

## Horrors 41

### Chapter 41: Hold Your Breath

“The Specters’ Favored, your courage is admirable. The Nightmare Mission this time is both a test and a reward!

“The name of the game is ‘Deep Water’. It can allow you to bypass the line between the living and the dead, giving you the opportunity to see those who have unfortunately passed away.

“Mission Requirement: Enter the bathroom alone at 3:30 am. Lock the door and turn off the lights. Fill up the tub with water and light a candle by the side before lying in it. The period between 3:30 and 3:40 am is the time of a day when Yin energy is most concentrated; it is also when the Yin and Yang cycle of the day converge. What you need to do is hold your breath at 3:44 am and submerge yourself under water, thinking about the name of the person you wish to meet the most.

“When time enters the twilight period between darkness and light, you’ll be able to see them at the edge of living and dead.

“Mission will be accomplished if you see said individual(s). If you do not, the mission will be automatically completed after holding your breath for sixty seconds.”

Chen Ge had a complicated feeling after reading the mission description. Compared to the first Nightmare Mission, this mission seemed a lot simpler. Closing one’s eyes for thirty minutes in a scary environment required superhuman courage and staunch constitution, but holding one’s breath for sixty seconds seemed doable for most.

However, it was exactly because it was doable by most that he was worried. This was a Nightmare Mission; it could not be that simple.

*Similar to the previous Nightmare Mission, the location is the bathroom, but the difference is that I’m required to sink myself inside the bathtub and hold my breath for sixty seconds.*

He carefully studied every single step of the mission. Including the preparation time, at most, the mission would require fifteen minutes, what scary thing could possibly happen in such a short amount of time?

Chen Ge was interested not only because the mission looked simpler but also due to a line among the mission description: “allow you to bypass the line between the living and the dead, giving you the opportunity to see those who have unfortunately passed away.”

Different from most, Chen Ge became calmer during periods of duress. He sat in his chair, contemplating the possibilities. His parents had disappeared in an abandoned countryside hospital, leaving behind nothing but a doll and the black phone. The black phone was activated when he was about to give up on the Haunted House. During the first Nightmare Mission, the doll became the thing that saved his life. So, the question worth pondering was, could the doll and the black phone have been purposely left behind by his parents to act as clues to their whereabouts?

If that was true, then this second Nightmare Mission would be additionally interesting.

*Perhaps, they're trying to contact me through this method to provide me with more information?*

Of course, this was merely Chen Ge's speculation. To be perfectly honest, even if the Nightmare Mission was not a plan set up by his parents, Chen Ge would carry on with this mission.

*Allow you to bypass the line between the living and the dead, giving you the opportunity to see those who have unfortunately passed away.*

For Chen Ge, this was a chance to confirm once and for all whether his parents were still alive or not. If he did not see his parents, then it meant that they were merely missing and still alive. If he did see them, then it would validate Chen Ge's first speculation; his parents left the black phone behind for a purpose, probably as a channel to siphon information to him. Perhaps the black phone even contained his parents' actual last words.

*Looks like I have no choice.*

Chen Ge glanced at his watch. It was already 2:55 am; thirty-five minutes until the starting time of the mission. *I've wasted too much time shattering those mirrors on the third floor; I've got to hurry.*

The mission requirement was for him to lie in a bathtub filled with water, but the only bathroom with a bathtub was inside the Murder by Midnight scenario. One of the doors of the workers' passageway was connected to a bathroom with a bathtub. It was the trap door Chen Ge had been using to enter the scenario and to shuttle He San's group out of the scenario.

*There are only thirty-five minutes left. There isn't enough time to go look for a hotel with a bathtub, so it looks like I'll need to do this within the mirror monster's territory.*

Since the decision had been made, Chen Ge no longer hesitated. He carried the four dolls with him and exited the Haunted House in the middle of the night to head toward the park's canteen to grab two cleavers.

*Even though these haven't been used to slaughter pigs or sheep before, I did see the workers use them to prepare chicken and fish. I suppose you can consider them blades that have tasted blood before.*

Chen Ge placed the blades beside his nose to take a sniff. Instead of the expectant smell of bloodshed, all he could smell was the heavy scent of green chilies and onions, which caused his eyes to water.

After returning to the Haunted House, Chen Ge ran between the fake bathroom and the toilet, carrying buckets of water. When it was ten minutes to the start of the mission, he finally managed to fill up the tub.

*Everything is ready; it's time to start.*

The Murder by Midnight scenario's front door was closed, and Chen Ge entered the bathroom from the workers' passageway. As demanded by the black phone, he was inside the bathroom alone. The mirror inside the bathroom had already been shattered by Chen Ge. The pieces made scrunching noises as his footsteps shuffled over them.

*It was quite noisy transporting the water, so the mirror monster should know about my presence by now, but that doesn't matter; I only need to hold my breath for one minute, and everything will be fine.*

From Chen Ge's perspective, the mission was weird but not that dangerous.

He locked the bathroom's door from within and rested the doll left behind by his parents against the door. Then, he placed the four ragdolls that represented the lingering spirits of Ping An Apartments' victims around the bathtub.

"Everyone, I'll be depending on your help later. Please help me fight for that one minute!"

Similar to before, he switched on his phone's recording camera and placed it on a suitable table to start the recording. However, the place was so dark that the screen was almost black, except for a fuzzy human-shaped shadow.

At the three-minute mark, Chen Ge removed the contents from his pockets and placed them on the counter. Following the black phone's instructions, he lit a candle and stuck it to the bathtub's rim. The dancing candlelight became the sole source of light in the room. Glancing downwards, Chen Ge saw his faces reflected in the many mirror pieces that littered the floor.

He removed his shirt and took a step toward the bathroom. Ripples could be seen breaking the water's surface. The bathtub was shallow, but due to the dim lighting, Chen Ge found himself unable to see the bottom. Touching the water with his fingers, a chill ran up his arm and spread through his body, causing him to shiver.

*This mission sure is freaky.*

After taking one last look at the time, Chen Ge stepped into the tub while holding the two cleavers. As he sat down, the water overflowed, drenching the mirror pieces.

*F\*ck, it's cold...*

Chen Ge could feel his body temperature dropping; even his heart rate had slowed. The bathroom was quiet except for the dripping sound of water that fell down from the edge of the bathtub.

*Just one minute, after this one minute, I'll have the reward, and the most important question on my mind will be answered!*

Chen Ge breathed in and out to control his heart rate, waiting for 3:44 am to arrive.

## **Chapter 42: Sixty Seconds**

Inside the darkened bathroom, Chen Ge sat alone inside the bathtub. He breathed in and out, circulating the air inside his lungs. The time noted on the black phone was precisely 3:42 am. He only had one chance, so he had to be careful.

The room was quiet, and he could not hear anything from outside the corridor; the monster from the mirror did not seem to be around.

Time ticked by. Chen Ge put the electronic watch he had brought purposely for this occasion on his side. When the digits changed to 3:43, he trained his focus and opened his mouth wide to slowly take in his breath.

As the candlelight flickered, Chen Ge slowly submerged his body into the water. His eyes were glued to the electronic watch; he had never been so focused in his life before. When the digit changed again, Chen Ge slipped underneath the water surface without hesitation.

It was finally 3:44 am!

The icy water flooded him from all sides. Submerging oneself in a bathtub filled with water in the middle of the night, the experience was unique to say the least.

The water numbed the senses, and it felt like there was nothing but darkness and oneself slowly falling into the abyss; there was complete silence other than the pounding of one's heart inside one's ears. The icy water pulled every sensory receptor in one's body taut.

Lying inside the bathtub, Chen Ge abandoned all thoughts as he listened to his heartbeat and started the countdown.

*Sixty seconds, I only need to hold on for sixty seconds.*

This was the first time he had done something like this as well. The surface of the water seemed to merge with the darkness. The candlelight, which felt like it was going out, drifted away from Chen Ge like he was slowly falling into the ocean.

*One, two...*

After the initial ten seconds, time seemed to have slowed down. The sound of water attempted to swallow even his heartbeat. All he could see was darkness. Chen Ge repeated his parents' names in his heart and held his pose with both his hands holding the cleavers and allowing his body to be carried along by the flow of the water.

The oxygen in his lungs was fast depleting. Chen Ge was starting to feel uncomfortable, like something heavy was pressing down on his body.

*Fifteen, sixteen...*

Every time his heart pumped, it exhausted the oxygen inside his lungs. As his heart slowed, so did the time; every second felt like an eternity. The feeling of discomfort intensified. It felt like a pair of hands was pressing down on his neck, slowly tightening around it.

Chen Ge opened his eyes, but underneath the water, he was unable to see anything. It felt like he had travelled to another world and was trapped in it. Three or four seconds later, his face turned startlingly white.

*How long has it been? Should be over soon, right?*

Suddenly, there was a violent ripple that crossed the surface, and a weird sound crossed through the heavy silence. The sound seemed to come from the outside corridor. Chen Ge had no idea how he managed to hear it so clearly... perhaps it was something done on purpose to distract his focus.

*Footsteps? Someone is walking outside the corridor?*

His heartbeat, which had slowed, started to race, and his body tensed involuntarily. *That is probably the mirror monster. Hopefully the dolls will be able to hold it off for another thirty seconds for me to finish the mission!*

His brain slowed to a crawl, and a buzzing sound appeared in his ears. Chen Ge was not doing so well, and the footsteps from the corridor only made it worse. He tried his best to focus and continued to repeat his parents' names internally as he returned to counting his heartbeat.

*Twenty-eight, twenty-nine...*

Chen Ge was unable to tell whether it was the water that had distorted the sound, but he swore the footsteps had begun to speed up, as if the opposite party was desperately trying to get into the bathroom.

Several seconds later, Chen Ge felt like a heavy piece of boulder was falling on top of his chest. The blood vessels on his neck started to pop. His limbs were going weak with cold. His brain was slowing down, and only Chen Ge's determination was making him hold on.

**BANG! BANG! BANG!**

Something slammed into the bathroom door without warning. Chen Ge felt like his heart was in a vice; the thing outside the door had lost its patience!

The opponent gave up after slamming the door a few more times. Perhaps it was the doll behind the door that had saved Chen Ge again. Silence returned to the room. Everything reverted to normal, or as normal as it could have been considering the circumstances. Normally, Chen Ge could easily hold his breath for a minute, but the footsteps from the corridor and the slamming on the doors had broken his composure. The degree of oxygen exhaustion increased when an animal was in distress.

He knew he was reaching his limit. The last wisp of oxygen inside his lungs had been depleted. Every second was torment.

*Thirty-nine, forty...*

When he counted to forty, Chen Ge's brain started to shut down. He had lost the ability to even keep the countdown going. If he allowed the little focus that he had left to waver, Chen Ge was sure he would drown. The sense of asphyxiation blotted out his thoughts, and all that remained in his head were his childhood memories with his parents.

A vein was pulsing weakly on Chen Ge's neck, and his hands that held the cleavers started to relax. He felt himself drifting toward the edge of death, and it was not until then that he truly understood the meaning of that sentence inside the mission description.

"It can allow you to bypass the line between the living and the dead, giving you the opportunity to see those who have unfortunately passed away."

What it really meant was, as night changed into day, those on the brink of death could peer into the other world!

Chen Ge stared unblinkingly at the surface of the water. His pupils were dilated, and it felt like he was pulling away from the surface. However, he could not see anything or anyone other than darkness, a darkness that was so quiet and yet filled with so much despair.

The feeling of one's lungs being squeezed by an invisible hand was a sensation that could not be put into words.

*No, if I stay down here any longer, I really will die in this bathtub.*

He believed he had survived half a minute already, and the people that Chen Ge wanted to see had not appeared. He had given up hope, or rather, he was glad that his parents did not appear; this meant that they were still alive.

His arms touched the cold surface of the bathtub's bottom. Using the last vestige of rationality, Chen Ge decided it was time to give up. His arms increased in strength to push himself out of the water when Chen Ge felt something was wrong!

Something was pressing down on his head, stopping him from coming up to the surface. His dilated pupils focused to one point as Chen Ge looked up, but there was nothing there!

The dolls had sealed the door and the area surrounding the bathtub; the mirror monster should not have been able to come in, so who was behind this?

More veins started to pop on Chen Ge's neck; his face was pretty much lifeless. At the very last minute, he used the last trace of energy in his body to grip the cleaver and wave it above his head.

The extended period of oxygen deprivation had pushed his body and spirit to their limits; like a string pulled taut, they could snap at any moment.

The cleaver cut through the surface, causing the water to splash all around. Chen Ge felt like he made contact with something, and he heard a crisp snap beside his ears before the mysterious force above his head suddenly disappeared.

Without hindrance, Chen Ge sat up in the bathtub immediately, gasping for air as he broke the surface!

### **Chapter 43: Mission Complete**

Chilling water slid down Chen Ge's hair. He was reeling from the fact that he had come so close to death. His chest was pumping unevenly, his lips turning from pale to purple, his hands still gripping the cleavers.

He felt more collected two minutes later, and the light-headedness dissolved. Wiping the water droplets from his face, Chen Ge stood up unsteadily from the bathtub. With the weak light of the candle, he could see that nothing had changed inside the bathroom.

*I swear I managed to cut something earlier; there was that snap too.*

Chen Ge looked around him and saw a cut left on the edge of the tub.

*Did I accidentally cut the tub? That shouldn't be it; there was definitely someone holding my head down in the water earlier, and the cleaver should have cut that person.*

Desperate to know the truth, Chen Ge climbed out of the tub to grab the phone that was still recording. He stopped the recording and replayed it from the start.

*At 3:30 am, I sat inside the bathtub, and nothing happened on screen until 3:43 am.*

Chen Ge leaned against the wall as his eyes glued themselves to the screen. At 3:44 am, he lay down in the tub, causing the water to overflow.

*Looking at it from another perspective, this does look rather creepy.*

When he was doing this in person, Chen Ge did not feel like it was all that odd, but looking at it through the camera's lens, there was something chillingly bizarre about this.

Chen Ge glanced at the time stamp. For the initial twenty seconds after he submerged himself, everything was normal inside the bathroom. There was the occasional sound of water dripping.

Ten seconds later, Chen Ge frowned. The video that was playing on screen was showing a different reality than he remembered!

Based on his memory, by then, the footsteps should have been heard from the corridor, but it was absolutely peaceful on the screen. The audio did not pick up anything weird, definitely no sound of footsteps. Five seconds later, the door slamming that Chen Ge remembered clearly also did not show up on-screen. All that was captured on the video was the darkened surface of the water and the dancing candlelight.

*The footsteps and door slamming were all parts of my hallucination?*

When fifty seconds had passed, the originally peaceful water surface was disturbed by a copious amount of air bubbles. It was obvious that the Chen Ge in the video was close to his limits. However, right then, something happened on the screen that made chills crawl all over Chen Ge's body.

There was a piece of shattered mirror the size of a palm lying beside the bathtub. Its surface started to cloud over like it had been swallowed by a dark fog. Eventually, a black shadow slowly extended itself from it. It leaned against the tub; the scene was definitely supernatural. Based on its build and features, it looked like He Feng.

The number of air bubbles started to increase, and the video was about to reach its climax. In the video, Chen Ge's body and mind were tested to their limits already, and he was about to give up. Chen Ge could see himself inside the tub moving upwards.

However, just as his head was about to break the surface, the black shadow beside the tub suddenly reached out with both of its hands to press on his head!

The shock caused water to stream into Chen Ge's nostrils, choking the man alive. Chen Ge struggled vehemently as the cleavers in his hands waved frantically above. The black shadow flickered like an image on an old television. The cleavers affected him but only slightly.

At the most crucial moment, the ragdolls that were placed around the bathtub started to teeter like they were being blown by winds. The smallest among them tipped over and used its body to block the palm-sized mirror piece completely.

The black shadow's body started to blur. It was then that Chen Ge's cleaver inadvertently made contact with its head, and the shadow disappeared. The cleaver flew out of Chen Ge's grasp, and before it landed on the floor, it scratched the edge of the bathtub, leaving a light mark. Almost at the same time, Chen Ge burst through the water surface.

The video ended then. After knowing the truth, the desire within Chen Ge's heart to demolish that creature intensified. *The thing has to be vanquished!*

Chen Ge saved the video and picked up the ragdoll that was lying on top of the mirror. The small girl's back had been cut by the sharp edge of the mirror, and her body was drenched.

*They're both existence from the other side, but their personalities are completely different. Some of them are just in it for the scare, and they're good at heart, while others harbor nothing but malice.*

Chen Ge dried his body and put on his clothes. He placed all the dolls inside his pocket, and it was then that he felt better.

*Shattering the mirrors is useless. It can still crawl out of the mirror, so how am I supposed to deal with a creature like this? The thing can appear and disappear at will and can't be found; I'm at a natural disadvantage dealing with things like this.*

Chen Ge picked up the palm-sized mirror out of curiosity, but he was shocked to realize the water droplets on it seemed to be moving with a will of their own. They trailed across the surface forming a number—3.

*Is this a taunt from the monster? Three, representing He San, He Feng, and myself? Or will it kill me within three days?*

Chen Ge had no clue what the number meant, but he was certain it wouldn't be anything good. *Then again, do you really think I am afraid of you? One of these days, I'll yank you out of the mirror and put you out in the sun to scorch you alive!*

Chen Ge came up with the worst curse he could think of. He had come so close to dying earlier.

After taking another deep breath, Chen Ge went to pick up the black phone. He did not have much anticipation, but when he saw the message that appeared on screen, his eyes lit up.

"The Specters' Favored, you managed to hold your breath for 62 seconds. Congratulations for completing the Nightmare Mission! Obtain the mission reward—Yin Yang Vision.

"Yin Yang Vision: See through the line that blurs between the two worlds. Use the Yang body to observe the Yin presence (A great upgrade to one's vision, other function currently unknown).

"Notice: You have completed two Nightmare Daily Missions. After completing the third Nightmare Mission, it will randomly unlock the Trial Mission for one of the scenarios!



“Completed three consecutive missions with more than a 95 percent completion rate, unlocking new feature—My Friends from the Other Side [Affection Status]!”

After reading through the series of messages, Chen Ge did not know what he should feel. The requirement of the Nightmare Mission was for him to hold his breath for sixty seconds. Due to the outside disturbance, he had already planned to surrender at around fifty or so seconds, and he would have failed the mission. However, the desire of the mirror monster to kill him had forced him to hold on for an additional few seconds, allowing him to complete the mission with a very close success.

In a way, the appearance of the mirror monster was a blessing in disguise, because in the end, the result was positive.

Chen Ge went through the black phone and realized how crucial this Nightmare Mission was. If he had failed the mission, not only would he not have earned the mission reward, the unlocking of the new scenario would have been delayed, and most importantly, the new function of the phone would not have been unlocked.

Compelled by curiosity, Chen Ge clicked the new tab open. The interface changed, and five unfamiliar names appeared on screen.

#### **Chapter 44: Reviews**

“Current Affection Levels:

“Qin Guoheng (Lingering Spirit): Unfamiliar (You two can’t be considered friends; he was helping you out of kindness)

“Du Ruoshui (Lingering Spirit): Unfamiliar

“Qin Munan (Lingering Spirit): Unfamiliar

“Qin Xiaoxiao (Baleful Specter): Slightly Favorable Opinion (You’ve managed to attract her attention. To her, you are slightly closer than a stranger)

“Zhang Ya (Red Specter): Crazy About You (You are a unique presence to her; she likes you, but only after you’re dead)

“To increase the affection level, you could expose them to the screams of visitors that are wealthy with negative feelings, gift them presents that contain Malice Points, or complete their Bloody Heart Mission.

“When the affection level reaches a certain point, they will selectively listen to your orders.

“Warning: Only specters with deep malice and a dark history will be able to provide you with a Bloody Heart Mission. Completing the mission will greatly increase the affection level and will give you the power to get them to help you complete something that isn’t against their will!”

The new feature gave Chen Ge a deeper understanding of his ‘friends’. He removed the smallest doll from his pocket. This doll did not look that much different from the other dolls, at least physically, but the phone app had set her apart. She was the sole baleful specter among the family of lingering spirits.

*Something like you can be considered a baleful spirit?*

Chen Ge poked Xiaoxiao's cheek with his finger. Xiaoxiao, who was raised into the air, seemed to be a bit angry; she gave Chen Ge the impression of a little kitten who hadn't been weaned from milk, gnashing her teeth in a show of aggression!

*I suppose this is an accidental discovery.*

If Qin Xiaoxiao was the kind and gentle presence among the baleful specter, then Zhang Ya was the complete opposite. In fact, this was the first time Chen Ge had come across the term 'Red Specter'.

*What exactly is the difference between a normal Baleful Specter and a Red Specter?*

Chen Ge tried to click on Zhang Ya's name, and the screen changed to reveal a blood-red interface.

"Are you sure you want to accept Zhang Ya's Bloody Heart Mission? Warning! This mission contains a certain level of danger!"

The blood red interface caused cold sweat to appear all over Chen Ge's forehead. *But the phone says only specters with exceptionally deep malice and a dark history will be able to provide me with a Bloody Heart Mission. Am I that lucky? To be able to win such a 'prize' from my first draw?*

Actually, that was not the end of Chen Ge's thoughts on the matter. He thought to himself, *If that's the case, I'd rather give up on such luck!*

However, afraid of how Zhang Ya might have reacted if she heard it, he kept it to himself.

*Crazy about me, but only after I'm dead? If that's not twisted, I don't know what is!*

After exiting the app, the fear brought on by the mirror monster had completely disappeared. Compared to the 'prize' he had gotten from the Wheel of Misfortune, the shadow inside the mirror was nothing. However, this did not mean that Chen Ge would let it go. In contrast, Chen Ge had made it a threat that had to be removed no matter what. Only by removing it would the Haunted House be safe.

Unlocking 'My Friends from the Other Side' provided Chen Ge with more options. From how he saw it, this feature was to set up the foundation for the Haunted House's spectral workers. As more features of the game got released, Chen Ge's interest in it increased.

After gaining an understanding of the new feature, Chen Ge turned to inspect his second reward—Yin Yang Vision.

The reward from Nightmare Missions would provide him with a personal upgrade. Chen Ge tried to look into the distance, but other than the ability to see slightly clearer in the dark, this Yin Yang Vision did not seem to have any other uses.

*Perhaps this power requires a special environment to trigger just like Mortician's Make-up.*

Chen Ge picked up a random mirror fragment from the floor and put it before his face. Physically speaking, there was not any noticeable change to his pair of eyes; they were similar to before.

*From the description, Yin Yang Vision should grant me the ability to see stuff that normal people wouldn't be able to see, but...*

Chen Ge raised Xiaoxiao to his eyes, but he saw nothing but a normal ragdoll. *Am I using it wrong, or is there a specific method to using the power?*

Chen Ge came up with nothing after some more trials, so he decided to put it on the backburner for now. Working his limbs, which had gone numb, Chen Ge stretched inside the bathroom. Then, he sat down inside the bathroom to edit his latest video.

*I've suffered so much. I wouldn't be able to face myself in the morning if I didn't share it with the world.*

He uploaded the original video onto the supernatural forum. It was 4 am, so Chen Ge didn't expect any responses. However, the moment the new video was released, there was already a new comment.

"Hello, is this a game to attract ghosts? Lying inside the bathroom at midnight will call out the spirits?"

Chen Ge glanced at the first comment and was shocked to realize it came from the forum moderator. He contemplated it for a while before adding the game rules and descriptions under the video and editing the name of the video to 'Why would someone voluntarily drown himself in his bathtub at home?'

Two minutes later, the comment floodgate had been opened. Chen Ge's account had garnered quite a following already on the forum. In fact, some of the users who were already asleep were woken up by their friends just to take a look at the video.

"Lying inside a filled bathtub at 3.30 am alone... Even with the lights on, I wouldn't dare do that."

"This new video seems to be even more supernatural than the previous one!"

"What the f\*ck is the shadow squatting beside the bathtub?"

"Did you hear anything or see anything out of the ordinary under the water? Boss, please reply!"

"The bathroom is the place with the heaviest Yin energy of the entire building, and the bathtub is a sort of hollow where Yin energy normally gathers. In Feng Shui, we call this '洼(wa)'. OP dares to play such a crazy game at a place like this, no wonder he stumbled across dirty stuff."

"To linger at the line between life and death as the night changes into day... probably only a madman could come up with an idea like this, and only a madman would follow through with it."

There were a few informational replies on the forum. Chen Ge gave them a cursory read, and similar to before, he did not reply. Instead, he logged out to start editing the video footage.

He cut out his final struggle at the end of the video, and the product he ended up with was 63 seconds long. For short videos, the best were those that were shorter but had more shock value.

However, Chen Ge went against the grain this time. He uploaded a video that was 63 seconds long and named it 'One-Minute Holding Breath Challenge.'

After releasing the video, those who followed Chen Ge were notified, and some already commented without watching the video.

"Breath holding challenge? There's no scary video today?"

"What is this? Even a drinking challenge would be more interesting than this!"

“Is this some new challenge? I’m going to give it a try, too.”

“It’s all over; the host’s talent has run out. What the F\*ck! What is that thing I saw lying beside the tub? Get the f\*ck out of my phone!”

#### **Chapter 45: Someone Is Trying to Kill Me!**

One minute after the video was posted, Chen Ge’s comment section exploded again!

“The shadow leaning against the tub 56 seconds in is a special effect, right? It seems to crawl up from underneath the tub!”

“The person waving the cleavers in the video is the host himself? Someone get him an Oscar!”

“If the black shadow had held on any longer, host wouldn’t be with us anymore!”

“F\*ck this sh\*t! I was trying to hold my breath as I started the video, but this thing popped up halfway!”

“Run while you still can! The host only shares ghost videos! Run and don’t look back!”

“After staring at my phone for a full minute, I realized I am not going to sleep tonight.”

“After your last video, I didn’t dare look at the mirror anymore, and after this video, I won’t dare take a bath alone anymore! Heartless host, taste this piledriver from me!”

Chen Ge was glad that his video had such a good reception even though it was 4 am. Feeling the ‘love’ his fans had for him, he realized everything was worth it. Before closing the video app, Chen Ge did not forget to put up an advertisement for his Haunted House. The fans were quick to respond, leaving messages saying they would visit him with some local delicacies.

*Buying tickets to visit the Haunted House and, on top of that, wanting to gift me local delicacies, the visitors today sure are nice.*

After Chen Ge exited the app, he felt much better. He stretched lazily once more and left the Murder by Midnight scenario, hugging the five dolls to his chest.

The night soon passed, and dawn arrived. The sky outside the Haunted House started to brighten. Chen Ge found several wooden planks from the Props Room. He nailed them entrance and the trap door that was connected to the Murder by Midnight scenario. Before he dealt with the mirror monster, he did not plan to use that scenario.

*Twenty a ticket, and Murder by Midnight can fit seven visitors at one time. If one run is counted as fifteen minutes, I’ll be able to gain a profit of 560 RMB per hour. One day’s work is eight hours, so that translates to more than 4,000 RMB.*

The thought squeezed Chen Ge’s heart with pain, but he was not blinded by greed. *Safety’s first. There’ll be more to earn after future scenarios are unlocked.*

After sealing up the scenario, Chen Ge returned to the staff breakroom. He placed the dolls beside his bed and changed into his running attire. The Trial Mission reminded Chen Ge of the fact that if not for his occasional training, he would have been buried under the ground then.

Xu Wan arrived for work at around 8.40 am. She was surprised to see Chen Ge around the corner with his head full of sweat. In her mind, her boss was not someone who was into exercising.

The gate of the Haunted House swung open, signifying the arrival of a new work day. The two workers stood at their assigned posts, ready to start the operation. At 9 am, the visitors started to enter the park, but the entrance of the Haunted House was still quite empty; it was the most vacant spot of all the attractions inside New Century Park.

“Boss, what did you do inside the Haunted House last night? Why are there water puddles all over the place?”

“I was moping the floor.” Chen Ge gave a random excuse before adding, “When you are acting as a ghost, remember to stay far away from any mirrors.”

“Why?”

Chen Ge was about to explain it to her when he saw Uncle Xu, the park manager, walking toward them.

“Uncle Xu, is there a problem?” Chen Ge removed the ear-mic. He realized Uncle Xu did not have a very pleased expression.

“You are just getting weirder by the days.” Uncle Xu studied Chen Ge up and down. “Just now, the people from the canteen came to me to report that they are missing their cleavers. I was just wondering which thief would be so odd to only steal two cleavers. After looking at the surveillance, I have just one question to ask. Why weren’t you asleep at night but snuck into the canteen to steal their cleavers? Is it that fun running around waving two cleavers?”

Uncle Xu reminded Chen Ge that the cleavers he had taken from the canteen were still left inside the bathtub.

“I just helped the police solve an open case, right? But one of the killers is still missing, so the cleavers are for self-protection. Don’t worry, I’ll buy the canteen new cleavers tomorrow.”

Chen Ge had no clue whether blades that had touched a ghost before could still be used for culinary purposes, so he didn’t think it was wise to return the cleavers to Uncle Xu.

“It’s getting harder and harder to understand you. Kid, tell me honestly. Are you involved in some illegal dealings behind my back?”

“What kind of illegal dealings can I get into with two cleavers? I’m not doing anything criminal, Uncle Xu, don’t worry.”

Uncle Xu was only half-convinced. However, since the park had just opened for the day, he had too many things to deal with to get into it with Chen Ge. He took a step closer to Chen Ge and pulled out a tightly wrapped plastic case from his pocket, “Here is 5,000, if you have any trouble, please come to me.”

“Uncle Xu, thank you so much. I’ll return you the money this weekend.”

“Just stop making trouble for me, that’ll be more than enough repayment.”

After Uncle Xu left, Chen Ge shoved the money inside his shirt. He leaned against the gate, thinking about how to utilize this money.

*5,000 should be just enough to install some cameras. However, the interior space of the Haunted House is now all occupied. I’ll need to expand before I can unlock new scenarios. Renting the underground parking lot is not a bad idea, but I wonder how much the management will charge me.*

Chen Ge had a mounting headache from the many problems he realized he was facing. *The biggest problem I have is a lack of money! The reward money is still nowhere to be seen. Should I try to hurry them?*

He turned to look in the direction of the police station. When his gaze scanned a certain corner, his pupils narrowed, and his gaze centered on a curious visitor. The man was wearing a cap low on his head and a long-sleeved top with two hands stuck inside his pockets. He wandered between several attractions as if deciding which one he should try.

*That person looks so familiar.*

Due to Yin Yang Vision, Chen Ge’s vision was better than most. The person probably did not know he had been exposed.

*Shall I go stop him?*

Just as Chen Ge was contemplating that, he had a group of visitors who wanted to visit the Haunted House. He threw himself into work, and the suspicious visitor was thus tossed out of his mind. When Xu Wan and Chen Ge were about to go for their lunch break, he once again spotted the suspicious man loitering near the Haunted House.

*The man hasn’t come near the Haunted House the whole morning, but he came over just as me and Xu Wan are planning to go for lunch. What is he up to?*

Chen Ge had Xu Wan leave first. He returned to the Haunted House. When the visitor noticed his return, he turned around and left the park without even turning back.

*Have I seen him somewhere before?*

Chen Ge’s eyelid twitched, a sign of a bad omen. Chen Ge decided to skip lunch and headed for the park security center. After getting the guard’s permission, he went to search for this suspicious visitor’s footage.

It was quite obvious that the man was purposely avoiding the cameras. From his arrival to his departure, the man had kept his hands inside his pockets. Even when he stopped for a smoke break, he had only used one hand to light the cigarette that he kept dangled on his lips. However, the most suspicious part was that after paying for entry, he only rode one attraction. That was the Ferris Wheel, and he rode it three times in a row.

*This person is definitely suspicious!*

## Chapter 46: Suspect

Chen Ge's fingers slowly tightened as he linked the series of unusual actions together. Without saying a word, he pulled out his phone to call Inspector Lee's number at Western Jiujiang City's police station while standing in the security office.

The phone rang twice before Inspector Lee's gravelly voice came through the line. "Hello?"

"Uncle San Bao, I need to report something to the police!"

"One, you'll need to call 110 for that. Two, my name is Inspector Lee."

"I found the last fugitive from Ping An Apartments! He was at New Century Park!"

When he heard that, Inspector Lee's voice changed. "You sure?"

"Yes, I am, but please don't come in your police car; you'll spook him, and he'll go on the run."

"Be there in fifteen minutes!"

After ending the call, Chen Ge held the phone in his hand as he stared at the surveillance footage. The guards also realized something was wrong, and they hurried to call Uncle Xu.

"What's going on?" After a while, Uncle Xu rushed over, sipping from his water bottle. "Can I not have my lunch in peace? Xiao Chen, why are you here and not at your Haunted House?"

He glanced at the surveillance footage. When he saw the phone in Chen Ge's hand, he asked cautiously, "Who were you on the phone with?"

"The police." Chen Ge did not turn to look at Uncle Xu as his eyes jumped between the many surveillance cameras. "They'll be here in another fifteen minutes."

"Police? Why didn't you discuss this with me first?" Uncle Xu's voice went up a pitch. "The park management has its own way of dealing with robberies, natural disaster..."

"Uncle Xu." Chen Ge turned around to interrupt Uncle Xu. His eyes were incongruently calm and collected considering the words that fell out of his lips. "Someone is trying to kill me!"

When he announced that, the security room became silent, and all the guards whipped their heads around to look at him.

"Chen Ge, have you been mentally affected from living inside the Haunted House for too long?" Uncle Xu did not call him Xiao Chen like usual but used Chen Ge, which he reserved for serious occasions only. "What nonsense are you talking about in broad daylight?"

"I helped the police solve the arson case at Ping An Apartments, but one of the murderers is still on the loose."

Uncle Xu understood what Chen Ge was getting at then. "You mean that person is now inside the park and is out for revenge?"

"I thought he would escape the region to hide, but who would have thought the man was so courageous?" Chen Ge pointed at the man on screen. "This visitor is acting too strangely. His cap is too low, meaning he's trying to hide his face. Plus, today is not a cold day, but he's wearing a long sleeve shirt, and he kept his hands inside his pocket throughout. Even when he was smoking or drinking water, he only used his right hand, and he kept his left hand firmly inside the pocket."

"That might be so, but none of that proves anything. Perhaps those are just his personal quirks?" Uncle Xu put down the water bottle and walked to close the security room door.

"The fugitive's name is Zhang Peng; his build is exact same as that of the man on screen. Most importantly, there is the tattoo of a peony on the back of his hand."

"Peony?"

"The flower of good fortune. The man is a down-on-his-luck gambler who has lost everything."

"Meaning he kept his left hand hidden because it would expose the tattoo?" Uncle Xu was slowly convinced by Chen Ge's story. "Could it be that the man has some weird skin disease that he doesn't want anyone to see?"

"I have other proof." Chen Ge switched the video footage. "After entering the park, he only visited one attraction, the Ferris Wheel, and he went on it three times in a row. Do you know what that represents?"

"What does that represent?" Uncle Xu was slowly lagging behind.

"The Ferris Wheel provides the best vantage point of the park. He was trying to find the best escape route for himself." Chen Ge slowed down the footage. "When Xu Wan and I left the Haunted House to go to the canteen, I saw him sneak toward the Haunted House. You can see from the video footage that he wandered around the Haunted House the whole morning but didn't approach it. He only did so after ensuring that Xu Wan and myself had left. This is definitely not the normal way a visitor would act."

"You're right." Uncle Xu nodded, convinced by Chen Ge's argument. "But why would he go near the Haunted House only when no one is there?"

Chen Ge tapped his fingers on the table. "If I were in his shoes, planning to kill the owner of a Haunted House, I would definitely stake out the place first to familiarize myself with the building's layout. Perhaps I could hide inside the Haunted House and wait for the place to close for maintenance, then I could jump at my target without him anticipating my arrival. Furthermore, a Haunted House is the perfect place to hide a body. If the blood stains are taken care of, when the body is discovered, it will most likely be the next day already."

Uncle Xu got chills listening to Chen Ge's speculation; there was a scene forming in his mind already.

"Now that you mention it, it is quite scary."

"The scariest thing is that it almost happened!" Chen Ge pulled his gaze back, and his balled fists slowly relaxed. "Thankfully, he has acted too rashly. Plus, my senses have been maintained at an all-time high due to the many weird events that have been happening; that's the only reason I managed to spot him."



“Then, where is he now? Shall I alert the other visitors?” Uncle Xu finally understood the gravity of the situation.

“He has already left the park after he was discovered. At the time, I still hadn’t seen the footage, so I was not confident with my speculation; that’s why I didn’t stop him.”

“You did well. If the suspect went berserk inside the park, it would have caused great chaos.” Uncle Xu took a sip of the water and told the guards beside him, “Remember to cooperate with the police when they arrive later.”

Ten minutes later, the door to the security room was pushed open. Three men in casual attire strode into the room; the one leading was Lee Sanbao. “Where’s Chen Ge? Let me see your surveillance footage.”

With the aid of the guards, Inspector Lee compared the man in the video to the police station’s database and finally managed to confirm the two were one and the same!

“Kid, you’ve done society another great service!” Inspector Lee smacked Chen Ge on his back before pulling out his phone to contact the station to report on the situation. After some discussion, they decided to split into two teams, one was going to conduct a secret investigation while the other would surround New Century Park and observe from afar.

“Zhang Peng is an extremely dangerous individual. You have to be careful since you’re being targeted. The probability of him coming back is very high, so I suggest you stay away from the Haunted House for the time being.”

After hearing what Inspector Lee had to say, all the guards felt uneasy. Chen Ge, however, was surprisingly unfazed. “If I’m not there, Xiao Wan alone won’t be able to keep the Haunted House open. If I close the Haunted House, Zhang Peng will definitely know that gig is up; he’ll go on the run then.”

“You mean, you’re planning to stay at the Haunted House as bait?” Inspector Lee frowned slightly, thinking this plan was far too dangerous.

“Don’t worry, if he dares come inside my Haunted House, I guarantee he won’t be leaving anytime soon.”

#### **Chapter 47: I’m an Emotionless Killer**

“I’m afraid I cannot agree to that.” Inspector Lee shook his head. “Capturing a fugitive is the police’s responsibility; how can we allow you to take this unnecessary risk?”

“Staying behind at the Haunted House is merely to create a false image for Zhang Peng to think he hasn’t been exposed. This way, he’ll follow through his plan to seek me out. When he returns to the park, you will be able to detain him,” Chen Ge explained after much contemplation. “If we fail to catch him this time, I’ll need to spend the rest of my life in fear, looking over my shoulder every moment, since he could strike at any given time.”

“In any case, the actual plan will have to be decided only after we discuss it with the city’s investigation team. The case at Ping An Apartments is their responsibility; we from the western station are merely

providing assistance, but I will relay your request to them.” Inspector Lee packed up his laptop and made a call before leaving the security room with the two other officers.

Uncle Xu wandered over after the police left. He was worried about Chen Ge. “Xiao Chen, I think you should listen to the police and go find somewhere else other than the Haunted House to stay for a few days.”

“Hiding from the problem is not going to solve anything, but I appreciate the concern, Uncle Xu.”

After taking another look at the surveillance, Chen Ge returned to the Haunted House.

Xu Wan was leaning against the gate, and when she saw Chen Ge walk toward her from the security office, she pointed at the boxed rice left on the table. “Boss, today’s menu is stir-fry green chili with pork and rice. When the canteen auntie wasn’t paying attention, I added another scoop of meat for you.”

Chen Ge thanked Xiao Wan for the rice. He looked at the girl but decided not to reveal any information about Zhang Peng. He finished the rice with big mouthfuls and began the afternoon service. Xu Wan acted as the ghost inside the Minghun scenario while Chen Ge stayed at the entrance to sell tickets. He kept his head low, but his eyes swept every corner of the park.

*Zhang Peng’s appearance can be a curse or a blessing depending on how I use him.*

After completing several missions on the black phone, Chen Ge’s logical thinking had improved tremendously, and his tolerance for stress had been given a power up.

*There’s a mirror monster hiding inside the Haunted House currently. The thing can pass through the mirror world and reality freely. In other words, if there’s a mirror, it is invincible. Chen Ge sold the ticket mechanically while his brain worked on overdrive to process the information. The attacks on He San and He Feng were very similar. Based on He Feng’s description, the monster’s aim was to possess their body and swap out their consciousness. Temporarily, we have no idea what the purpose of that is, but one thing worth considering is, if the monster enters a person’s body, does that mean that it won’t be able to escape the body at least for a short period of time?*

Chen Ge had discovered this phenomenon when he conversed with He Feng, but there was no danger-free method to test out this theory. He had prepared to give up on this idea, but then Zhang Peng had decided to show himself that morning.

When he confirmed it was Zhang Peng on the camera, the plan had been settled in Chen Ge’s mind. He planned to use Zhang Peng as bait. He had to figure out a way to lure Zhang Peng inside the Haunted House and enable the mirror monster to possess his body.

This way, he could kill two birds with one stone. It was also why he insisted on staying at the Haunted House.

*This is the plan. It’s dangerous, but if it’s successful, I’ll be able to remove two threats at once.*

At 5 pm, Chen Ge called Xu Wan out and let her leave early. He went back inside the Haunted House to prepare various stuff for Zhang Peng. At 5.30 pm, Chen Ge received a call from Inspector Lee, telling him that the police had set up a perimeter around New Century Park. If Zhang Peng showed himself, he would definitely not get away. After dinner, Chen Ge carried Doctor Skull-cracker’s outfit and hammer as

he entered the Haunted House's main control room. He locked the door and sat before the monitors. If there was no accident, he was going to spend the whole night inside the room.

*There are indeed too few cameras. There are too many blind spots, so I mustn't let my guard down.*

The sun dipped below the horizon, and as daylight left, New Century Park felt weirdly eerie. Chen Ge wrapped the outfit around him as a cover as he sat inside the control room. At midnight, those who should not be there had arrived, but those who should have been there had not.

Similar to the previous night, the sound of sawing came from the Murder by Midnight scenario.

*Is the creature taunting me?* Chen Ge shrugged the outfit off and walked to the door, wondering if he should go meet the creature. *I'll let it be for now.*

Putting back on the ear-mic, Chen Ge hugged the doll left behind by his parents to his chest and returned to the surveillance monitor.

At around 1 am, when Chen Ge was at the verge of giving up, he saw the door to the bathroom rattle on screen.

*Someone's there?*

He focused on the monitor, completely rejuvenated. Not long after, the door fell open a sliver and a lanky man wielding a twenty-centimeter-long boning knife slipped through the opening.

*That bathroom is where I did my first Nightmare Mission. The window leads outside. He probably prepared some stepping stone beforehand and messed with the lock earlier.*

Chen Ge looked at the surveillance calmly. The door to the control room was still locked. The control room's location was well-hidden, and those unfamiliar with the Haunted House's layout would not be able to reach it anytime soon.

On screen, Zhang Peng travelled down the corridor, holding the knife in one hand and his phone in another. He had no idea he was being watched as he focused on side-stepping the random stuff and unknown props that littered the corridor.

After fifteen minutes traversing the obstacle course, Zhang Peng finally reached the staff breakroom. He could be seen hesitating at the door. His chest rose and fell unevenly, and his hand that held the knife shivered. He reached out to push on the door multiple times, but every time, he pulled back just before his finger touched the door. It was obvious that he was caught in a conundrum.

Zhang Peng dithered for about twenty seconds before he came to a decision. He did not even notice the camera that was looking at him.

He raised the knife in one hand while the other grabbed the door knob. With a deep breath, he shoved the door open, and like a leopard pouncing on its prey, he jumped into the breakroom!

One minute later, Zhang Peng came out carrying the knife. There was a bit of red on the blade, he seemed to have accidentally slashed his arm. He tossed the knife to his other hand. Zhang Peng's expression turned more grievous. He glanced at the stairs before picking up the pace as he went down the corridor.

From the surveillance feed, Chen Ge could see Zhang Peng was heading toward the control room. Chen Ge messaged Inspector Lee and held Doctor Skull-cracker's hammer as he hid behind the door.

He was about to surprise Zhang Peng with a horror movie classic—the scare behind the door—but Zhang Peng merely wandered past the control room's door before heading into the workers' passageway.

*What is this man up to?* Chen Ge was confused by his opponent's actions. He hurried to the monitor and saw that Zhang Peng was using his knife to pry off the wooden planks that had sealed up the trap door at the end of passageway before heading in without a second thought.

*Why is he heading into the Murder by Midnight scenario?* Chen Ge peeled off his ear-mic as his eyes widened with shock. *There have been sawing sounds coming out from the scenario... does he think I'm sawing stuff inside?*

### **Chapter 48: Please Let Me Go!**

Chen Ge's features twisted as Zhang Peng's vicious and obstinate glare appeared in his mind. *Two demons fighting each other?*

The sawing sound from the Murder by Midnight scenario did not stop due to Zhang Peng's entrance—the mirror monster probably did not anticipate that someone would rush in so blindly and rashly.

*I can't play it safe any longer. I have to see the mirror monster enter Zhang Peng's body with my own eyes before I can sleep easy at night.*

With a glance at the surveillance to pinpoint Zhang Peng's location, Chen Ge yanked out the chains from the Doctor Skull-cracker outfit and dropped them to the floor before putting both the outfit and the skin mask on. He waved the iron hammer twice to get a feel for it, and a wicked energy radiated from Chen Ge.

*How come it feels like I'm the bad guy here?*

After grabbing his keys and phone, he shoved the dolls into his pocket, grabbed hold of the weirdly-designed hammer, and headed out of the control room.

...

Trapped inside the Murder by Midnight scenario, Zhang Peng felt the weight of the knife in his hand getting heavier. He had prepared for this day for a long time, but one could never prepare enough because accidents had already happened.

It was already 1 am, and a normal person would be asleep already. Even if they were not, they would be resting in their bedroom. He was all sorts of excited when he saw the sign that pointed to the staff breakroom. It had taken him a long time before he managed to calm down.

He had given himself plenty of pep talk, to arouse the hatred and resentment within himself before he gathered enough courage to blast through the door. As he did so, he had waved the knife fiendishly at the bed. He had been so caught in the motion that he did not notice he had slashed himself.

The blade was tipped with blood, but there was no one inside the bed. The only blood stain on the ruined bedspread came from his arm. Other than resentment, there was now an additional stain of grievance; it fueled his murderous intent, eclipsing his rationality completely.

*Ruining Ping An Apartments, sending Juan Er into jail. You despicable bastard, I swear I'll kill you if it's the last thing I do!*

The more Zhang Peng thought about it, the angrier he became. The sawing sound from upstairs was like flies, causing his emotions to rile up even more.

He gripped his knife tightly as he wandered close to the source. To prevent being found out, he was extremely careful along the way.

*I'm close; the source is from this floor!*

Zhang Peng poked his head out from the stairs. He did not carry any light source with him. He kept his back to the wall as he entered the third-floor corridor.

*I say, this Haunted House sure is creepy; the corridors are as complicated as a maze. After I kill him, even if I just drop his body inside a random room, it'll take at least half a month before he's discovered.*

His lips curled up into a cruel smirk.

*The sound is coming from in front! But what is the man up to, not sleeping so late at night but sawing stuff? Fixing some emergency props?*

Zhang Peng bent down. He used the long sleeves to cover his wound as he crawled forward with the point of the knife leading the way forward.

At the end of the third-floor corridor, the entrance to the scenario, Zhang Peng saw a blurry black shadow. The shadow was standing in the middle of the door, holding something in his hand, scratching on the door.

*Weird, why didn't he turn on the lights?*

It was not until he was so close that Zhang Peng realized this incongruity. However, he did not dwell on it because his mind was soon swallowed up by the desire for revenge. The air seemed to have frozen around him. He slowly raised the knife above his shoulder. His body was as tense as a strung bow, and he charged forward to stab at the shadow.

"Go to hell!"

The full speed sprint sent Zhang Peng and the knife crashing into the shadow!

An excited smile had begun to appear on his face, but it only lasted for 0.2 seconds before it disappeared. The knife shot through the shadow directly!

The inertia caused Zhang Peng to slam into the door headfirst, and he almost broke his waist from the impact.

"What the f\*ck?" Zhang Peng was unable to accept this result. He climbed up from the floor in a hurry and waved the knife frantically around him. "Where is he? Where is he?"

After his anger left him, a sensation that he had not experienced before started to grow within Zhang Peng's heart.

*I swear I saw a black shadow standing here! My eyes weren't mistaken!*

Zhang Peng no longer cared about hiding his tracks. He pulled out his phone to light up his surroundings. The door was crisscrossed with scratch marks, and several sharp mirror pieces littered the ground.

*This was all left behind by the dark shadow, so I was right, there was someone standing here earlier!*

*So, where in the world did he go?*

Zhang Peng shivered from head to toe. His anger had been completely drenched as he looked fearfully down the darkened corridor that suddenly felt so eerie.

*A man can't just disappear from thin air, unless... that wasn't a normal man.*

His Adam's Apple wiggled, and the weak light from the phone could no longer bring him a sense of security. If anything, the weak light only heightened his fear, like there were monsters hiding in the corners where the light could not reach.

*The Haunted House's owner isn't a living person! This Haunted House is really haunted!*

Zhang Peng's forehead was covered in cold sweat. Even his hand that gripped the knife was soaked with sweat. Any thought of revenge and murder had completely left his mind. He dashed down the corridor hurriedly; all he had on his mind then was to escape this blasted place.

In his hurry to escape, he did not notice the angle of the staircase door was different from how he had left it before.

*Revenge can be re-planned after I leave this place.*

Holding his wounded arm, Zhang Peng jumped into the staircase, when a shadow flitted out from behind the door and assaulted him.

The sound of bone cracking was crisp to the ear. Zhang Peng held his right arm that seemed to be dying, and his brain went into shutdown.

"Sorry, I missed." Chen Ge wandered out from behind the door. The creepy skin mask twisted with a display of myriad expressions as Chen Ge's lips moved. "I was aiming for your shoulder blade."

Chen Ge's tone was indifferent, like he was talking about the weather. Looking at Chen Ge, Zhang Peng felt like he was about to suffocate. *Jesus, Buddha, Allah, someone please help me!*

Zhang Peng did try to resist, but when he saw the forty-centimeter-long hammer in Chen Ge's hands, his limbs refused to listen to his commands. *The hammer is covered with blood, and the handle has the shape of a human spine! Are you that afraid people won't know that you're a mad murderer?*

Without giving his opponent much time to recover, Chen Ge picked up the hammer and swung it at Zhang Peng's leg. He needed someone who was completely defenseless to be the vessel for the mirror monster.

## **Bang!**

The bars on the stairs curved from impact. Zhang Peng evaded the attack at the last minute. With one arm bleeding and another incapacitated, Zhang Peng had given up on resistance. He even dropped his knife as he ran down the stairs.

“You dare visit my Haunted House with such lack of courage?”

Grabbing the iron hammer, Chen Ge gave chase after his prey as the two of them returned to the first floor.

## **Chapter 49: Xiao Chen, Are You Hurt!**

Zhang Peng shot out of the workers’ passageway like a bullet, as blind as one too. The layout of the Haunted House was complicated, and combined with the lack of lighting, several minutes later, he soon realized with a sinking heart that he was lost.

“Why are you stopping? Don’t be afraid, I won’t hurt you; I just want to do a small experiment on you.” With both of his hands on the iron hammer, Chen Ge trailed behind Zhang Peng, slowly leading his prey into a dead-end.

“Not going to harm me? The moment we met, you cracked my arm! That is what you called not going to harm me?” Zhang Peng had lost his only weapon; his left arm was bleeding; his right arm was limp, hanging off his shoulder like a noodle. In that moment, he felt wronged, and the thought to call the police for help appeared in his mind.

“Listen to my advice—stop struggling and follow my orders, or you might need a wheelchair for the rest of your life.” Chen Ge took deliberate steps toward Zhang Peng. He had no pity for the man; after all, Zhang Peng was there to kill him. If he had not discovered that sooner, he would have been dead already.

“Boss, does that sound like what a victim would say? I must have been jinxed!” Zhang Peng was completely defenseless, so he ran down whatever open path he could find.

“That pair of legs sure know how to run...” Chen Ge continued to chase after Zhang Peng. However, several steps later, a sawing noise appeared in Chen Ge’s ears again as a black shadow shot out from the workers’ passageway!

The mirror monster must have understood what was really happening by then; it knew this was the perfect opportunity. Zhang Peng raced blindly around the first floor. When he turned a corner, he saw a figure of a man waving at him from the corner of his eyes. Perhaps he was too scared by Chen Ge because he ran toward that person without a second thought.

Chen Ge, who followed behind Zhang Peng, saw this, and a chill ran down his spine. The figure was around the same build as He Feng; it was the mirror monster!

“I want you to live, but you insist on dying; that’s a real ghost!” Chen Ge’s warning fell on deaf ears. Zhang Peng had reached the end of the corridor, and with the guidance of the figure, he wandered into the bathroom.

*The mirrors in the first-floor bathroom are in pristine condition. Since it's leading Zhang Peng toward the bathroom, the monster is going to make its move soon!*

Chen Ge was feeling nervous since the crucial moment had arrived. He dashed to the bathroom and worked with the doorknob. It was then that he realized the door was locked.

The development had strayed from his plan. The sudden appearance of the black shadow had ruined everything. It had managed to capture Zhang Peng before Chen Ge could detain the man.

**" Ahhh! "**

Several seconds later, an ear-splitting scream came out from behind the bathroom door. Then it was followed by the sound of stuff falling and crashing. Zhang Peng seemed to have stumbled across something really scary.

"What's going on in there?" Chen Ge raised the hammer to crack down on the doorknob. The doorknob fell off, but the door still would not budge. Someone had used the cupboard to block the door from behind it. Unable to know what was happening inside the bathroom, Chen Ge was anxious as he swung the hammer repeatedly at the wooden door.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The loud noises could be heard even outside the Haunted House. Chen Ge had depleted most of his energy before he managed to break the hollow wooden door. The cupboard behind it had started to budge to reveal an opening that was about half a palm wide.

Looking through the opening, Chen Ge saw the black cloth that covered the mirror had fallen to the floor. Zhang Peng was staring at the mirror with his eyes unfocused, but the scariest thing was... there was a large black shadow standing between him and the mirror!

The black shadow was slowly morphing until it became almost like Zhang Peng. It took one step back to allow half of its body to melt into the mirror, and then the weirdest thing happened.

The dazed Zhang Peng walked toward the mirror. He pressed his face against the surface of the mirror. His body and the black shadow were slowly merging. About four seconds later, a creepy grin appeared on Zhang Peng's blank face!

He slowly turned around and made sure to hold Chen Ge's gaze through the door and the cupboard. He swiped some fresh blood off his arm and wrote down something on the surface of the mirror.

Another one or two seconds later, spirit seemed to return to Zhang Peng's eyes. He shuddered visibly before jumping out the bathroom window and out of the Haunted House.

*The mirror monster has escaped into Zhang Peng's body? But does that thing have such a deep resentment toward me? Could it be because I've ruined its plan multiple times?*

The mirror monster had assaulted both He San and He Feng. Both times, it had been interrupted due to an external influence; that was probably why the monster harbored resentment toward the owner of the Haunted House, Chen Ge.



The door to the bathroom was still blocked, and it would stay blocked for a quite some time. Chen Ge quickly rushed to the front door, but before he could get anywhere, he could hear Inspector Lee's voice calling.

"Chen Ge! Hang in there! We're coming to get you!" Following a loud bang, the Haunted House's gate was pried off its hinges, and several officers streamed into the building. Seeing this, Chen Ge immediately tossed the iron hammer to the side and removed his outfit and mask.

The sound of footsteps echoed down the corridor. Inspector Lee was the first one to burst through the darkness. Seeing Chen Ge standing all alone in the corridor, he asked with concern, "Xiao Chen, are you hurt?"

Chen Ge played into the skit as he staggered a step back and leaned 'weakly' against the wall. He had his hand on his chest as he said, "I was shocked, but I wasn't hurt. Leave me be, go chase after Zhang Peng! I saw him jump out of the Haunted House's bathroom window!"

"Okay, leave the rest to us. Thank you for your help tonight!"

"Don't mention it. To be able to help the law enforcement is my honor, what is a little risk or sacrifice?"

"But you'd better not act so rashly anymore in the future—just look at how dangerous it was tonight!" Inspector Lee's eyes were aglow with admiration and approval. He had his men chase after Zhang Peng while he stayed behind with Chen Ge inside the Haunted House to examine the crime scene.

He wandered into the staff breakroom first. When he saw the blood on the bed, he turned to Chen Ge with worry. "Xiao Chen, you're injured? Let me see!"

"That isn't mine..." Chen Ge also didn't know how to explain it. "At the time, the room was dark. The suspect probably accidentally hurt himself."

Inspector Lee nodded. He used his flashlight to examine the knife marks on the bed frame and bedsheet, and his expression darkened. "You're not wrong. A man who is not familiar with knife work would accidentally slash himself in extreme stressful situations."

He counted the visible marks and concluded, "17 slashes in total! This is more than enough to pin him with attempted murder; this is the best proof!"

Looking at the knife marks, Chen Ge also felt a chill run up his arms.

Inspector Lee pulled on his gloves and signaled for Chen Ge to vacate the room. "Remember to not touch anything in this room. Later, people will come to take pictures to keep as evidence."

"Of course, I will provide my full cooperation."

Chen Ge retreated out of the room and returned to where he had been earlier to hide the iron mallet before walking to the first-floor bathroom. He stood before the ruined door and wondered to himself, *If I'm not mistaken, Zhang Peng wrote something on the mirror, right?*

## **Chapter 50: Meaning of the Number**

After adjusting his position, Chen Ge finally managed to discern the blood message that was left on the mirror, it was another Arabic number—2.

There was nothing scary about the number itself, but the fact that it was written in blood did up the scary factor slightly.

*What does this number mean? After the black shadow left last night, I saw a 3 on the shattered mirror and now it has become 2 ; is there some kind of relationship between them? Why is the number decreasing? Chen Ge was at a loss. Could they represent some kind of countdown?*

Looking at the drying blood stain, Chen Ge leaned against the door and started to contemplate.

*The mirror monster has already entered Zhang Peng's body, so there was no reason for it to leave this message behind unless it plans to come back for revenge.*

Chen Ge considered this possibility, but he couldn't confirm it; he knew too little about the other world and the mirror monster.

*Suppose the number continues to drop, what will happen when it reaches zero?*

A bad feeling rose within Chen Ge's heart as he paced around the entrance of the bathroom. *Could the number be related to my life? When it reaches zero, my life will be over like those tropes in scary movies?*

Chen Ge stopped himself from overthinking. *I suppose there's nothing else for me to do for now but wait for tomorrow night to arrive. If there's another number that appears around or within the Haunted House, then I'll decide what to do.*

Chen Ge sighed deeply. All he ever wanted was to keep the Haunted House his parents left for him alive, and if it was within his means, he hoped to improve it, but there just had to be these accidents that screwed with his plan.

When he returned to the staff breakroom, several police cars had arrived outside the Haunted House. The main city's investigation team had come to ask Chen Ge some questions and snap a few pictures of the crime scene before joining the others to pursue and capture Zhang Peng.

Inspector Lee accompanied Chen Ge, but even when the sun climbed up over the horizon, there was still no news of Zhang Peng being captured. However, Inspector Lee promised Chen Ge multiple times that with the condition Zhang Peng was in, he would not be able to avoid capture for long; he would be caught within the next 24 hours.

Honestly, Chen Ge was not that worried about Zhang Peng. He was feeling down because he was concerned about the number that had been left behind by the mirror monster. Inspector Lee thought that Chen Ge was reeling from trauma, so he consoled him as best he could before leaving with the other officers after daylight.

Chen Ge was left alone in the Haunted House. He opened the window to allow the morning draft to caress his face.

*I'm the owner of a Haunted House, the lord of ghosts and spirits so to speak, but how come I feel I am so pitiful?*

The morning rays filtered into the room. The ragdoll left on the bed turned as if carried by the wind and fell underneath the bed.

Chen Ge picked it up and poked it on its tummy. “The only specter who listens to me only knows how to act cute. In a real combat situation, I’ll probably need to protect you.”

The ragdoll seemed to be unhappy with Chen Ge’s evaluation of her. She tried to resist but could not do anything.

*The rewards from both Nightmare Missions were support skills; they are useful for the development of the Haunted House but don’t really help me personally much.*

Even though Chen Ge had no idea what the numbers meant, he refused to let himself be toyed with by some mysterious forces like that.

Taking out the black phone, Chen Ge clicked through the app for a long time and realized his only trump card was the scary-looking Red Specter—Zhang Ya. When he was at the wooden hut behind Ping An Apartments, Zhang Ya had helped him once, tipping him to Wang Qi’s presence. Technically, she had saved his life.

However, during the Nightmare Mission, when the mirror monster tried to drown him in the bathtub, she had not appeared. This went to show how cavalier she was with Chen Ge’s life.

*Completing her Bloody Heart Mission will enable me to get her to do something that is not against her will. Maybe I’ll be able to get her to help me deal with the imminent danger.*

Chen Ge clicked on Zhang Ya’s name, and even his courage that had been cultivated from a young age started to waver as he looked at the bloody red interface. *But this lady likes a dead Chen Ge, what if the affection level rises too fast and she can’t wait for me to join her in the afterlife?*

Not everyone could accept a specter’s admiration that easily. After exiting the app, even the air around Chen Ge felt fresher. *The Bloody Heart Mission will be my final resort. If the mysterious number appears one more time tonight, I’ll have to complete the Bloody Heart Mission.*

After making that decision, with a plan forming in his mind, Chen Ge fell back to sleep.

Xu Wan came to work at around 8 am. Chen Ge left the Haunted House in her capable hands while he went to purchase the surveillance cameras with Uncle Xu’s money. He was in such a hurry because there were too many blind spots around the Haunted House; it was too dangerous. On top of that, one of the black phone’s Daily Missions was for him to install surveillance cameras and security devices.

After the purchase was made, Chen Ge had the workers come to the Haunted House that afternoon to install the devices. With him personally watching, the few workers installed the cameras in most corners of the Haunted House with their hearts shaking, forming a surveillance web that had few blind spots. Even though Chen Ge planned to purchase listening device as well, due to limited funds, he only got the cheapest one and had it installed inside the Minghun scenario.

At 7 pm, after the final testing was done, Chen Ge received the mission success alert on the black phone.

“Congratulation for completing the Easy Mission, reward earned—Background Music, Wedding Dress!

“Note: Wedding Dress is the perfect accompaniment to Minghun! The Minghun scenario’s Scream Factor has been upgraded to 1 Star!”

Chen Ge was surprised when he saw the phone alert. The original Scream Factor for Minghun was only 0.5 Stars, but with this new music, it was upgraded to 1 Star.

*Looks like this music is even more disturbing than Black Friday.*

Wanting to immediately try it out, Chen Ge played the music. It was a completely different style from Black Friday. One was a slow insidious burn, like a force slowly dragging the listener into the dark abyss; the other was weirder in nature, a mix of wedding music and funeral music. The new track caused Chen Ge’s skin to crawl from the first note alone.

*It does fit the Minghun scenario perfectly, but constant exposure to it will probably cause unwanted psychological trauma. Unless someone comes to challenge the Haunted House, I’d better keep it to myself for now.*

Chen Ge saved Wedding Dress to his own phone before returning to the third floor alone to clean up the place.

He did not have enough funds to hire cleaners, so with the dolls snuggled in his pockets, he cleared out all the mirror pieces he could find on the third floor. When he was done, it was almost midnight. Chen Ge held his phone as he wandered between the bathroom and the staff breakroom.

He looked at the mirrors carefully as he waited for midnight to arrive.