepped out; she had a bad feeling standing inside the elevator. She opted for the stairs. She started to climb, but it felt like the stairs were never-ending. When she reached the sixth floor, she heard the door on the first floor open like someone else had entered the safety entrance.

Someone is following me?

The first thought that came into Gao Ru Xue's mind was the strange man in the raincoat. At the same time, the words by the driver also resurfaced.

Could the man be the serial killer? He just killed someone in his building?

Her face paled.

I've accidentally become one of the witnesses, so now he wanted to silence me?

Gao Ru Xue initially walked slowly so that she would not make too much noise, but with the pressure from fear, she started to run. I need to get back home as soon as possible!

Footsteps echoed from underneath her. It sounded like someone else was racing up the stairs as well!

The distance closed. Gao Ru Xue ran as fast as she could. Her home was on the 13th floor, and there was only a five-floor distance between them. She climbed to the 13th floor without catching her breath. Gao Ru Xue shoved the safety door open and staggered into the corridor. She rummaged through her pocket for the key. The echoes of the footsteps became clearer inside the stairwell; the man was just steps behind her!

Her fingers froze, and she had to try twice before she managed to push the key into the keyhole. She twisted the key to open the outer anti-theft door. The sound in the stairwell came closer; the person was probably only one floor away.

Quick!

Finally finding the key to the inner door, Gao Ru Xue pushed the key in, and the footsteps beside her ears turned into a running gait! The person had already reached the 13th floor!

The inner door was pushed open and Gao Ru Xue rushed in without closing the outer door. She turned to slam the door close. She leaned against the door and started gasping for air. "Finally, home."

She adjusted her breathing. Gao Ru Xue turned around and looked outside through the peephole. There was no one in the darkened corridor. All the room doors were locked, and only Gao Ru Xue's outer door was left half open.