

Horrors 611

Chapter 611: The Woman in the Tunnel and the Shadow of the Spider [3 in 1]

Chen Ge had made the mental preparation that no matter what happened, he would never open his eyes. His body was swallowed up by darkness, and the noises around his eyes fell away. It felt as if he was walking slowly and alone deep into the ocean, departing from the familiar world, with the fear of the future unknown, and carrying with him an anticipation for the final destination. Many feelings blossomed in the man's mind, like an octopus' tentacles wrapping themselves around his shuddering heart.

"I've already experienced this sense of isolation many times before. To prevent this feeling from happening in real life, this time, I have to see this to its end," Chen Ge mumbled to himself, not because he thought someone or something was listening but because he was trying to give himself words of encouragement.

About ten meters later, Chen Ge's felt an emptiness underneath his fingers. On his third trail, the split finally appeared again. Without hesitation, he strode into the split.

The temperature around him dropped. Chen Ge had no idea whether his decision was the correct one or not—he had never been a particularly clever person. The reason that he had been able to survive thus far was dependent on his supernatural observational skill, decisive personality, and a courage that had been cultivated since he was young.

Touching the wet and slimy wall, Chen Ge emptied his mind, not allowing it to latch onto anything. The only sound echoing in his ears was his own footsteps, yet slowly but surely, the originally rhythmic sound was interrupted. Someone or something was following behind Chen Ge.

Don't turn to look, don't even think about it.

Not seeing meant nothing, and not thinking meant not existing. Chen Ge repeated that to himself in his mind, and that was how he kept himself from being distracted.

Many footsteps started to appear in the quiet tunnel. There seemed to be more than Chen Ge walking through the tunnel. The footsteps initially only came from behind Chen Ge, but slowly, other than the side where the wall was, the sound of footsteps came from everywhere.

Chen Ge's heart was itchy like it was being scratched by a cat. He was incredibly curious, but he maintained enough self-control to not remove the simplified blindfold on his face. After going through so much, Chen Ge had a very strong adaptive ability. He soon regained control of himself and slowly got used to the echoes of footsteps around him. He cheered for himself internally, hypnotizing himself with the belief that the footsteps around him were not there to harm him. At least from what he was experiencing, it merely appeared that they just so happened to be on the same path that Chen Ge was travelling on.

Am I on a path that is only traversable by ghosts?

After several more seconds, Chen Ge discovered another problem. Other than the footsteps, there was a new sound, the sound of car tires crunching over items on the road.

Vehicles are passing me by?

Currently, there should only be one automobile in the tunnel, and that was the taxi driven in by the driver.

Who activated the car? Could it be that the driver has found his way back to his taxi? Or is he actually more than a normal taxi driver?

The driver that had driven Chen Ge to White Dragon Cave Tunnel was a random one that he had found on the street; the possibility that he was related to the tunnel was too much of a stretch. The possibility was so small that it could be ignored.

It shouldn't be the driver. Does that mean there's another thing driving the car?

Chen Ge was about to consider the line of thought when something even more incredible happened. He could hear clearly in both of his ears the humming of engines, plural. There was more than one car passing him by.

What on Earth is happening?

With his eyes blindfolded, Chen Ge had no idea what was going on—he could only picture the explanation with what he heard. The footsteps around him picked up pace, and they appeared to be rushing in a unified direction.

Something scarier is forcing him to run? Or has the thing that has been drawing them forward finally appeared?

Chen Ge was unsure whether he should follow them and run. With his eyes blindfolded, it was hard to make a decision. After a moment's hesitation, he decided to maintain his current speed. He kept himself alert and careful with every move and used his remaining senses to slowly dissect this whole new 'world'.

The slick feeling on the wall has disappeared, and what's left is a cold hard surface. It feels much smoother and flatter to the hands, like it has been sanded down before.

Chen Ge desperately wanted to remove the blindfold to confirm his suspicion. Ever since he entered the split, the world had changed tremendously. The split led him to a completely different world.

He continued moving forward, and the tunnel became even more crowded. He could just about make out people talking, and the more he moved forward, the louder the voices became. But the strange thing was, as loud as the person spoke and as sharp as the voices were, he was unable to perceive the meaning that was inherent in the words; he could only process the emotions behind the words— anxiety, anger, and a small inkling of fear.

What is happening out there?

Even though he was still inside the tunnel, the situation outside had completely changed. The footsteps, the screaming, the honking of cars, the tires grinding, and the humming of motors—it felt as if the tunnel was still in use.

If the tunnel hadn't been sealed, it would be this active, I suppose...

Chen Ge had no idea where he was, but one thing was certain, everything that he was experiencing should have something to do with the actual owner of White Dragon Cave Tunnel, and it was probably leading him there on purpose.

The cacophony around Chen Ge grew louder, and more voices entered Chen Ge's mind, making it nearly impossible for him to hear his own voice. The only thing that he could tell was that the footsteps were still moving in one particular direction, and after he paid them more attention, he realized that all the cars were moving that way as well.

Why are they moving that way?

The question was stuck in his mind. While Chen Ge was figuring out the answer, a different sound entered his left ear. The noises drowned out the voice for the most part, such that Chen Ge only managed to tell it was the voice of a child. It was crisp and intermittent, and it sounded like the child was injured.

Chen Ge shuffled another few steps forward along with the 'crowd', and the child's voice appeared again.

"No, wait..." This time, Chen Ge stopped. He noticed something weird. The child's voice was coming from behind his left ear. When all the 'people' and cars were moving forward, the owner of the voice stayed where they were; they had not moved.

Another person might not have noticed a detail as small as this, but Chen Ge was different. To break through this conundrum, he kept his focus sharp, making note of everything around him. He did not dare speak lest he revealed the fact that he was different from the 'people' around him.

"Save me, save me, save my mummy..." Several seconds later, the voice returned, and it came from the same spot as before.

This is strange. I can hear so many sounds, but for some reason, I can hear this soft voice the clearest.

He could read the despair in the person's voice, and the feeling was hard to describe; it made Chen Ge feel comfortable, like the voice was reaching into his heart to squeeze on it.

Turning around, without knowing what kind of danger was coming from behind him, Chen Ge instinctively moved toward the source of the voice. He nudged his footsteps little by little, and like a blind person, Chen Ge slowly searched for his way.

As he got nearer the voice, suddenly, someone tapped him on his shoulder, and then it was followed by an urgent scream. The voice was loud, and it warned him to move faster. If he stayed, he would be in mortal danger.

These are probably the spirits that entered the tunnel with me. They are running for their lives, so the thing chasing after them is probably the owner of the tunnel!

The way Chen Ge thought was different from the 'people' inside the tunnel. He was very clear about his identity; he was a bait, waiting for the owner of the tunnel to show himself.

This was a very risky move, but that was the most direct and simplest way that Chen Ge could think of to tackle the issue at hand. He had always adopted the most straightforward solution to his problem—that was his style.

The 'people' in the tunnel seemed to misunderstand his action, and the voices around him sharpened to become clearer. The 'people' urged him to leave, telling him that if he dared stay any longer, he would really die!

Chen Ge was unfazed by the persuasion of the 'people' around him, and soon, his ears captured a different sound.

It sounded like liquid dripping.

Tik tok tik tok.

It was very close to him.

Seeing Chen Ge's desire to stay, the 'people' that tried to persuade him abandoned him, and the tunnel became quiet again. The footsteps, the crunching of the tires, and the honking of the car disappeared like the tunnel was once again abandoned by 'society and its people'.

"Save me, save me, save my mummy..." The location near the wall issued the child's pleading again. Chen Ge went closer to it and slowly squatted down. His eyes were still blindfolded, and he did not dare to speak, afraid that it might cause some unknown and unbeneficial changes.

After a few seconds, Chen Ge's hands, which were not covered or gloved, reached out toward the source of the voice. His fingertips touched a liquid that was cold, and Chen Ge was very familiar with this sense.

This is blood.

He searched around blindly, and eventually, his five fingers came across a thin and slender arm.

"I'm trapped by the window. Please go and save my mother first. She's stuck in the driver's seat!"

The child's voice entered Chen Ge's ears. He did not follow the child's direction immediately but was instead reminded of something else. The voice had initially come from his left side; Chen Ge was very sure of that. Now that his body was turned, the voice was still coming from the wall. This meant that what the voice said did not make any logical sense.

If the thing is really trapped inside a car, how did it manage to talk into my ear that was facing the wall? I've been walking alongside the wall after all!

Interestingly enough, when the driver disappeared, he had once mentioned that there was something incredibly scary near Chen Ge's left cheek.

This is such a coincidence. The driver said that the thing was near my left cheek, and that is exactly where the child's voice originated from. So, if the driver wasn't lying, the monster that managed to spook him should be the 'child' that I'm hearing now.

Chen Ge slowly understood what had happened. The reason for the driver's disappearance was probably because he had chanced upon the monster's real identity and had ruined the monster's plan.

"My mother is just in front. Can you please save her? Please?" The voice was so desperate that it was hard to reject.

"Okay, I will help you." Chen Ge had no idea what kind of scary face was issuing this childlike, innocent voice. He chose to follow the thing's request to save the mother because he believed that this was the upright and moral thing to do. With the child's guidance, Chen Ge bent down and slowly moved forward.

The sound of liquid dripping had not stopped. A strange scent filled up the air, and the further Chen Ge moved forward, the greater the sense of danger he felt he was in. He could not see on account of the blindfold over his eyes, so Chen Ge could only slowly find his way forward.

His hands soon found the frame of a car. He bent down, and his hands touched a woman's hair. He did not speak, and by applying force to his arms, Chen Ge grabbed the woman by her shoulders and gently shuffled her out of the car.

"Take her away! Quick! Now!" After Chen Ge rescued the woman, the child's voice turned shrill. Unlike normal children, the child had not cried even though he was injured, and his voice was filled with a maturity that was not present in other children his age.

Chen Ge had no idea what the child was plotting. He dragged the woman and walked for several steps before suddenly stopping.

"Go ahead! Why are you stopping? Go!"

Ignoring the child's order, Chen Ge carried the woman on his back and returned to the child. Without his sight, Chen Ge's hands touched around the car window and had a brief understanding of the child's situation. The lower half of the child's body was stuck inside the car window, and the broken glass had pierced through his stomach. If Chen Ge forcibly dragged the child out, it would definitely cause the injury to worsen. Chen Ge tried to lift up the car, but obviously, he did not possess the super strength to do that.

"Just leave me behind, take her and leave!" Perhaps it was pain or perhaps it was something else, but the child wailed at the top of his lungs, and finally, Chen Ge could hear the tears in his voice.

"If I abandon you and your mother manages to survive, she will live in guilt for the rest of her life." Chen Ge could not resist the urge to voice the thought in his mind. When he said that, the surroundings suddenly became a lot quieter, but soon, everything returned to normal.

"My body is stuck, and I can't leave. You have to go, or else everyone will die!"

After confirming that his words would not influence this world, Chen Ge became more courageous. “I have an idea that might be able to save you, but it’ll be painful, and I can’t guarantee that you’ll be able to survive.”

“What is it?” As long as there was a possibility, most people would still fight for it.

“Your hip bone is stuck in the warped car window. I can try to force you out, but that way, your lower body will definitely be crippled, and the wounds on your body might worsen.” That was the situation that Chen Ge had perceived from the use of his hands, and it was because he had not witnessed the actual gore that he dared come up with such a risky idea. “Like you said, staying here will lead to certain death, but pursuing this chance might lead to a hope of survival.”

“But if I die in the tugging process, wouldn’t you become the murderer that took my life?” the child suddenly asked.

If this was real life, perhaps Chen Ge would hesitate, but in that strange place, he did not panic at all. “If it can increase the chance of your survivability by even one percent, I don’t mind being misunderstood by the world.”

He leaned down on the ground and braced his feet against the warped car window while hugging the child’s upper body with both of his arms. “It’ll be painful, but if we manage to survive this ordeal, then a new life awaits.”

He started to apply force, and the boy’s body was slowly adjusting to the pull. The sound of bones cracking was eerie to Chen Ge’s ears. Other than that, the boy’s skin was torn open, and blood oozed, but none of that stopped Chen Ge from continuing his rescue.

He expended all of his strength and finally pulled the boy out from the warped window.

“Good, we’ve done it! Are you still okay?” No one answered Chen Ge, and the tunnel suddenly became a lot more deserted. Chen Ge had no idea what had happened, but he had a feeling something was not right—perhaps the monster at the back had caught up to them.

Even at a time like that, Chen Ge had not forgotten about the woman on the ground and the child next to him. Even though he clearly knew that neither of them was technically human.

“Something is probably coming, be careful.” Chen Ge slung the woman over his back and picked up the broken child from the ground. To his surprise, the child in his arms was much heavier than the woman on his back—they were not even on the same weight level.

However, it was not the time to care about things like that, and he jogged forward. Chen Ge could not see the road, and it did not take long for him to trip and fall. He did not say a word or even curse; he quickly got back up, picked up the child and the woman, and continued running.

He tripped and fell, gaining many bruises as he knocked against the wall and floor. After who knew how many tumbles, when Chen Ge stood up and wanted to pick up the child again, another voice sounded next to him.

“Are you an idiot?” The voice was similar to the child that he had heard, but the voice was no longer in pain. In its place was a trace of coldness and a strange resentment. Chen Ge did not reply. He wanted to go and pick up the child again, but he caught air.

“So, such people really exist in the world.” The voice continued, but this time, it came from right above Chen Ge. Standing where he was, when Chen Ge did not know what to do, someone tapped him lightly on his shoulder, and a pair of bone-chilling arms wreathed around his neck and undid the blindfold around his neck.

Opening his eyes, Chen Ge turned to look and realize that it was the woman in the tunnel standing behind him. But different from last time, she was much prettier—at least, her skull was not broken, and all her facial features were where they should be.

“It’s you?” Chen Ge revealed a smile and was about to say something more when he fell under the shadow of a large spider. Looking up, the smile on Chen Ge’s face froze. Even though he had met so many ghosts, at that moment, he could not help the fear from curling around his heart.

Just above Chen Ge was a red spider made from endless spirits and Specters hanging upside down. The red on the spider was much brighter than the red dress on the woman’s body. It felt as if blood was flowing through its body, and it were slowly dripping down.

“Why have you stopped speaking?” The voice came from the head of the spider. Following the voice, Chen Ge noticed that the spider’s head was replaced by a boy’s. He only had his upper body remaining, and his lower body was attached to that of a giant spider. With his legs gripping the wall, the boy hung from the ceiling, looking at Chen Ge with cruelty and hatred in his eyes.

“Wait, so I was carrying you with me earlier?” The first sentence out of Chen Ge’s lips stumped the boy. In reality, he also did not expect Chen Ge to choose to carry him and run. Both the ghost and the man felt quite uncomfortable after the charade was broken.

“It’s fine, that’s quite an interesting experience.” Chen Ge tried to find an excuse for his behavior. Without waiting for the boy’s response, he quickly changed the topic. “I actually came here to discuss something with your mother. I didn’t expect something like this to happen. I know your heart is filled with hatred, and I will not try to convince you to let it go. I merely want to say that if you have any dream, I can help you fulfil it, even if it is to take revenge.”

What Chen Ge said was completely different from what the boy anticipated. He did not think that anyone would be able to say something like this considering the situation that Chen Ge was in. He did not know how to answer, so he chose to be silent.

“It’s fine if you don’t want to answer, but can you tell me why the tunnel has changed to something like this?” Chen Ge asked the question on his mind. The White Dragon Cave Tunnel even stopped the shadow, so there had to be a big secret hiding here.

The boy opened his lips, but perhaps he thought that he should not reveal his past so easily, so he closed them again. However, with the persuasion from the woman and the fact that he had nothing to lose, the boy gave Chen Ge a rough depiction of his past.

He was the woman's child, and after his mother divorced his father several years ago, she drove the car, taking her child back to her mother's home. When they passed White Dragon Cave Tunnel, they got into a car accident, a large-scale collision in fact, and one of them was leaking gas.

It was unclear now which of the cars started burning first, but as the trail of fire nudged toward the oil-leaking vehicle, the people in the tunnel started to run. At the time, the boy had been stuck inside the window, and the woman was injured. She had managed to crawl out from the wreckage, but she had been too weak to be able to save her child without help.

She had cried for help from people around her, chasing after the passing cars, yelling for them to stop. If one of them had been willing to help her, they would have been able to save the child. However, under the condition where their lives would be put in danger, no one was willing to lend a hand.

In the end, the woman who had the means to escape did not leave but chose to return to her baby's side, to console him, to accompany him until the fire reached the leaking vehicle.

Ever since then, peace had deserted White Dragon Cave Tunnel.

Many drivers saw a woman in a red dress standing in the tunnel waving for them to stop, and some witnessed a monster piecing indeterminate things onto its body...

Chapter 612: Dream Weaver?

The woman waved for the drivers to stop to get people to help save her son. If the drivers would stop to aid her, she would get into the car and follow them until they arrived at her son's death spot. While those who refused to stop and left just like that, the woman would leave something special in their car. Compared to the boy who had turned into a monster, the woman could be considered relatively kind.

With his body stuck, and his eyes watching the slow approach of death, the small body had been consumed by fire bit by bit, and the pain had forever been seared in the boy's heart, making it something that he would never forget. His clear eyes were dominated by hatred and resentment. The flames danced on his skin, filling every inch of his body, slowly turning him into something else.

Hatred blinded him, causing him to destroy everything in sight, using their body to fill up his own misgiving. If one came across the woman in the tunnel, if one was kind enough, one would at most get into a car accident. The vehicle would be ruined, but most of the time, one would escape with one's life intact. However, if one ran into the child, the only destination was death.

Specters were ultimately Specters; resentment had already laid a curtain over their eyes, silencing their conscience while becoming the reason for their existence. Chen Ge listened to the woman and her child's story patiently. This was undeniably a tragedy; human nature was gray, alternating between a sinner and a saint. As a bystander, he had no right to judge others, so he could only lend them an ear.

Without anyone stopping to help and her son stuck in the car, the mother had chosen to return to accompany her child, to actively wait for death. From Chen Ge's perspective, the child had turned into a true monster—his resentment being far beyond that of his mother was due to guilt and self-blame. Perhaps he thought subconsciously that it was him who caused his mother's death; his mother would

not have died if not for him. He wanted to find a channel to vent that emotion, and that turned him deeper toward the abyss.

With a giant shadow of a spider hanging above him, it would be a lie to say that Chen Ge did not feel a shred of fear. However, after understanding the whole story, at the very least, he was able to understand the woman in the tunnel and her son that took on the shape of a giant spider better.

“So, you have been suffering a pain like this.” Chen Ge’s tone was even. There was no conspicuous pity—at most, there was only a light trace of melancholy.

“Pain? I wouldn’t say so. Initially, there might be some discomfort, but eventually, I fell in love with this sensation. Every nerve was grinded sharp by knives. Seeing blood pour out from the many holes and then sharing this joy with more people, I like to admire their expression because I know they are admiring me as well.” The boy’s upper body grew on the ginormous spider body, and he had an ‘innocent’ smile on his face.

“I can understand that, and in fact, I do admire you.” Chen Ge’s expression returned to normal, and the last trace of discomfort on his face disappeared. In terms of being calm while facing a great deal of pressure, no one could do better than Chen Ge in Jiujiang.

“You admire me? I’m sorry, but that only made the scalp of my head go numb, so please watch your actions and words. Don’t come too close to me, you make me uncomfortable.” The child denied Chen Ge’s kind intention. He wanted to leave immediately. “Go back to where you came from. We don’t welcome you here. Mommy will only stay with me, and she won’t be going anywhere.”

The monster spoke in the petulance of a child, but contrasting that with his scary body, it was definitely a strange experience.

“Since you insist on your mother staying with you, I’m not going to force anything otherwise. But in return, can you help me answer a few simple questions?” Without waiting for a confirmation, Chen Ge continued. “Why are there suddenly splits in White Dragon Cave Tunnel? The tunnel that I saw when my eyes open and the tunnel that I felt with my eyes closed are completely different, why is that? After closing my eyes, I can hear people and car honks, and my hands even found the frame of a car, but how come all these things disappear after I open my eyes?”

“You sure have plenty of questions.” The boy was impatient. His thick appendages crawled on the wall, and each move created this grating sound of shuffling.

“I’m just curious.”

“There is only one tunnel here. Earlier, I drew you into my dream.”

The boy’s answer surprised Chen Ge. “In your dream?”

“It’s very hard to explain. No one has asked me this question before, so for now, let’s just use dreams to explain it. It is the term closest to the truth anyway.” The boy started at Chen Ge, and he was quite annoyed. If not for the fact that Chen Ge had done everything right in his test, he would have come after Chen Ge already.

“A dream only exists in one’s mind, and the body is still, but what I experienced earlier is completely different from a dream. I couldn’t see it, but everything else was real. My fingers could touch it, and my ears can hear them.” Chen Ge did not believe the boy could weave dreams and, more than that, drag someone into that weaved dream.

“Why do you have so many endless questions?” The boy’s murderous intent continued to rise seeing how stubborn Chen Ge was, but he was able to suppress it. “I’ve already told you, dream is just an appellation. If you want, you can also see it as a type of power. As long as we’re in this tunnel, I can drag everything into my dream.”

“It’s geographically limited? The power is only usable inside this tunnel?” Chen Ge noted the boy’s weakness before the boy’s face. He started to lower his head to think ignoring the boy’s face, which had turned ashen.

The boy was different from a normal Red Specter. Compared to a Specter, he was more like a monster. The big difference between his upper body and lower body attracted Chen Ge’s attention. Thinking back to earlier, the world that he had felt, the boy was stuck inside the car with his upper body exposed outside and his lower body trapped inside. After he transformed into a ghost, his upper body remained, but his lower body disappeared.

Where’s his lower body? Chen Ge’s mind turned, and then he was suddenly reminded of something else. Of all the three-star scenarios introduced by the black phone, there was one common feature—there would be a door! So, where was the door at White Dragon Cave Tunnel?

This is a tunnel, and the builder wouldn’t have built a door in the middle of the street for no reason, right?

Only when one is at the deepest depths of despair can they push open the ‘door’. The child spent his last moment trapped inside a car window. His body was crushed by the warped window.

A flash crossed Chen Ge’s eyes. The ‘door’ in White Dragon Cave Tunnel was most likely the car door!

But then that led to another problem. The abandoned car had already been towed away by the police a long time ago, so how was the ‘door’ inside the tunnel being maintained?

With a curious gaze, Chen Ge turned to study the boy’s incredibly disproportionate body.

Could the door be growing on him?

Chen Ge was shocked by the thought that appeared in his mind. If that was the case, then the Red Specter before him was really something extraordinary.

A moveable blood door...

Being stared at by Chen Ge, the boy’s pretty brows scrunched together. For some reason, he felt like in Chen Ge’s eyes, he was not a scary monster but instead some kind of rare piece of art.

Chapter 613: Door Stuck Inside the Body

"What are you looking at?" The thick appendage moved to point to Chen Ge, stopping before his eyes. The boy seemed to be averse to be gawked at like a spectacle.

"I'm sorry, that was impolite of me." Chen Ge pulled his eyes away from the part where the body's stomach was joined to the spider's body. Even if the 'door' for White Dragon Cave Tunnel was really on the child's body, he would not tell Chen Ge anyway, so focusing on that point would be useless. Thus, Chen Ge ended that topic quickly. "If you're not willing to share about that, we'll talk about something else."

Chen Ge suddenly turned serious. "This is my last question, and it is related to all of our safety, so I hope you wouldn't hide anything from me with regards to this question."

"Go ahead." The boy pulled back his scary appendage.

"At midnight several days ago, did you see a shadow enter White Dragon Cave Tunnel?"

The mention of the shadow caused the boy's expression to shift instantly. "Are you here because of him?"

"Looks like you do know something." Chen Ge was excited. He had finally someone who could tell him more about the shadow. The temperature in the tunnel suddenly dropped, and a cold wind drifted out from the deeper part of the tunnel. Neither the boy nor his mother spoke. They were silent for a long time until the boy jumped down from the wall. With his strong appendages holding his large body up, the boy looked down on Chen Ge.

The monster was incredibly large, and the way he stood placed Chen Ge under great pressure.

"Go home. The more you know, the deeper you'll sink into despair." When the boy said that, his voice even quivered slightly.

"Are you afraid?"

"I'm not!" The boy suddenly lost control of his emotions and raised his front appendage to swipe at Chen Ge's chest. The human faces on the appendage wailed, but it stopped at the last minute.

"We have the same enemy, so I can help you in any way that you might need me to." Chen Ge looked at the appendage right before his eyes and slowly lowered his arms. If the boy wanted to hurt him, he would be sent flying already.

After a long time, the boy slowly moved back from Chen Ge and lowered his body to maintain the same eye level with Chen Ge. "That man is crazy. That was not his first time coming to White Dragon Cave."

"He's been here before? Was this several years ago?" Chen Ge thought back to the strange 'memory' that he had seen in this tunnel, about how his young self was killed.

"Do you know why my mother and I insist on hiding here, unwilling to take one step out of this place?" Uncertainty crossed the boy's face.

"Is it because of the shadow? Does he want to harm you?"

“Who really knows? The shadow comes every year, and every time, he is stronger than before. I only barely manage to keep him back every time.” The boy did not sense any threat from Chen Ge, but he felt a strange discomfort from the man’s shadow. “I hate shadows.”

“I met the shadow recently, and in just a week, he has grown much stronger. I have no idea how he did that.” Perhaps the information revealed by Chen Ge made them uncomfortable. After sharing a look with his mother, the boy told Chen Ge, “I can tell you everything I know, but you have to promise me one thing.”

“No problem.” Chen Ge gave his promise without even asking what the promise was. His easy-going nature unsettled the boy.

“I need you to wind this spider thread around your neck.” The appendages on the spider body spread and a gap slowly opened at the joint where the boy’s torso was sewn to the spider body. A thick stench of blood floated into the air, and blood dripped down his body. As the gap grew bigger, the expression on the boy’s face turned scarier. He reached his hand into the gap, and it looked like someone was reaching into his own stomach.

“Tell me your choice.” The boy slowly pulled out his hand to retrieve several red spider threads from the gap. They were stuck to each other, and with the boy pulling on them, they gradually wound into a thin red rope.

There was no fear in Chen Ge’s eyes as he stared at the thread dripping with blood. His answer was still the same. “No problem.”

Stepping forward, Chen Ge moved to the boy’s side without any hesitation.

His insouciance caused the boy to become suspicious. He studied Chen Ge seriously, and for a moment, he thought this kind-looking man before him could be hiding a devil with self-destructive desire deep inside his heart.

Being close to the boy, Chen Ge finally had a chance to inspect the gap on the boy’s body.

Fresh blood, spider threads that looked like blood vessels, the heavy scent of blood—all these features matched those of a ‘blood door’.

Accepting the spider thread with both hands, Chen Ge smiled at the boy. He cried for Zhang Ya’s name internally, wanting Zhang Ya to see whether the thread would be threatening to his health or not, but Zhang Ya gave him no reply.

The thread slowly neared Chen Ge’s neck; it was too late to turn back now. Just as the thread was going to wind around his thin neck, the woman in the tunnel stepped forward and shoved the thread away. Perhaps Chen Ge had left a good impression on the woman the last time they interacted, so this time, she came forward to help him.

“Are you really not afraid?” Suspicion appeared in the boy’s resentment-filled eyes. Then he turned around. “Follow me. I know many things about the shadow. Perhaps we can work together this one time.”

Chen Ge had no idea why the boy suddenly changed his mind. He followed the boy, and something brushed against his head. He lifted his head to look, and Chen Ge's eyes twitched. In the center of the tunnel, at the top of the darkened ceiling, hung many "bodies".

Their necks were all wound with spider threads, and they dangled from the ceiling like hanging victims.

"If you wind the thread around your neck, your only destination is death. I have no idea why Mommy suddenly decided to intervene, but I respect her choice." The boy's heart was seared by hatred and anger; the only thing that could give him pause in the world was his mother.

The boy crawled onto the wall—this 'forest of bodies' was where he rested normally. "I met the shadow a long time ago. At the time, he was not as powerful as he is now; he was just a kid slightly older than me.

"I have no idea where he came from or what his origin was; I only know he's been looking for many different children, and if I'm not mistaken, he needs to feed these children to something called a ghost fetus.

"He told me that he needed to build a door at Li Wan City. Initially, I had no idea what he meant, but later, I understood that the door he mentioned was this."

The boy moved his body, and blood splashed. A large gap opened up between his spider body and his human torso. A conspicuous depression could be seen. "I have a distorted door, and the door is stuck inside my body. It was something I edged open little by little when the fire was burning."

Chapter 614: Come with Me

Only when a person was at their most despaired and most helpless would they be able to open the 'door'. When the fire was burning, the boy was trapped inside the warped car window, and what he saw was his injured mother and the people who ran away from them.

Fire burned his body, and as his flesh and blood melted into the car door, he finally managed to open the door that he was stuck in. His lower body was left inside the car, but his upper body was burnt into the car door.

Chen Ge couldn't imagine a pain like that, so no matter what the boy had done, Chen Ge did not think that he was in a position to judge him. No one was born a monster; even if they looked different from a normal human being, their heart was made of flesh and blood.

Crawling amid the jungle of human bodies, the gap on the boy's body slowly recovered.

"The shadow wants to build a door in Li Wan City to release something from behind the door. Before he met me, the madman came up with many experiments to test out human nature and push innocent people to their breaking point. Then he used them to open the door, but even until they died, none of them were able to open the door. His plan kept failing until he eventually turned his target to me. He wanted to capture me and detain me in Li Wan City to help him complete his plan."

The boy's tone dropped. "Naturally, I wouldn't agree, so I wanted to kill him."

This was a cruel character. He would kill whoever that dared target him.

"But from the current situation, it appears that you've failed." Chen Ge easily rained on the boy's parade. He was reminding the boy that things had changed, and the shadow was their common enemy.

"You're right, he's extremely hard to kill." After saying that, the boy studied Chen Ge. "He grows ever stronger, but as long as I am inside this tunnel, I'll be able to protect myself and my mother."

Blood leaked out from the boy's torso. "I can drag anything that enter the tunnel into the door, and there I can do many things that I wouldn't be able to do outside the tunnel."

The door-pusher's power would multiply when they were inside the door, so the boy's ability to pull people into his door was incredibly powerful if used right.

"So, you pulled me into your door earlier?"

"Yes, that place is a nightmare that I've weaved. Time is frozen on that day, but there is a weakness to this power—it can only be used inside this tunnel. Once I leave the tunnel, the door can't be opened anymore." The gap on the boy's torso was like a mouth, and it looked scary. "Sometimes, I even wonder, was it me who opened the door, or did the door assume who I was?"

The boy's situation was very unique. This was Chen Ge's first time encountering something like this as well.

"You've fought the shadow before. Did you notice if he has any weakness?"

"If I knew that, do you think I'd still be here talking with you?" The appendages shook agitatedly, and the boy looked quite mad. "The madman was stronger every time he came. I tried many methods, but I could not kill him. Then I planned to trap him inside the world behind the door, but eventually, he found out the pattern of the tunnel behind the door and almost escaped on his own..."

The boy caught himself because he realized that he had accidentally revealed that there was a pattern to the tunnel behind the door.

"And then?" Chen Ge pretended not to have heard him and urged him to continue.

"He failed, but I won't be able to use the same trick next time." The boy leaned his body to the side to expose a large gash on the spider body. "I just fought him some time back. He was strangely desperate like a maddened dog."

"Where did he go after that fight?" Chen Ge wanted to know if the shadow returned to possess Jia Ming after leaving the tunnel.

"How would I know?" The boy started to evade the question. With the interrogation from Chen Ge, he had finally revealed three things to him. Whenever the shadow came here, his form would change. The boy suspected that the shadow had the ability to change his appearance and size. There was a child's shadow hiding inside the shadow—no matter the appearance that he took on, the child's shadow had never changed. The last was something that the boy himself could not confirm. He sensed a presence similar to Chen Ge in the shadow, and that was why he had wanted to kill Chen Ge earlier.

Memorizing these three points, after confirming that he was unable to get more information from the boy, Chen Ge turned to the woman.

“What are doing?” Before he said anything, the boy weaved through the ‘forest’ to stand between Chen Ge and his mother.

“After you leave the tunnel, you won’t be able to open the door inside your body, and your power will drop drastically, so I wish to ask her to help me fight the shadow. After all, the more we have, the greater the chance of winning.”

Chen Ge said that so naturally that the boy felt stumped. “Letting you go and telling you so many things is already the limit of my kindness, but you still want to take my mommy with you?”

“If we don’t deal with the shadow, when he returns to the tunnel, both you and your mother will die,” Chen Ge said plainly. The boy’s mind was filled with resentment and vengeance, so the normal persuasion that Chen Ge used on other ghosts would be pointless. Thus, Chen Ge changed his angle and decided to go around this the most straightforward way—to convince the boy with the facts.

“I will not force you to make the choice, but I hope that you’ll really take into consideration your mother and your current situation.” With pain in his voice, Chen Ge empathized with their pain. “I believe you are unwilling to experience that deep despair again, right?”

“Impossible, she will die if she leaves this tunnel. They will all die.” The appendages slashed the dead bodies hanging from the ceiling. The pained souls wailed, but their spirits were wound inside the spider web—they were unable to escape. The boy could be quite scary if he wanted to.

“Instead of waiting for death, I still think it’s better to grasp your fate with your hands.” Chen Ge walked past the boy to address the woman. “Your child wants to protect you, and you also want to protect your child; neither of you can suffer the pain of loss again. I understand that, so no matter the choice either of you make, I will accept it.”

The dangling bodies swayed as they cried out in pain. This continued for several minutes until the woman smiled at Chen Ge and walked toward her boy.

Like a loving mother, she reached out to hug the boy’s head. The boy’s eyes, which were filled with hatred, suddenly softened, and his large appendages were pulled together. The scary lines on the spider body also stopped bleeding.

The woman whispered something into the boy’s ear before letting go and walking out of the tunnel.

Chen Ge did not pry because he said that he would accept any decision that they made. Catching up to the woman, the expression on Chen Ge’s face finally softened.

This three-star scenario should be successful after bringing away the mother of the strongest monster with me, but the completion rate will probably be really low. I should come back if I have the chance to give the mother and son their deserved reunion. For now, I should focus on dealing with the shadow.

Chapter 615: Preparation Work Completed

The taxi was parked at the entrance of the tunnel, and Chen Ge's focus was captured as he studied one page of the comic. After a long time, there was a commotion coming from the driver's seat, so Chen Ge pulled the door lightly open. "You're finally awake."

He tapped the driver's face and then covered his mouth. He predicted that the first thing the driver would do after waking up was scream, so he took the precaution. The driver's eyes flew open, and his face was covered in fear.

"Calm down, and listen to me." After conversing with the spider-boy, Chen Ge had not left immediately. To ensure that the mission was completed, he had spent time inside the tunnel until the sun rose. After one night of exploration, Chen Ge had discovered many things.

Many spirits that died from car accidents had made their home inside the tunnel; the place was as dangerous as the underground morgue. However, whenever the shadow came, he would commit to a total cleanse, taking away or consuming all the spirits that blocked his way. As time passed, the number of ghosts in White Dragon Cave Tunnel decreased, and in a way, Chen Ge benefited from that.

They had come across so many ghosts heading toward the tunnel when they arrived because that was the boy laying the bait for them to come. The boy had been injured in the battle with the shadow, and the fastest way to recover was to feed.

After some communication, Chen Ge knew that the boy was still hiding his special power, and that power appeared to be related to his large spider body. Chen Ge did not interact too much with the boy, and for the time being, he did not plan to bring the boy back to his Haunted House. After pushing open the 'door' in the fire, the boy had been completely corrupted.

He hated everything other than his mother. Selfishness, hatred, anger—all the negative human emotions could be found on the boy's body, so in other words, the boy was much more dangerous than he appeared.

Pulling back his thought, Chen Ge turned to the panicking driver, and his voice softened. "We seemed to have run into ghosts tonight."

Slowly releasing his hand, Chen Ge put his backpack on the passenger seat and said calmly, "We'll talk on the road, but for now, let's leave this haunted place first."

The driver immediately started the car and turned to rush down the road. "What happened earlier? I remember there were three, no, wait, two strange passengers inside the car, and then we were carried into White Dragon Tunnel Cave. There were many people rapping against the car window, and there were bloody handprints everywhere. The car broke down, and the phone couldn't be used..."

As he spoke, the driver sounded like he was about to cry. Chen Ge quickly tried to calm his emotions. "I think you were possessed. I got into your car in Western Jiujiang, and I wanted to go to Eastern Jiujiang to visit a friend. But on the way, when we passed an old, empty, abandoned building, you suddenly stopped and rolled down the window to talk to the air. Then you even opened the car door. You have no idea how scared I was."

"You didn't see anyone?" The driver's face was blanched.

“There was no one there; I only saw you talking to air. Then something creepier happened. After driving for a while, you suddenly stepped on the brake, screaming about almost hitting someone. I quickly turned to look, but there was no one on the road. Then, without asking for my opinion, you opened the backdoor and started rambling again.” Chen Ge complained to the driver like he was the wronged party. “Then, just when I thought things couldn’t get weirder, after finishing your one-sided conversation, you drove the car right into White Dragon Cave Tunnel. I tried but couldn’t stop you.”

“I think I have a memory of that.” The driver took in a cold breath. He felt like his limbs were frozen. “Have I really been possessed? Are there actual ghosts in this world?”

“That, I cannot answer, but in any case, you have given me the biggest scare of my life tonight.” Chen Ge hugged the backpack that radiated a faint scent of blood and looked quite pitiable.

“We probably ran into ghosts then.” The driver looked at the squeaky clean car window—there was not one bloody handprint in sight. He had no idea that it was Chen Ge and all of his employees who had cleaned his car for almost an hour. His heart was shaking, and the driver kept feeling something was wrong. However, he kept his lips zipped, and he only sighed in relief after driving out of Eastern Jiujiang.

As the sky was hazy with light, the driver dropped Chen Ge off at New Century Park.

“Just drop me here. Here’s 100, keep the change.” Chen Ge was about to leave when the driver grabbed his sleeve. “What’s wrong?”

“Big brother, are you sure you didn’t see anything last night?” The driver glanced around his car. “Please, give me a direct answer. I don’t think I’ll be able to drive this car anymore. I keep feeling like there’s something inside here.”

“Don’t worry, your car now is very clean, and in the future, stop driving to Eastern Jiujiang,” Chen Ge said as he grabbed his bag and headed into the park.

“What exactly happened last night? Oh right, I can check the vehicle camera... Wait a minute, who removed the machine? If it’s a ghost, then it sure is a high-tech ghost!”

...

Returning to the Haunted House, Chen Ge went into the staff breakroom and took out the black phone. As the sun rose, he received the mission complete message.

“Congratulation Specters’ Favored for completing three-star Trial Mission.

“A new scenario, The End of the Tunnel, has been unlocked.

“The End of the Tunnel: What is at the end of the tunnel?

“Mission Completion Rate: 20%

“Hidden reward not yet unlocked.”

The completion rate is low, just slightly higher than the rate at Coffin Village, Chen Ge, sitting in bed, thought to himself. Since the completion rate is only twenty percent, it looks like the boy in the tunnel

still hid something very important from me. He must have lied to me last night, but it is hard to tell what the lie was.

The boy had a hatred-filled heart, so it was normal for him not to trust Chen Ge. If not for his mother, the boy would have hanged Chen Ge.

Looks like he needs some real education.

Putting the phone away, Chen Ge went underground and found the newly-unlocked scenario next to the Twin Water Ghost pool.

It was a tunnel that one could not see the end of. Chen Ge had no idea where it led, and just standing at the entrance, Chen Ge could feel the bone-chilling wind that radiated out.

The boy can only open the door inside his body at White Dragon Cave Tunnel. I wonder if he can do the same if he's here at this Haunted House replica.

The boy was unique because he was in possession of a mobile door. Chen Ge valued that because he believed that in the near future, the boy would have a huge role to play.

After sealing up the entrance, Chen Ge left. He planned to remake all of these recent scenarios to combine them into a large faux-four-star scenario after completing the 3.5-star scenario in Li Wan City.

He already had a concept inside his mind.

When this large scenario is built, my Haunted House should rise to a new height.

Focused on dealing with the shadow, it had been so long since Chen Ge admired the happy expressions on his visitors' faces.

The weather forecast said that there might be a rain tonight. After the sun sets, I should go explore the area around Li Wan City to see if I can run into the woman with the red raincoat.

Chapter 616: Heavy Rain! Heavy Rain!

At 8 am, Chen Ge, who had only lain down for two hours of sleep, walked out from the Haunted House. The sky was cloudy, a portent of lousy weather ahead, but that did not dampen the visitors' spirit. The theme park was still not yet officially open, but there was already a crowd waiting.

"No matter how good the attraction is, after many repetitions, the visitors will eventually lose interest. I have to keep unlocking new scenarios or come up with new playstyle to spice up the experience." The Haunted House was Chen Ge's base. He decided to give it a good upgrade once he dealt with the shadow.

"Boss, what are you thinking about?" Xiao Gu jogged through the gate in a pair of exercise slacks. "We probably won't have that many visitors today on the account of impending rain."

"That might not be true. Once it starts to rain, the visitors will be forced to queue for indoor attractions since the outdoor attractions won't operate normally. Perhaps many visitors who normally wouldn't

give the Haunted House a chance might attempt it.” Chen Ge led Xiao Gu to the dressing room. “In other words, don’t think about slacking on the job. Get to work.”

“Yes, boss.” Xiao Gu was a very qualified worker. He was loyal and worked without complaint. Chen Ge planned to raise his salary for the coming month. The Haunted House could not have met its success with the workers, so naturally, Chen Ge felt like he should share the earnings with them.

“After the new scenarios are unlocked, two employees is no longer enough. I should try to recruit more employees during this mission.”

The park opened at 9 am, and a new busy day began. This time, Chen Ge did not hide inside the staff breakroom to sleep. He summoned Bai Qiulin, Ol’ Zhou, and Duan Yue and had them change into outfits that would not show their faces. Chen Ge led them through all the scenarios before his guests.

He explained the purpose of all the rooms in the Haunted House and the official responsibility of a Haunted House worker to the three of them. He even gave them some lessons on running and operating the business.

“In the future, I’ll need the three of you to help me manage the underground scenarios. I will have Xu Yin and Yan Danian help you.”

The underground scenario was getting bigger and bigger, so Chen Ge definitely could not handle everything alone. To prevent accidents, he needed to improve the safety awareness of his ‘employees’.

“In a bit, I need you to pass on the knowledge that I’ve taught you today to the students in the mannequins and the professors and lecturers in the morgue. Especially remind the professors to not purposely go after the students from the medical university.”

Chen Ge had no idea what the source of the professors’ conflict with the Jiujiang Medical University students was. They were normally so reserved and professional, rarely showing up before the visitors, but once the students from the university arrived, they would turn into the scariest visage.

To Chen Ge’s bafflement, the headmaster from the university seemed to have taken this on as a challenge. He even encouraged his students to come to the Haunted House’s morgue to train their courage when they were free. Chen Ge did not want to intervene too much, but whenever he saw the students who were scared mindless by their ‘teachers’, he would feel sorry for them.

“When I go around Li Wan City tonight, I should bring the professors with me. I have a feeling their full potential hasn’t been unlocked yet, and it’s not a long-term solution to have them spend their time just scaring students in the underground morgue.”

After briefing Ol’ Zhou and the rest, Chen Ge had them enter the scenario.

The visitors that visited the Haunted House that day would come across this strange scene. There would be this strangely-dressed fellow, and no one knew whether they were a visitor or worker. As they stood on the podium in the classroom explaining lessons on management to the room of mannequins, words would appear on the blackboard, notes about how to find people to talk to inside a group and how to increase efficiency at work. It felt like a scene right out of a multi-level marketing meeting.

Chen Ge, who hid in the corner, kept watch over Ol' Zhou's group, and reality proved that they were indeed quite excellent and would become the spiritual center of the Haunted House in the future.

"The three of them, and Yan Danian, are the perfect team. They know each other well, and each has their own assigned role. The only weakness is their lack of power. However, once Bai Qiulin advances to become a Red Specter, that weakness will be obsolete. This team of four can help me manage many scenarios."

Chen Ge was very satisfied, but he still had a regret in his heart because the most suitable candidate to be the Haunted House's manager should be Mu Yang High School's old headmaster.

"Perhaps I should return to that place to look around if there's time." Chen Ge walked out from the underground parking lot. He entered the staff breakroom, removed the cat from its perch, opened the locked drawer, and fished out the notes that he had made earlier. He went through all the supernatural events that he had encountered in Eastern Jiujiang.

After finishing his revision, Chen Ge used his lighter to burn the papers. The man and the cat saw the ash that floated up into the air, but they were thinking about different things.

"The sky is dark. There should be a heavy rain tonight."

...

The clouds were still hanging low in the sky at 3 pm. Due to safety concerns, most of the outdoor attractions had been shut down, and more visitors rushed into the Haunted House. At 5 pm, a shower fell from the sky, and it continued to grow. As a kind and considerate gesture, Uncle Xu and the park workers gave out free umbrellas to the visitors who needed them. Seeing as the rain might turn heavier, the park decided to close its door at 5:30 pm.

"It's raining, so why don't the two of you go home?" After sending the last batch of visitors away, Chen Ge let Xu Wan and Xiao Gu off work while he stayed behind to finish the cleaning.

At 7 pm, the sky became darker. Chen Ge stared at the dim sky outside the Haunted House, and he was silently contemplating.

"This is such a wonderful weather." Changing into a set of clean clothes, Chen Ge grabbed his backpack and ran into the underground parking lot. He placed all the ghosts that he could carry into the comic, including the senior doctor Wei Jiuqin.

"Sir, you don't need to come out, just stay inside the pages. I'm bringing you with me because you're a good doctor, and I hope your good karma will be able to bring me luck tonight."

Chen Ge returned to the staff breakroom and found another bag. He poured some cat food inside it.

"I'm going out to do something big tonight, you coming?" Chen Ge knelt down next to the white bag. The confused cat tilted its head at the bag of cat food, and it felt this scene was strangely familiar. Before it could resist, Chen Ge shoved it and Xiaoxiao into the travel bag.

"After all, it's a cat that has consumed the society's blood vial. It's quite spirited." Chen Ge pulled up the zipper half-way and rubbed the cat that poked its head out.

Chen Ge left the room and exited the Haunted House via the backdoor. He stopped next to the bus. Ever since he obtained the vehicle, it had been parked near the Haunted House's backdoor.

Uncle Xu had asked him about it before, and Chen Ge had said that he dragged this from the flea market and was planning to turn it into a new scenario. Summoning the driver, Tang Jun, from the comic, Chen Ge passed him the key. "Tonight, we're going for a spin."

Chapter 617: Welcome, Passengers

The honest Tang Jun opened the door, took the seat at the driver's spot, and felt that everything was so surreal. "I didn't think I'd get back to my old career so soon."

"That is what you're best at, but I'll never force you to do anything you don't like. We're colleagues, so if you have any requests, do voice them." Chen Ge placed the heavy backpack at the last row. "Tonight's weather is not bad. The rain is very heavy, which is perfect for an outing."

"Where are we planning to go tonight?" Tang Jun was still a bit cautious around Chen Ge for reasons that he could not understand.

"Li Wan City, just take the route that you're familiar with."

"We're really going there?" When he heard the words 'Li Wan City', a bad omen arose within Tang Jun's heart. "Boss, that place is really dangerous. I'm not doubting your ability, but I simply think there is no reason for us to provoke them."

"I'm not doing this to provoke anyone." Tang Jun was about to sigh in relief when Chen Ge added, "I plan to cleanse Li Wan City from top to bottom, to rescue those that need to be rescued and to find out the truth."

Since Chen Ge had said that, there was nothing more for Tang Jun to say; they were on different wavelengths.

"There's still time for you to bow out. We'll only depart at 11 pm." Route 104 was very long, and it connected Eastern and Western Jiujiang. If they left at 11 pm, if there was no delay, they would arrive at Li Wan City after midnight.

"I won't run; you've underestimated me." Tang Jun's legs shook unnaturally, and his hands gripped the steering wheel a bit too tightly. The rain continued to pour, and it was complete darkness outside of the bus.

At 11 pm, a broken bus exited New Century Park and slowly disappeared into the rain.

"Is this how you normally drive?"

"Yes."

"Have you been blocked by traffic police before?"

"No. The shadow has done something to the vehicle. In a way, you can see this vehicle as a hearse in service of dead people and people in despair." Tang Jun answered Chen Ge's questions seriously as he piloted the bus, and soon, they arrived at the first bus stop.

The stop appeared blurry through the heavy rain. There was no one there, but Tang Jun still chose to open the door and waited by the stop for three minutes.

"Even if there is no visible passenger waiting by the bus stop, it's better to wait for three minutes and perhaps a special passenger will arrive. That is what the shadow told me."

The rain flew into the car. Chen Ge, who was seated at the second last row, observed everything silently. There were many ghost stories related to the bus in this city, but who would thought that it would one day turn into something like this? However, this was in line with the ghost stories society's goal.

When I walk in the darkness, I am the scariest ghost story this city has ever heard.

Tang Jun continued to move after three minutes. After many stops, Chen Ge finally saw someone waiting at the stop after they left Western Jiujiang.

"He's waiting for a bus at 11 pm. This sure is an interesting character." The bus slowed to a halt. The driver did not say a word as he opened the door. The man at the stop shuffled his way up the vehicle.

He was wearing a cheap suit, radiating a heavy stench of alcohol. His cheeks were red, and he was slurring his words. Both his shirt and pants were wet.

"Do... do you take card..." He took out his wallet and tapped it multiple times at one of the spots on the bus. He was getting agitated because he still had not heard the beep that signified payment had been deducted from his card.

"Why don't you go there and rest? I'll pay for your ticket." Chen Ge went to support the drunkard who almost fell. He scanned the man with his Yin Yang Vision. This passenger should not be a 'passenger' that he was waiting for. "Take a good rest and don't move."

"Thank you. I've been so unlucky recently, but tonight, everything's going to change! I just got a huge contract, managed to catch the last bus, and even got the help from a kind person like you. Thank you so much!" the drunkard said. He slumped into the third row and took up two seats.

"You are indeed quite lucky." Chen Ge turned to look at Tang Jun, and the latter understood his meaning. He shook his head. He also was not sure whether this was the special passenger that Chen Ge 'needed' or not.

"Boss, where are you going? I'll wake you up when we've arrived."

"Just ignore me, I don't want to hold you up! My home is at the last stop. When the bus stops fully, it's time for me to alight." Then, the drunkard collapsed on the row of seat.

"The final stop? You're going to Li Wan City?" Chen Ge studied the man closely but still could not see anything wrong with him.

The bus continued to travel through the rain. After entering Eastern Jiujiang, the surroundings became conspicuously more deserted—not many cars could be seen on the road. They passed a few more stops, and one hour later, Chen Ge saw a pair of red high heels on one of the platforms.

There was no one around, just a pair of heels placed at the spot where the rain would not drench them. Chen Ge glanced toward the driver's seat. Tang Jun did not seem like he knew anything—he kept staring at the steering wheel.

No one got on the bus, and after three minutes, the doors closed. Just as Chen Ge was checking whether the heels were still there, Tang Jun suddenly laughed. Following his voice, Chen Ge noticed a pair of red high heels being placed on the seat just behind the driver's seat. The blood red shoes were placed side by side—it felt like a person was sitting behind the driver.

When did she get on?

Still there was no one there, just a pair of shoes. Chen Ge walked forward and exchanged a look with Tang Jun through the mirror. In the mirror, he noticed that Tang Jun was trying his best to smile even though he was probably about to cry.

“Your attitude is very nice, keep that smile on your face.” Chen Ge acted like he did not see the red high heels and returned to his seat. He opened the travel bag to try to appease the kidnapped white cat. Crawling out of the bag, the cat did not seem to be used to the atmosphere inside the bus, and it took a quick tour before returning to Chen Ge's side.

“You should be happier on an outing.” Seeing the cat's reaction, Chen Ge understood many things. He grabbed the backpack that contained the recorder and placed it next to him. It was totally silent inside the car. Other than Chen Ge, no one spoke. This bus that travelled through the darkness and rain was a like mobile coffin.

The rain was still turning heavier. Just as the bus reached the next stop, Chen Ge saw someone in a black raincoat running away from the platform. The man had originally been pacing back and forth, looking like he was in a hurry. However, once the car really pulled up, he left instantly like he had seen something that he should not have.

“Did the person recognize me?” Chen Ge studied the man's frame and thought that he looked very familiar. He instantly signaled for Tang Jun to chase after the man with the bus.

Chapter 618: Smiling Face

The black raincoat covered the man's body, but Chen Ge noticed that he was wearing many layers, making him look bigger than he actually was. When he noticed that the bus was coming his way, he immediately turned to run the other way.

“Why is it following me?” There was panic in the person's eyes. The bus had deserted its route—that had never happened before. The bus cut through the rain, its speed not too fast and not too slow. It was driving right next to the man like it was waiting for him to get on. Such a strange thing happening caused the man to pick up his pace. He looked left and right like looking for an alley too small for the bus to get through.

"It's so dangerous for you to wander alone so late at night when it's raining." Chen Ge had Tang Jun stop the bus in the man's path and open the door. The man hesitated before getting on the bus. He removed the rain jacket and revealed a face that Chen Ge was familiar with.

Chen Ge had met this passenger before. When he visited Li Wan City before, it was this man who had introduced Chen Ge to the hearse. He was a doctor from the burn unit who had married a patient much younger than he was. Due to complicated reasons, his wife had committed suicide in the bathroom. Since then, he had been wearing the scarf knitted by his wife and gone searching for methods to see his wife again in the dark corners of the city.

After the doctor got on, he saw Chen Ge. In such a weird situation, it was greatly relieving to see a familiar face. He walked toward Chen Ge and sat down next to him without hesitation. The vehicle continued to move. Rain pelted the bus window, and the sound made people feel uneasy.

"You're still alive?"

Chen Ge's greeting was unusual to say the least, but the doctor was not mad. He shushed Chen Ge and then whispered, "Today, this bus is different from normal. Something bad might have happened."

"What's so different?" Chen Ge listened to the feedback, thinking about how to improve.

"I can't tell, but it just feels strange." The doctor shrugged his coat off and scanned the other passengers in the vehicle out of the corner of his eyes.

"No wonder you chose to escape the moment the bus pulled up at the platform." Chen Ge shrugged. He placed the cat back into the travel bag. Whenever there was danger, the cat would become incredibly obedient and liked to stick close to Chen Ge.

After the doctor got on, the bus turned around and returned to its normal route.

"We'll reach Li Wan City in a few more stops. There sure is a lot of passengers wanting to take this bus tonight." Chen Ge closed his eyes to rest. Be it the drunkard or the red high heels, neither of them was his target. His main target was still the woman in the red raincoat.

Crossing through the rain, outside the bus, it was howling with wind and thunder, but inside the bus, it felt smothering and oppressive like even breathing was difficult. After another five minutes, the bus reached the next stop.

At the empty stop, there was a pool of blood being washed away by the rain. No one knew what had happened at the stop before the bus arrived. The blood stain slowly faded cleansed by the rain.

"When the woman in the red raincoat is attacked or provoked, blood will seep out of her raincoat, so does this belong to her?" Chen Ge could not confirm it. Perhaps it was a waiting passenger who was murdered.

Like usual, the bus opened the door and stopped for three minutes even though there was no one waiting at the platform. There was nothing unusual for the first minute, but during the second minute, there was a shadow coming down the road.

He swayed in the heavy rain, sporting a mushroom-shaped hairstyle. His neck was longer than normal, and even though his facial features looked normal, in combination, it felt so awkward.

Just as the door was about to close, the mushroom head got on the bus. His whole body was drenched, and he had a smile fixed on his face. His lips cracked open to reveal his teeth. Even though the rain slid into his lips, he did not mind as if this was the only facial expression that he could make.

“A strange smiling man?” That was Chen Ge’s impression of this new passenger. He used his Yin Yang Vision silently, and with just a glance, it felt like someone had poked his pupils with a pin. He quickly closed his eyes to shut off the sharp pain. When Chen Ge reopened them, the smiling man was already seated. He took a seat in the second row. It seemed like he was purposely taking the seat opposite from the pair of red high heels.

Tonight, we sure have plenty of quality passengers!

Rubbing his eyes, Chen Ge was still working through the pain. He had no idea what the man was hiding, but one thing was for sure, the man was definitely not a normal person like the doctor.

The bus continued to move. Several minutes later, the doctor suddenly reached behind him to pass a phone to Chen Ge. Accepting the phone, Chen Ge read the written message on it—‘Ever since we left Li Wan City, the hearse disappeared. It stopped arriving at the designated time. Tonight, I came to try my luck, but the hearse showed up when it shouldn’t have. It has broken all of the rhythm that has been set up in the past. Tonight, there will be more former passengers like myself who came to check the route, so it’ll be very dangerous. Be careful, and one thing to pay attention to is the smiling monster on the second row. Be cautious. It has killed a whole bus of people before.’

Reading the doctor’s message, Chen Ge noticed something. When referring to the smiling passenger, the doctor used monster and ‘it’ to describe it.

How did the doctor find out it has killed a whole bus of people? If he was one of the passengers, how did he survive? If he wasn’t on the bus then, who told him about this?

His eyes were pulsing with pain. Chen Ge merely glanced at the man with the power gifted to him by the black phone.

This man sports such a cute hairstyle, but in reality, he’s a cruel character.

When Chen Ge was silently observing the smiling man, the bus reached the next stop. Before entering the platform, Chen Ge saw a young man on the platform looking quite unsettled. After the bus parked and the door opened, sitting inside the bus, Chen Ge could hear the young man’s voice. “It’s really here, the midnight bus! The stories are real!”

His voice was shaking, and his face was white. His lips were unnaturally purple, and his body was shaking like he could collapse at any moment.

“Such a scaredy-cat?” Chen Ge studied the young man through the window. The man looked just over twenty, probably still in university. This was just a normal student. Chen Ge believed that he was like Xiao Gu, followed by unnatural things, and with his bad luck, he ran into the last bus on Route 104.

Chen Ge had no interest in the young man. He looked at him like how a fisher would look like a small fish that had gotten into the net. He prepared to let him go.

The bus pulled up to the stop. Out of Chen Ge's expectations, this young man who looked so scared and cowardly jumped through the door without being forced when the doors were about to close.

Chapter 619: Black Schoolbag

The doors closed, and the engine revved. The young man's Adam's apple shivered slightly. He squeezed the umbrella between his legs, sought out some coins from his pocket, and tossed them inside the ticket machine. Following the crisp sound of the coins falling against metallic tin, all the few passengers on the bus turned to look at the young man.

Being stared at by so many strange individuals, he quickly lowered his head as if he thought that if he could not see them, they would not notice him. The bus swayed on the road, and the young man gripped the rail tightly to stop himself from falling. Perhaps due to his nervousness, one could see the green veins popping on the back of his hand.

"A new arrival?" It seemed to be the first time that the doctor had encountered the young man. His brow raised slightly, and his lips pressed into a straight line, but ultimately, he did not say anything.

Two minutes later, the young man silently looked around him. He sighed in relief when he realized that the passengers had stopped paying him any attention. He reached his hand into his pocket to silently take out his phone. It seemed like he was planning to utilize the camera function.

"It's a bit much trying to take a picture." Chen Ge was unwilling for his hearse to be exposed, so before the young man could do anything, he stood up to walk toward him. Seeing someone approach, the young man was so scared that the phone almost slipped out of his fingers.

"There are so many empty seats in the bus. Why are you standing?" Chen Ge's smile was infectious, and his voice was friendly.

"I..." The young man did not explain that it was because he was too cowardly to do so. Ever since getting on the bus, he had realized that even his brain had started to move slower, and for some reason, he could not land on a believable excuse.

"Are you still in school?" Chen Ge very naturally placed his hand on the young man's arm. "Sit here, stay away from the wind, or you might catch a cold."

Before the young man realized what was happening, he was already dragged by Chen Ge to the last row. Calculating the distance between himself and the door, and then turning to look at the locked window, he predicted that it would be faster to break the glass and jump out.

"Don't be so nervous. Is this your first time taking the last bus on Route 104?" Chen Ge was like the big brother next door. "You've probably been misled by some of the baseless articles online. In reality, the public transport company occasionally adds a last trip running at midnight on certain days. I have no idea why, but you don't need to worry. We're all living humans."

To increase the persuasiveness, Chen Ge even opened his travel bag to grab the white cat. "Have you seen a ghost who has a pet cat?"

The white cat who had been hauled out to be shown was annoyed. It waved its claws but was too far away to actually touch Chen Ge, so its anger caused its fur to burst.

Seeing such a lively creature, the horror in the young man's heart dissipated. He scratched his head and said uncertainly, "But it's midnight and raining so heavily, why are there so many passengers?"

"Even at night, there are many who need to work to keep their lives afloat, like telephone operators, late night drivers, night-shift guards, and radio personalities with early morning programs. The contributions of these people can't be overlooked for the advancement of our city."

Such a positive statement felt strange inside the eerie bus, but Chen Ge ignored the incongruity. "By the way, what do you do for a living? Why are you still outside so late at night?"

"I..." The young man hesitated. He turned to look at the other passengers. Since the lights inside the bus were not on, he could only see clumps of shadows. His palms were slick with sweat. After a long time, he silently put the phone away and told Chen Ge, "I am a student at Lin Jiang First High."

"A high schooler?" Chen Ge studied the child's face. "You look so mature for your age."

"I've repeated my studies for two years already, and it seems like I'm going to have to repeat again, but that is not that important anymore." The young man's tone was laced with a bitterness that was far beyond his youth.

"Brother, you've repeated two years already. Is there really anything that is more important than that?"

"Yes." The young man nodded firmly, and he took out his phone. "In my class, three students went missing. I know where they are, but the police refused to believe me."

Opening the phone, the young man showed Chen Ge a group picture. "They are my best friends."

There were four people in the picture. The young man held a basketball at the back, a pair of twins with obvious distinction in personality stood on both of his sides. The one on the left was shrouded in a negative aura, carrying a black backpack in his hands, while the one on the right looked at the girl at the front with overflowing love in his gaze.

"Why did they suddenly disappear?" Chen Ge studied the students in the picture, paying extra attention to the backpack that the boy on the left was carrying. In Xiao Bu's game, there was a black schoolbag placed at the last row of the bus, and when Xiao Gu took the hearse, he had come across a high-schooler on the bus. That high-schooler had also been carrying a black bag.

"Black school bag, a pair of twins who look similar but have completely opposite personalities..." Chen Ge seemed to be reminded of something. "Did the three of them disappear after taking the last bus on Route 104?"

The young man nodded again. "The twins have a rare surname, Bei. Even though they looked identical, they couldn't have been more different. The elder brother was Bei Ye. He was easily angered and didn't have many friends. His favorite activity was pulling heinous pranks that only he would enjoy. The younger brother was Bei Wen. He was a good student, quiet and shy. He kept to himself unless when he was approached.

“The four of us stayed close to each other, so we normally went home together. Some time ago, for some strange reason, Bei Ye and Bei Wen got into a fight at the bus stop. Apparently, it was because Bei Ye got tired of living in Bei Wen’s shadow.

“At the time, we didn’t think so much of it. Bei Ye stormed off, but the next day, we realized that Bei Ye hadn’t returned home that night. During class, Bei Ye came back to us, and strangely enough, the first thing he did was apologize to Bei Wen. Then he told us a secret. He said, after midnight, there would be a bus carrying all dead people heading toward Eastern Jiujiang.

“Naturally, we didn’t believe him. Bei Ye invited us to wait for this bus with him. Neither Bei Wen nor I wanted to give him the time of the day, but he forced our hands by provoking Bei Wen in front of the girl.”

The young man stopped to take a breath. He looked at his phone, and the more he thought about it, the more scared he became.

“And then?”

“And then all three of them disappeared. Bei Ye and his father disappeared on the same day, then it was the girl and finally Bei Wen.”

This sequence was similar to the sequence in Chen Ge’s memory. He felt like there were a great chance Bei Wen and Bei Ye were trapped inside the world behind the door in Li Wan City.

“Get off the bus at the next stop. If I run into your friends, I’ll bring them back.”

“You’ll bring them back? No way.” The young man shook his head. “You have no idea how much courage I needed to summon before I could even get on this bus...”

“Follow my orders if you don’t want to die.” The smile on Chen Ge’s face was still gentle, but the young man felt like he had been splashed with a basin of cold water in winter. He could not help but shudder.

The child was like the main character in a normal scary movie, but he was lucky to have run into Chen Ge.

Chapter 620: Omen

To use such a gentle caressing tone to say something as scary as ‘you will die’... For a moment, the young man thought that there was something wrong with his ears. He sat where he was, frozen, and looked at Chen Ge blankly like his mind was unable to process the information.

“Tell me everything you know. The greater the detail, the greater the chance I have at saving your friends. Other than that, remember this—no matter where your home is, do not go toward the east once you get off the bus. Understood?”

What kind of person was Chen Ge? To say that he was someone who had climbed out a mountain of dead bodies would be stretching it a bit too far, but thinking back to his past experience, one would need to use more than two hands to count the crazed murderers that had fallen under his hands.

Traversing through haunted houses every night, having close contact with ghosts, that caused the essence of the Specters to eventually brush off on the man. Chen Ge had not done anything other than change the tone of his voice, but the young man already thought that something was wrong. Perhaps it was his intrinsic need for survival that compelled him to stay away from this dangerous person. Chen Ge's body temperature was lower than normal, but it should not have accounted for anything. Yet, the young man suddenly felt ravaged by an eternal chill. With both of his hands pressed against the cushion, he stealthily nudged away from Chen Ge.

"Bei Wen was the last to disappear. Perhaps because he was scared, he was acting differently from normal."

"That isn't useful information. I need clues about them. Did they leave behind anything useful? Like messages or a diary." Chen Ge cornered the young man into the corner of the last row. "Think about it seriously."

The young man's face was stressed, and after a long cogitation, he finally remembered something. "Before Bei Wen disappeared, he told me to not tell the police about the last bus on Route 104 no matter what. He also gave me a key and told me that if he didn't come back in three weeks to take this key to the last bus to find him."

"Do you have the key with you?" With Chen Ge's watching, the young man took out a rusted key from his pocket. It was stained with blood.

"Let me take a look." Chen Ge grabbed the key to inspect it. He could not believe it. He rummaged through his bag and found his own key in the inner lining of his bag. The two keys looked surprisingly similar.

"You have the same key?" The young man gasped in shock.

"Be quiet." Chen Ge placed both keys on the chair and frowned. He had obtained that key a long time ago when he finished Men Nan's second persona's mission. It had been a reward from the black phone, Self-perceptive Key. The key would be able to help him search for his real self should he fall under the effect of confusion and illusion.

Chen Ge had believed that this key would be useful when he explored the Third Sick Hall. One would easily be disturbed by the thick haze of negative energy behind the door when one entered it for the first time, causing a loss of self. Based on Chen Ge's suspicion, the key was to handle a contingency like that.

In the end, he did not have to use the key back then because Zhang Ya was too overpowered. She had charged into the door and chased after the president. Other than shock, Chen Ge did not experience too much of any other emotion, so he did not have a use for this key.

Since Chen Ge thought that he might have a use for this key in the future, he had kept it inside his backpack. But to his surprise, on the way to Eastern Jiujiang that day, he ran into a similar key. In terms of appearance, other than the bite mark, they looked identical.

"Does the appearance of this key signify something?" The key was able to stop someone from getting lost. Before Bei Wen went missing, he had told the young man to come find him with the key. Did this mean that the place that he was going to was somewhere one could be lost fairly easily?

"Do you know where Bei Wen got this?" Chen Ge very naturally placed both keys inside his pocket.

"He didn't tell me." The young man watched as Chen Ge snatch his key away. He answered honestly and did not dare ask for the key back.

"The key is quite important, but don't worry, since I've taken your key, I will definitely help your friend." Chen Ge leaned against the chair, and he suddenly felt like this was an omen. When the first key appeared, he had entered the Third Sick Hall and run into the toughest opponent since then—the ghost stories society.

This time, he was going to Eastern Jiujiang alone, and the appearance of the key probably signified that he was going to run into another powerful enemy.

The first key has to do with Men Nan. The child has two personas, and they are different personality-wise. The second key is related to the Bei twins, who look the same but act differently. Chen Ge touched the keys in his pocket and was suddenly reminded of the shadow who looked like this. Does this mean I'll eventually run into a third key?

Chen Ge turned to look at the window. No one spoke again, and the bus eventually reached the next stop.

"Get off here and walk toward the west; it's not so safe east of here." Chen Ge squeezed back to allow the young man to pass. The young man stood up. It seemed like he had something else to say, but as he looked at Chen Ge's face, he ultimately swallowed his words and jogged off the bus.

"Hey, you forgot your umbrella!" Chen Ge yelled out the window. The young man was so scared that even with the rain pouring, he ran westward without even turning his head around.

"Have I scared him? But this is a good thing. This way, he'll be able to focus on his exams and won't need to repeat a third time." Chen Ge walked back to his seat, and the doctor lightly nudged him. "What's wrong?"

"Now is not the time to care about others," the doctor whispered before winding the scarf tighter around his neck, covering his face fully.

"Understood." Chen Ge took the young man's umbrella and returned to his spot. When he lifted his eyes, he noticed that the mushroom head at the second row was looking at him. With the cracked lips and frozen smile, he was staring at Chen Ge so intensely that the latter felt like rewarding him with a hammer to the face. Considering the crowd on the bus, Chen Ge dampened that urge.

"Stop smiling, is it because you're too ugly once you stop?" Chen Ge's challenge was highly provocative, but the mushroom head did not react in any way other than to continue staring at Chen Ge, smiling all the way.

The atmosphere on the bus became tense, but at that moment, the front door creaked, and a bloody hand reached into the bus. Blood dripped, and a woman in a red raincoat stood at the front door.

Her hair was stuck to her face, blocking her eyes. Her lips were sewn shut by something, and she looked positively ghastly.

“Finally, you’ve arrived.”

Seeing the woman, Chen Ge directly stood up from his seat. All the passengers on the bus had their attention turned to the woman in the red raincoat.