

Horrors 621

Chapter 621: Trap

The bus had already changed owner, but the woman in red raincoat was still cautious around it. Her arms gripped the door, and the red of her coat was conspicuous in the dark.

“We’re both going in the same direction. Why don’t you join us as we head toward Li Wan City tonight?” Chen Ge invited the woman on. He had many questions that he wished to ask her. The last time that he left the hearse, he had handed the ‘human trafficker’ who stole the children to the woman, but since then, he had not seen the human trafficker.

Chen Ge suspected that the woman in the red raincoat had already found out the information that she needed from her, the location of her own children. After all, if she did not come up with any result, she would not have shown up for the last bus on Route 104.

Walking to the front door, Chen Ge bent slightly over to address the woman. “If you’ve completed all the preparation, we shall go rescue your child tonight. I will go with you—that was my promise to you.”

Her lips sewn shut by blood vessels meant that she could not speak, so she made a series of strange gestures toward Chen Ge instead. Her fingertip pointed at the bus, then at Chen Ge’s face, and then at the spot where Chen Ge’s heart would be. Finally, she squeezed her fingers together like she was crushing Chen Ge’s heart in her palm.

“The hearse? My face? Crushing my heart?” It dawned on Chen Ge several moments later. “Do you mean that someone who looks like me is out to gouge out my heart? And he’s currently on the bus?”

The woman did not nod or shake her head. She looked through the curtain of her hair as she reached out to grab Chen Ge’s arm, trying to pull him off the bus. The bus was now Chen Ge’s property, and his backpack and cat were still on the bus, so naturally, he would not give it up so easily.

Chen Ge took a step back. When the woman sensed that, she stopped applying force and allowed Chen Ge to slip from her grasp. The rain slid down her raincoat. For the last piece of communication, she pointed in the direction of Li Wan City and her arms curled together to mimic the action of holding a baby. Before Chen Ge understood what she meant, the woman retreated to the platform. Blood trailed down her raincoat, and the blood pooled around her.

The bus slowly rolled out from the platform, and the woman stood there as she watched the last bus of Route 104 move away. The closer they were to Li Wan City, the heavier the rain outside fell. Outside the window, there was no light at all; it was as if the bus was travelling through a realm of darkness.

“What was she trying to say?” The woman had refused to get on the bus, which was different from what Chen Ge planned. “But if she doesn’t want to cooperate with me, she didn’t need to have shown up at all. She should have sensed a source of danger in the bus, so she refused to get on.”

Chen Ge sneaked a look at the other passengers—the doctor and the drunkard should be a normal human being, so Chen Ge focused his attention on the red high heels and the smiling man.

Should I make the first move? Chen Ge thought to himself when the phone in his pocket vibrated. He glanced at the caller's number before ending the call. Then he fired off a message to the caller.

"Inspector Lee, it's not convenient for me to answer your call. I hope you don't mind us communicating via messages."

When Chen Ge saw that it was Lee Zheng's number, he thought that something bad had happened.

"Jia Ming has escaped from the hospital! Be careful! I fear he might go to hurt you!" Lee Zheng used three exclamation marks in his message.

"But why would he come for me? I have not done anything to him. Plus, wasn't he at the hospital with the officers watching him? How did he manage to escape?" Jiujiang's police force was best of the best, and Chen Ge had good faith in the law enforcement.

"The mad man spun a wild story to confuse us. In the story, he was a victim, and through the retelling of eleven different stories, he described a shadowy monster who was an expert at changing its appearance and voice. He told us that the shadow monster was the real mastermind—he was merely an unlucky soul who was at the wrong place at the wrong time!"

"Eleven stories?"

"Eleven stories in total, detailing how he was threatened by the mastermind to do things that are in violation of his moral values. However, none of the stories were factually-flawed, and our investigation corroborated his claims."

"This proves that he wasn't lying."

"Yes, he wasn't lying about those eleven stories, but he was deceitful with one major detail!" Lee Zheng sounded agitated. There were many unusual spaces and exclamation points in his messages. "The mastermind was never real to begin with; it was a creation in his mind. He was the real killer! For all of those eleven stories, he was the real killer!"

Seeing this message, Chen Ge finally understood that the eleven stories probably represented eleven human lives.

"This man who looks shy and weak on the surface is hiding a completely twisted persona! When he told us the stories, his voice even broke several times due to emotions. He was so wrought by regret that the doctors and nurses felt sorry for him. We sent out people to inspect the crime scenes in his stories, and as the details surfaced, as the investigation deepened, we felt more unsettled. To speed up the investigation, we arranged more people to join the case. Earlier tonight, Jia Ming's sickness showed signs of worsening, and the doctors suggested sending him to the ICU. Thinking that he wouldn't be awake any time soon, we only left one officer behind to look after him.

"But on the way to send Jia Ming to the ICU, this man who shouldn't have been able to walk jumped out from the second-floor window and escaped. He had already planned everything, he scouted out the route beforehand. His sickroom was on the third floor, and ICU was on the first floor. The window that he jumped out of led to the back alley. It was a maze inside there with the hidden splits and turns—one officer was not enough to catch up to him."

Lee Zheng told Chen Ge about Jia Ming's escape, but Chen Ge was not interested in any of that. "Inspector Lee, I predicted that Jia Ming would attempt to escape, but why would you say he's out to harm me?"

"We found some wooden chips next to his bed. We opened the bedside table and realized that, at the back, someone had used their fingers to carve out your name. After the names were carved, the person would use their nails to gouge them out again, I don't think anyone would do that except when they had extreme hatred toward the named individual. In any case, be careful—we suspect that he's already on his way to find you."

I don't have any history with Jia Ming, so he shouldn't harbor such deep hatred toward me unless it wasn't Jia Ming who we saw at the hospital.

From Lee Zheng's message, Chen Ge suspected that the shadow was still in Jia Ming's body. He had probably fainted outside of White Dragon Cave Tunnel that night because of some accident.

"By the way, where are you now? Don't go wandering tonight!"

After a while, Lee Zheng sent another message. Initially, Chen Ge did not think that it was weird, but as he formulated a reply, he paused.

Wait a minute, why would Inspector Lee ask about my current location? And he rarely used exclamation marks in our previous correspondence. Is it possible that it's Jia Ming and not Lee Zheng who's communicating with me?

Chapter 622: The Strangest Adversary [2 in 1]

Chen Ge reread the series of messages sent by Lee Zheng. The usage of punctuation and the overall tone were indeed a variation from how the inspector would usually communicate via messages. The monster described by Jia Ming in the messages was familiar with changing with its appearance and voice; in other words, it would be able to mimic Lee Zheng's voice perfectly. However, since Chen Ge could not answer the call because he was on the hearse, Lee Zheng could only use written messages to communicate with Chen Ge. This was probably a contingency that the other party would not anticipate before making the call.

Could it really be Jia Ming who is sending messages with me?

Once the thought appeared, it crawled around Chen Ge's heart like poisonous briar, causing the man to work up a cold sweat. His finger hung over the top corner of the screen. After a long time, Chen Ge finally replied to Lee Zheng. "No problem, I'll make sure to stay at New Century Park tonight and won't go anywhere."

"Hmm, I'm just writing this to warn you—the man hates you to an extreme degree, and there is currently a warrant out for his arrest, so he might just take this last chance to go find you. It's better for you to stay put at the theme park. In a bit, I'll arrange some of my men to set up a perimeter around the theme park to protect you."

"So sorry for the trouble."

“Don’t mention it, it is, after all, due to our negligence that he was able to escape. But remember, do not wander off to anywhere tonight. Once you leave New Century Park, it is going to be very hard for us to ensure your safety.”

“Understood.” After Chen Ge gave an affirmative reply, Lee Zheng stopped sending Chen Ge messages like there was no need for communication after his goal had been achieved.

“It just feels like something is not right.” Chen Ge held the phone in his hand. Without thinking about the feelings of the other passengers, he called Captain Yan directly, wanting to find corroboration to Lee Zheng’s story. It was near midnight, but Captain Yan still accepted Chen Ge’s call—this went to show how much he valued the input of this young man. From Captain Yan, Chen Ge confirmed that Lee Zheng had not been lying; Jia Ming had indeed escaped from the hospital.

After hanging up, Chen Ge still felt something was off. “Is it possible that the shadow has escaped from Jia Ming’s body but now has possessed Lee Zheng?”

If that was true, then things would become a lot more complicated.

“At the hospital, Jia Ming once told the story where he ran into the shadow and Jiang Long at the latter’s bungalow. At the time, Jiang Long was kneeling on the ground, covered in blood, while the shadow stood beside him, holding a knife. This is an interesting scene.

“Considering Jiang Long’s neighbor’s dogs had just been murdered, can I make the extrapolation that it was Jiang Long who killed the dogs? A real estate mogul had no real reason to murder other people’s pet dogs, so obviously, if he had done so, it was forced by the shadow. Yes, the shadow was trying to slowly wear down Jiang Long’s constitution. From this point, one can confirm there should be some limitation before the shadow can assume full control over an individual. The weaker the victim’s constitution, the easier it would be for the shadow to take control of them.

“Lee Zheng is a professional police inspector; it will be very difficult for the shadow to take control of a man like that, but that does not mean it is impossible.”

Lee Zheng’s messages reminded Chen Ge that the shadow had already abandoned its original host so he could not trust anyone that night.

“Xiao Bu once told me, if I dare venture into Li Wan City again, there will be a serious threat to my life. I’ve just entered Eastern Jiujiang, and something already happened to Jia Ming who was supposed to be under police surveillance. Can I be sure that this is just a coincidence?”

Chen Ge was about to put his phone away when the screen lit up again. This time, it was Fan Chong who was calling.

“You sure are one busy man.” The doctor glanced behind him, signaling for Chen Ge to be quieter. Maintaining a high profile at a location like this would bring him no benefit.

“There are only a few people in my contact list. Even I want to know what is up with them tonight.” Chen Ge took out the earphone. After he plugged it in, he answered the call.

“Boss Chen! I’ve cleared the game! I know the truth now! I finally know the truth!”

“Calm down and slow down. I can hear you just fine.” Chen Ge lowered his voice, realizing he was indeed creating too much of a commotion.

“I used the save file that you left behind to try again and again, I ran into eleven new side quests, and the eleven side quests corresponded to eleven crime scenes and eleven human lives. I’m telling you, I used my life to explore every corner of the game, slowly pushing the progress forward, but finally, I’ve completed all the eleven side quests.” Fan Chong sounded incredibly ecstatic on the phone.

“Eleven side quests?” Chen Ge had just come across the number eleven on the messages with Lee Zheng. Facing the police’s interrogation, Jia Ming had told the law enforcement eleven different stories. Most of the scenarios in Xiao Bu’s game were based on real life; in fact, they were probably derived from something that really happened. Chen Ge suspected that the eleven side quests that Fan Chong had cleared were exactly the eleven real murder cases that Jia Ming told the police.

The town in Xiao Bu’s game was based on Li Wan City, so it is only logical for these eleven murder cases to be related to Li Wan City.

After giving it some thought, Chen Ge asked softly, “After completing all the side quests, did you get any kind of hint? Or something akin to a reward?”

“That is why I’m calling you, boss! After clearing all the side quests, the computer screen started to bleed. The grayish style of the game started to change again, and this time, all the buildings turned blood red. Both keyboard and the mouse disconnected, and I lost control of Xiao Bu. She stood inside the game and waved at me. It was real scary. At that moment, I really thought she was about to drag me inside the game with her.”

“Focus on the important details please, what happened next?”

“She started to move on her own and entered one of the red buildings. Right then a new window popped up to reveal a line written in blood—Mommy is probably here.” Fan Chong took a big gulp of water, still reeling from excitement and fear.

“Was there any specific thing about the building that stood out?” Chen Ge quickly followed up with this question.

“It looked quite normal, nothing special about it, but there was a poster for a theme park pasted outside the wall of the building. Boss Chen, this is the most important reason I’m calling!” Fan Chong sucked in a deep breath. “The theme park on the poster should be New Century Park. Hell, I even saw your Haunted House on the poster.”

“You spotted my Haunted House inside the poster?” Chen Ge voiced the question out loud.

“Yes, I have no idea what this represents, but I believe that this means that the game creator probably knows you, and this should be some kind of super hidden Easter egg.” Fan Chong was practically buzzing with emotion.

“Nowadays, the theme park has already stopped relying on posters for advertisements. Furthermore, the appearance of my Haunted House hasn’t changed for decades, so the poster you saw was probably left behind by my parents.” What Chen Ge said only made sense to Chen Ge. He really did not expect to find a clue left behind by his parents inside Xiao Bu’s game.

He thought back to everything that Fan Chong had said. After clearing all the side quests, Xiao Bu entered a specific building, and the only thing she said was that her mother was probably inside this building. Chen Ge had no idea whether Xiao Bu had found her mother or not, but Chen Ge realized that his own parents had probably entered that building before.

Is this a clue left behind by them, or is the poster another trap laid by the shadow?

Since the shadow's power was too unique, it could masquerade as anyone. After a brief pause to figure things out, Chen Ge suddenly posed this question to Fan Chong. "What is the brand of the e-bike that you're currently using?"

"Huh? It's from Ai Niao. What's wrong?" Fan Chong was on a high—he had finally cleared the game after spending days trying to work through the game. He had been desperate to find someone to share the joy with, but he did not expect Chen Ge to suddenly ask a question like that. Without even thinking about it, the answer had already slipped out of his lips.

"Nah, nothing's wrong." Chen Ge sighed in relief. Fan Chong was probably the real one, so he answered the question perfectly. "Anything else happen after Xiao Bu entered that red house?"

"I'm sorry, but I can't tell. That is where the game was stuck. I've reloaded the game several times, but that is the furthest I can go. I believe this should be the ending. Xiao Bu, who was in search of her mother, stepped into the deepest part of her nightmare and found the room where her mother probably once stayed in this city filled with murderers and ghosts. The game decides to end there because it wants to have an open ending. This way, the players can come up with the ending that they prefer on their own." Fan Chong had played this game endlessly for a month. He had already gotten attached to the experience without even realizing it; it was as if he had lived through the experience himself.

"You've already gotten addicted to this game, haven't you? Just focus on your computer tonight. If something else happens, call me instantly." Chen Ge had a feeling that more things were connected than he previously realized, and as the dots lined up, he was forced to continue moving forward. "Be careful. Something big might happen in Li Wan City tonight. No matter what happen, do not leave your home tonight."

Chen Ge turned to look at the strange and weird passengers on the bus; all of these 'people' were heading toward Li Wan City. That was their final destination.

"Don't worry, I'll stay to watch over Xiao Bu tonight, and if there're any changes, I'll call you at first notice to bring you the latest update." Fan Chong just finished saying that when there was door knocking coming from the speaker. "Boss Chen, is there someone knocking on the door on your side?"

"That's impossible. I'm outside, and there's no door around me. The knocking came from your side." Chen Ge narrowed his eyes. "Don't go to open the door, and don't disconnect the call."

"The knocking is from my side? But how come it sounds like it came through the phone?" The excitement slipped away from Fan Chong's voice—in its place was uncertainty and confusion. The knocking in the phone became clearer. Chen Ge held his breath to hear better. Fan Chong was also holding his breath, but in his case, it was because he was scared.

“Please don’t harm me, I’ve not done anything bad in my life.” There was the sound of a chair being moved; it sounded like Fan Chong had moved to hide inside his bed. However, that did nothing to stop the constant door knocking.

Chen Ge heard clearly from his side. The knocking should have started at the living room door before slowly moving to the bedroom door, like something had entered Fan Chong’s room, and the thing was slowly moving toward him.

“Don’t panic. Turn on your camera and face the camera toward the door—I’ll help you take a look.” Chen Ge was worried for Fan Chong as well. However, he was not physically in Li Wan City, so even if he wanted to help Fan Chong, he could not.

“O... okay,” Fan Chong stuttered. He worked his phone as the sound of knocking grew. Before he managed to fix the camera, Fan Chong’s scream suddenly echoed through the phone. “Big Brother! Save me! Inside the room! He’s inside the room!”

The scream was followed by a loud struggle. The cupboards and chair sounded like they were toppled over. The knocking on the door became intense until ten seconds later when the knocking disappeared as suddenly as it appeared, and it became eerily quiet on the other side of the phone.

“Fan Chong?” Chen Ge called softly into the phone, but there was no answer from the other side.

Several seconds later, there was the sound of slippers brushing against the floor as someone jogged over. Then it was followed by Fan Dade’s surprised yell. “Xiao Chong? Fan Chong!”

Through Fan Dade’s yelling, Chen Ge could confirm that something had befallen Fan Chong. He shouted into the phone, trying to get Fan Dade’s attention.

“Hello? Boss Chen? Were you on the phone with Xiao Chong earlier?”

“Is Fan Chong injured? Can he still speak? Can you pass him the phone?” Chen Ge was worried about that overweight shut-in.

“But he’s not at home! The living room door and bedroom door are both open. It feels like he has just run out of the house!” Fan Dade’s words were like a bomb, shaking Chen Ge’s heart.

“Not inside the room?” Chen Ge was instantly reminded of the shadow. “Why would he go after Fan Chong? And how did he even manage to locate Fan Chong?”

“Was it you who asked him to go out?” After hearing Chen Ge’s voice on the other end of the phone, Fan Dade felt much calmer. He placed immense trust in this Haunted House operator who was much younger than he was. With his help, many problems could be resolved easily.

“Someone broke into your home earlier; it was probably a murderer on the loose called Jia Ming. I suggest you call the police immediately and tell them everything you know. Other than that, inspect all the locations that you can use to hide inside your house. Make sure to keep yourself safe before the police arrive,” Chen Ge said in a serious tone.

“A murderer? Why would he come to our home? There is no way Xiao Chong would have provoked someone like that!” Fan Dade’s voice rose several pitches out of panic.

“I’ll be there in a minute. Focus on what you need to do now. Call the police and take care of yourself.”

“Okay, I will call the police now.” After Fan Dade hung up, Chen Ge looked at the phone screen, and his fists slowly tightened. His adversary practically kidnapped Fan Chong while he was on the phone with the man. The enemy this time definitely placed some huge pressure on Chen Ge.

“The approaching sound of knocking signifies that the shadow is on the move, but does this mean he is doing this alone or with the help of some other ghosts?” Chen Ge put the phone away. He gripped his hands together with his head lowered to rewind the events in his head. Suddenly, his eyes grew as big as saucer. “Something is weird. Before everything went quiet, the last thing Fan Chong yelled out sounds quite weird now that I think about it. It sounded like someone was clamping their hands over his mouth, and he yelled out those words while he was struggling.”

Chen Ge took out some paper and pen from his backpack and wrote down everything Fan Chong yelled.

“Big Brother! Save me! Inside the room! He’s inside the room!”

Four terms that sounded like they had nothing to do with each other. At first glance, it probably signified Fan Chong was screaming to get help from his big brother, who lived in the same house as him, but thinking of it from another perspective, if the ‘save me’ was not directed at his big brother but at Chen Ge, then the whole meaning of the sentence changed.

“Is it possible that Fan Chong opened the door to Fan Dade’s room, but he realized how strange his brother was acting compared to usual, like perhaps he was holding a knife in his hand. In that situation, he gasped out for his brother and then turned to the phone to plead for help from me. The ‘he’s in the room’ will come to mean the strange big brother has entered the room to detain him.”

The same sentence had a completely different meaning based on whom Fan Chong was addressing.

“Could the shadow have possessed Fan Dade after escaping from the hospital? Then how does that explain what has happened to Lee Zheng and Jia Ming?” Chen Ge felt the hair on his back standing on end—he was getting increasingly unsettled. “Hopefully, I’m simply overthinking this.”

If Fan Dade had fallen victim to the shadow, then Fan Chong’s home would be a death trap. The shadow would be waiting for Chen Ge to arrive to claim his life.

“Shall I go save him?” Chen Ge’s eyes scanned the other passengers in the car. His eyes narrowed as a plan started to form in his mind.

Chapter 623: Words of a Child

The residential area that Fan Chong stayed at could be very dangerous. If Chen Ge went there, he might fall into the trap set up by the shadow, so he turned his focus onto the other passengers. Sending others to fight his enemy, Chen Ge had done something similar when he was playing Xiao Bu’s game.

These people aren’t idiots, and it is not going to be easy to influence their perception and get them to willingly scout on ahead for me. I’ll need to plan this carefully.

From how Chen Ge saw it, whether it was the smiling man or the red high heels, they could become an asset to him. He did not care about whether they wanted to harm him or not; he only cared about their power level. If they were too weak, Chen Ge feared they might not even be able to fulfill the simple task of scouting ahead. Chen Ge did not share his thoughts with others. If the doctor knew what he was thinking, he would definitely believe that Chen Ge had lost his mind.

Things are getting more and more interesting.

So many accidents had happened before he even arrived at Li Wan City. Things had gone out of Chen Ge's control, and no one knew what would happen the next second.

I can't possibly go back to New Century Park now. Lee Zheng is packing a gun, and if he is really under the influence of the shadow, then I'll be in serious danger if I return to the park.

If the shadow could take control of Lee Zheng, then he could very well possess any other police officer. Hell, even the kind and gentle senior guard at the park could be used against Chen Ge. This was the hardest opponent that Chen Ge had ever faced thus far. Ever since the game started, he could no longer trust anyone around him.

To take down the shadow, the best solution was to rely on his own two hands. Instead of waiting to fall into its trap, Chen Ge should cut his way into the shadow's lair, find its original body, and kill it.

Dealing with such a high intelligence and extremely cunning enemy, Chen Ge had already come up with a complete plan. Focus on his advantage and avoid the disadvantages—under the premise that his own safety was guaranteed, try to mow down the enemy as soon as possible. No matter how deep the shadow's plot spun, if Chen Ge did not give the shadow the time to plan, his great IQ would be wasted.

I have no idea where the shadow is hiding currently. He might be laying in ambush at New Century Park, or hiding behind the door of Fan Chong's home, or even be on this bus. I have to maintain a high alert. He will only show his real self when he is one hundred percent confident that he'll be able to kill me.

Chen Ge had an accurate assessment of the situation; Eastern Jiujiang was the shadow's territory, and Li Wan City was the shadow's lair that it had managed for years already. It was never a fair battle between him and the shadow since the beginning.

"The bus is entering the next stop, please remain seated!"

Just as Chen Ge was sorting through his thoughts, the bus reached the next stop. The bus door opened, and the howling wind carried the heavy rain into the bus. The bus windows creaked noisily, ravaged by the rain, and it sounded like they would break at any moment.

"Daddy, I'm scared..." A juvenile voice came from outside the bus.

"It'll be fine, we'll reach our destination soon, and daddy and mummy will be going with you." A middle-aged man with blanched face hauled a young boy about five into the bus. Following behind the father and son was a woman whose hair needed more than a little combing.

Different types of strange passengers could be found on the eerie public bus. The boy stood helplessly in the aisle, unsure where to place his hands. From the expression on his face, it appeared like he was going to cry soon.

"It'll be fine. We'll reach our destination soon." The man sounded like a broken record. He placed his hand on the boy's head, forcing him to turn away from meeting the eyes of the other passengers. The wife who trailed behind did not utter a word. Just like that, this strange family of three ascended the bus, and they took the fourth row in the middle of the bus.

A family outing to Li Wan City? Chen Ge studied the family of three for a while. To his knowledge, Li Wan City was the location where many children would go missing. To help the ghost fetus, the shadow had been on the lookout for children, and with that danger in mind, the family dared to bring their boy to Li Wan City. Strange did not even start to describe the situation.

More and more passengers are getting on the bus; it is possible for the shadow to be masquerading as one of them.

The addition of a child on the bus meant that the quiet from before was shattered.

"Daddy, let's go home." The little boy kept pleading, and tears could be heard in his voice. "That uncle over there has been staring at me, and he looks very scary."

The boy used his finger to point at the smiling man. When his father saw that, he quickly grabbed and put the child's finger away and scolded him sternly. "Don't use your finger to point at other people. That is very rude."

"But he kept staring at me." The boy wanted to say more to his father, but the man applied greater force on his grab until the boy's arm was red from the pressure. Sensing the acute pain that came from his arm, the boy finally lost control of his emotions and beadlike tears slid out from his eyes.

"Stop making a scene. If you continue to act like this, I'll send you off the bus, and your mother and I will do this alone." The father's threat was effective. The boy forced the tears back, kept his head lowered as he sat at the corner of the seat.

"That's my boy. You are the man of the family; how can you weep at the smallest thing?" The middle-aged man let go of his grasp. A deep red welt could be seen on the spot where the father had grabbed the boy. "Haven't you been wishing to see your big sister? When we reach our destination, we'll be able to meet with your big sister."

"Big sister? Really?" The boy raised his eyes to reveal a pair of blinking eyes; they were like the most beautiful pearls in the world, clear and shiny. It was as if the boy's eyes had captured the glistening stars in the sky.

"Of course, when have I ever lied to you?" The middle-aged man forced a smile, and he tussled the boy's hair.

"But..." The boy continued hesitantly, and his eyes spoke of the same innocence. "Big sister told me that she was killed by Mommy, and Mommy came to tell me that big sister went missing. And now Daddy is telling me we're going to find big sister. I have no idea who to believe any..." Before the boy could finish, he was roughly cut off because his father yanked his hair harshly, practically lifting his boy off the seat by his head.

"Ouch! Sorry, Father, I will not speak of this anymore! Forgive me, Father!"

“Shut the f*ck up!” Still gripping the boy’s hair, the middle-aged man shoved him back against the seat. The man’s face was as dark as the far side of the moon.

Children rarely filtered their words before they spoke, so sometimes, they would say something incredibly inappropriate.

The doctor and Chen Ge, who sat at the back of the bus, overheard what the boy said, but neither of them decided to do anything about it. Silence returned, but it was occasionally punctured by the silent sniffing of the boy.

The rain continued to pour, and the bus moved away from the stop. By now, they were extremely close to Li Wan City. In fact, there were only three or four stops left between them.

“This should be the last of the passengers, right?” Chen Ge stood up, deciding to put his plan into action. Activating the recorder, Chen Ge walked to the front of the bus, and with the smiling man and the doctor watching him, he bent over to pick up the pair of red high heels.

Chapter 624: The Difficulty of a 3.5-Star Scenario

“Where did this pair of high heels come from?” Chen Ge picked up the shoes like this was the first time that he had noticed it. Hearing that, the driver, Tang Jun, glanced at the rear-view mirror. His cold sweat kept falling—his new boss was indeed different from a normal person.

A person with no mental defects would not actively approach a ghost under any circumstances, but his boss was completely different. He willingly headed toward the mountain even though he knew that was the tiger’s prowling ground. Hell, he would gladly enter the tiger’s cave if he could get something out of it—this was the type of person who had no concern for consequences.

He thought about persuading his boss, but he did not know where to start, so he kept his mouth shut and focused on driving. No one in the car would dare answer Chen Ge’s question—they all stared at him like he was dumb.

“What is the man up to now?” The doctor wrapped his face tighter with his scarf, showing only his two eyes. Considering the fact that he might not be able to save himself, he naturally would not step forward to help Chen Ge.

For the family of three, the wife and son kept their heads lowered, and neither of them spoke. However, the husband smiled wickedly like he was glad that something bad was about to happen to Chen Ge.

The drunkard had been the first passenger to get onto the bus. Then, he had collapsed at his seat and fainted, and ever since, he had remained unconscious.

The smiling face placed his eyes on Chen Ge, and coincidentally, Chen Ge was also staring back at him.

“You are closest to this seat. Do you have any idea who left this pair of heels behind?” Holding the pair of red high heels in his hand, there was a strange feeling that came from his palm—it felt like he was touching bloodied human skin. Chen Ge held the shoes with one hand and slowly walked toward the smiling man.

“Has this man lost his mind? Riling one up is not enough, so he’s going for two at the same time? Does he not believe there are actual ghosts in this world? Does he think I was lying to him last time we were on this bus?” The doctor was worried for Chen Ge. He was certain that he had told Chen Ge earlier that the smiling man had killed a whole vehicle of people, but Chen Ge still proactively went to provoke the man. This action baffled the doctor.

Holding the pair of heels, Chen Ge stopped next to the smiling face. He waved the shoes before the man’s eyes.

“You look so pressed.” Chen Ge very naturally placed the heels right next to the smiling man’s leg. “The owner of this pair of heels must be very beautiful, because her good taste is exemplified by how gorgeous the heels are, what do you think?”

The smiling man slowly raised his head. With the smile still on his face, he forced out the words from his lips. “Take them away.”

One could read into a person’s personality to a certain degree based on their voice. There was not a trace of laughter in the smiling man’s voice, and he would pause longer than necessary between every word like it had been so long since he last spoke.

“Do you hate this pair of shoes that much? Why? This is such a pretty pair of red high heels.” Chen Ge’s legs were tense. He was ready to retreat should the situation ask for it.

For other people, it might look like Chen Ge was playing with fire, or to be more precise, playing with death. They had no idea where Chen Ge got the courage to do something like this and could not figure out why Chen Ge was doing all that. The bus had almost reached Li Wan City already, and there was not much time left for Chen Ge. If he could make use of the passengers on the bus, they could become a great asset; however, if he failed to wrangle them to his cause, he would enter the battlefield already suffering from an injury. He did not want to have to be cautious about these passengers when he was dealing with the shadow, so he decided to try out their reaction first.

To use the red high heels to test out the smiling man, this was something that Chen Ge decided on the spot. The red high heels first showed up on the middle of an empty bus stop. Chen Ge had no idea how they got on the bus—he only noticed only that they showed up and that they took the seat at the first row.

Initially, Chen Ge did not think much of this, but the strange action by the smiling man caught his attention. The doctor told him that the smiling man had once massacre a whole bus of people, so he should be a very dangerous character, but after he got on the bus, he actively avoided the pair of red high heels and took the seat at the second row without much hesitation.

The smiling man gave the pair of heels a wide berth, what was he cautious of?

Chen Ge would never underestimate his enemy, thinking that the more physically powerful they were, the dumber they would be. In reality, the more powerful the spirits, the sharper they were. They knew how to hide and cover themselves. They waited until their prey put their guard down and then snapped their neck with one swift move.

The smiling man ignored the pair of red high heels to avoid conflict, but he did not anticipate Chen Ge, a character who would do the things that one least expected.

Chen Ge did not have that much concern for his personal safety because he followed a higher philosophy, and that was to make what the enemy did not want to materialize in real life a reality.

Looking at the red high heels beside his leg, the smiling man's face was dark, but even under such circumstances, he kept the edges of his lips curled up. Perhaps the monster had gone through some trauma when he was young, or maybe he suffered from some kind of illness where this was the only facial expression that he could make.

The smile did not change, but the white in the smiling man's eyes started to take on a gray hue, and twisting dark lines started to leak out from his pupils. It honestly looked quite disgusting. The change to his body was beyond that. The neck that was already longer than normal started to grow, and the folds on his neck were torn open to reveal a deeply-gray skin. This monster was different from the Red Specters that Chen Ge had met in the past. He did not possess any quality that made him a ghost; in fact, Chen Ge was sure that this was a quintessential living human being. However, the presence that radiated from the smiling man was way beyond that of a normal individual. And yet, Chen Ge could not find any sign of a ghost on the man.

"Take them away!" The chilling echo of a voice forced out from the man's mouth. The man's mushroom head swayed lightly, and the smile on his face grew bigger. The monster's teeth appeared sanded smooth. They were different from normal human teeth. As a matter of fact, they looked more like the jaws of an animal.

The sound of static appeared in Chen Ge's ears. Only when Chen Ge was in mortal danger would Xu Yin come up with such reminder. The last time this happen, it was when Chen Ge was facing the shadow at the fresh water plant.

This man is that scary? Xu Yin was only one step away from becoming a complete Red Specter, and he was the kind who would only fight stronger when he was injured. He never showed any sign of fear, but when facing the smiling man, he was quick to give Chen Ge the warning.

This man is far more dangerous than I imagined.

Xu Yin was solidly the second-best fighter that Chen Ge had. If he gave the warning, then things were definitely quite dangerous.

Such a monster already appeared on the bus before I arrived at Li Wan City. It is really hard to imagine what kind of monsters Li Wan City has collected over the years.

In the end, Chen Ge did not take the heels away; he left them next to the smiling man and strode toward the driver. This was his vehicle, so he made the rules. He was going to have Tang Jun drive the bus to the residential area where Fan Chong stayed. No matter what kind of trap was waiting for him, he could charge through it with smiling man and the red high heels in tow.

*Am I acting a bit too rashly? Oh, f*ck it, there's no time to slowly ponder about this anymore!*

Chapter 625: The Last Passenger

Chen Ge whispered to Tang Jun to have him change the final stop. When they reached Li Wan City, the bus would head toward the residential area where Fan Chong stayed. After they reached an agreement, Chen Ge walked back to his seat at the back of the bus. When he passed the smiling man, a visceral chill rose from his heart.

Turning to look, the smiling face was staring at Chen Ge with his gray pupils.

“Looks like he has plenty to tell me. Why wouldn’t he just move the pair of heels away if he dislikes them that much? How come it feels like he doesn’t even want to touch the shoes? Could there be some curse related to the shoes?”

As Chen Ge mumbled to himself, he was struck awed by the words that left his lips. From the smiling man’s reaction, perhaps there was indeed a curse that was placed on the shoes.

“Oh well, in any case, I’ve already touched them. Worse comes to worst, I’ll just swing the heels at the shadow when I run into him.” Chen Ge did not mind too much about curses. After all, he had already received a cursed love letter way back when he first obtained the black phone. A curse was not scary—the scary thing was the ghost that was behind the curse.

Returning to his seat, Chen Ge stopped provoking the smiling man. He reached his hand into the backpack while he turned to look out the window. From who knew when, it was a slate of darkness outside the window. Soon, the bus would reach the last stop before they arrived at Li Wan City.

The door opened, and there was sound of chain rattling cutting through the rain. A pair of hands that were soaked white in the rain reached into the car to grab the rails. Rain slithered down the man’s fingers, and a weird, sharp chuckle interspersed the rattling of a chain. When all the passengers’ faces were turned to the front door, a face teetered into the aisle.

The man’s face was exquisite, and one could see how handsome he had once been if one looked past the large gash that ran from the corner of his left eye to the edge of his lips. From afar, it looked like the man had two mouths on his face, one running horizontally and the other vertically.

The gash appeared to be a recent injury. The wound had not completely healed, and with the aggravation from the rainwater, the injury had signs of festering and secreting puss. The thin lips slowly opened. He used his tongue to lick at the edge of the wound just above his lips. He grimaced from the pain, but weirdly enough, he tried to make it appear like he was enjoying the sensation of pain.

“What kind of mad man is it this time?” Chen Ge came to this conclusion after giving the latest passenger a glance.

The man seemed to enjoy the spotlight that was placed on him. He used his fine fingers to comb his hair that was messed up by the rain. The fingers were white before they touched the hair, but after fixing the hair, the fingertips were dyed red. There appeared to be an open wound on the man’s scalp, or there was some dried blood that had clotted up in his hair.

“What is so funny?” This new passenger was even crazier than Chen Ge expected. The first thing he did after getting on the bus was provoke the smiling man. He did not seem to notice the danger, and his

bulging eyes stared at the man whose smile hung persistently even though it was clear that he was not in a jovial mood.

“What is the source of this man’s confidence?” With his attention to detail, Chen Ge noticed part of the wounds on the man’s face had already festered, and the rest had started to scab. Therefore, based on this observation, he believed that this man was alive, but why would a living person purposely go and provoke the smiling man? Was it due to courage from ignorance, or was he hiding some kind of unique trump card?

The man was already raging from Chen Ge’s provocation, and now, he was treated with yet another man looking for death. The black lines in his pupils squirmed like worms, and the gash on his lips that counted as a smile opened wider.

Everyone knew something bad was going to happen... except for the new passenger. In fact, he upped the ante by pointing at the wound on his face. “Are you trying to copy me?”

After he got into the bus, the passengers realized that the new passenger was covered in blood, and he had a pair of scissors, about thirty centimeters long, in his left arm while he dragged an old bag that was still leaking blood on his right arm.

“A murderer?” Chen Ge studied the man, and the more he did, the more confused he became. The passenger was wearing a white T-shirt. If he had just committed a murder out of passion, his mistake was understandable, but he looked too calm to have done something like that. So obviously, this was a premeditated murder. But why would someone who could maintain his rationality even after a killing choose to wear a white-colored shirt on which blood would appear most conspicuous?

Would it not make more sense to wear darker colored clothes for better camouflage?

“Is this the man’s hobby? This man is a crazed serial killer?” This should be the logical explanation. The man was too distracted from the high of the murder, so that would explain the illogical things that he had done.

“But something still doesn’t feel right.” Chen Ge’s eyes moved to the man’s arm. A pair of scissors was a strange weapon of choice for a murderer. Would an axe or a kitchen knife not have worked better for his purpose?

Then, he turned to focus on the bag the man was dragging. The rain had soaked the bag, and blood kept leaking out from within. If the bag was hiding human body parts, blood would not have leaked from the top but pooled at the bottom. Furthermore, human blood from body parts would eventually coagulate and would not keep on pouring out like a foundation. So, for Chen Ge, it felt like the bag was not filled with body parts but instead shoved full with leaking blood bags.

Mostly likely, Chen Ge had spent so much time with crazed murderers that he was able to pick out many details in the shortest amount of time.

“I’ll ask you again, are you trying to copy me?” The provocation in the new passenger’s voice made what Chen Ge did earlier pale in comparison. Even he had not been so direct when he was trying to stir the pot—he had merely placed another ghost next to the smiling man. Be it physically or verbally, he did not pose any affront toward the smiling man.

The smiling man's patience was dwindling. The black lines crawled out from his pupils and slithered down his cheeks.

"Are you mute? I'm asking you a question!" The new passenger continued to press; he did not show any trace of fear at all. He leaked the edge of the scissors and voluntarily walked toward the smiling man. "Let me guess what drives you for taking this bus at midnight..."

When he lowered his head to pretend to think, he spotted the red high heels next to the smiling man. Then it seemed to dawn on him. He reached out to grab the pair of heels. "Are you going to look for your wife?"

When the new passenger said that, the smile on the smiling man's froze, and that made his expression incredibly strange. He stopped being angry at the new passenger. He glanced at the red high heels and wore a stranger smile as he returned to his seat.

"Looks like I was right." The new passenger's words were rife with madness. He dangled the heels by the edge of his scissors as he replaced them. "I'll leave you be on account of the loyalty of your love."

It felt like he was finding an excuse for himself to run away from the smiling man. After that, he dragged the bag and headed down the aisle, but he only took one step when a strange thing happened.

After he took the first step, there was the sound of high heels clicking against the ground; it felt like someone was tailing him. Turning back to look, the red high heels were still sitting where they were.

The stubborn new passenger took two other steps, and whenever he moved, the sound of high heels followed.

"The heels are sitting on the seat, so where did the sound come from? What is following me?"

Probably due to his nervousness, the new passenger voiced out his thought, and he sounded slightly different from the courageous man who had threatened the smiling man earlier.

Chen Ge, having observed from the back, saw everything. The smiling man probably did plan to end the man's life, but the man turned to provoke the red high heels, and the high heels decided to deal with the man before the smiling man could make his move.

"This man is ultimately too inexperienced. I praised the beauty of the shoes and made sure to applaud the owner's taste before proceeding to deal with the smiling man." Chen Ge sighed. But then, something unexpected happened. After the new passenger failed to deal with the sound of the high heels, he made a beeline toward Chen Ge and the doctor, who were seated at the back of the bus.

Chapter 626: Next Stop, Li Wan City

Why is he walking toward us? Chen Ge was confused by the man's action. Wait, does he plan to offend every single passenger on this bus at least once? I'm not sure that is a good idea, buddy.

Naturally, the passenger did not hear Chen Ge's thoughts. Whenever his shoes landed against the ground, there would be two footsteps, one directly behind the other. It was creepy to say the least.

Chen Ge started to fidget as the man walked toward the end of the bus. After all, this man was carrying the curse of the red high heels with him. He nudged into the seat. It was not that he was afraid, but he simply refused to be dragged into a problem that he did not create. The passenger noticed Chen Ge's silent move. His eyes alternated between Chen Ge and the doctor, and eventually, that slightly deranged smile fell on Chen Ge.

"You are afraid." The tone was firm, the eyes unfeeling, and the lips of the new passenger curved upward like he had taken control of everything, like nothing in this vehicle could escape his eyes.

"I am, slightly," Chen Ge admitted without shame.

"The more afraid you are, the worse thing will happen to you." The new passenger seemed to have decided his seat. He held the scissors and bag with one hand while his free hand went to grasp Chen Ge's backpack and travel bag.

He did not attack Chen Ge but targeted his carry-ons. That was the first time that Chen Ge had come across someone like that. He frowned involuntarily, wondering if the passenger had seen through the group of ghosts hiding in his backpack.

However, two seconds later, Chen Ge tossed that suspicion out of his mind. With a weird smile, the new passenger held the straps of the backpack tight and tried to lift it up. Out of almost every other passenger's expectation, the backpack did not even budge. The passenger who looked so savage was unable to lift up Chen Ge's backpack with one hand.

"He he." After a brief chuckle, the new passenger gave it another try. The rope muscles on his arms tightened, and it felt like he had used the maximum limit of his strength before he could manage to lift Chen Ge's backpack up and toss it on the ground.

BANG!

The backpack was heavily loaded. It created a dull thud when it landed on the ground.

"What is inside the bag?" The new passenger raised his chin and pointed the sharp ends of the scissors at Chen Ge's eyes.

"I'm a prop maker affiliated with a theme park. The backpack is filled with my everyday tools, the tools of my trade so to speak." Chen Ge raised both of his hands in an attempt to appease him. He had seen the police officers doing something similar at crime scene to avoid unnecessary conflict. The smoothness of the action and sincerity of the tone meant that this was not the first time that Chen Ge had done something like this.

Chen Ge's 'cowardice' satisfied the new passenger greatly. He scanned the whole bus, and this young man before him appeared the most easily-bullied. He extended his tongue and tried hard to lick at his wound before finally taking the seat next to Chen Ge.

Slowly putting his hands down, Chen Ge turned his head to look beside him. After hearing what the new passenger had to say, even he had thought that the man was about to attack him, or at the very least, open his backpack to take a look inside. However, as it turned out, the man's bark was greater than his bite. He did not even find an excuse for himself and sat down directly.

“Er... Are you heading toward Li Wan City as well?” Chen Ge was amused by this new passenger. The first thing he did after getting on the bus was provoke the other passengers. His actions and expression were over the top like he was worried others would not tell he was a crazed murderer.

“Who would take this last bus that is prepared for the dead at midnight if they’re not heading toward Li Wan City?” The new passenger studied Chen Ge at close distance. It was his impression that of all the passengers on the bus, Chen Ge looked the most normal and was most likely a good person.

“A bus that is prepared for the dead...” One would think that Chen Ge had taken acting lesson before because he assumed the role of a frightened individual at the snap of his finger. He took in a cold breath like he was trying to suppress his fear, but his action belied his ‘real’ emotion. The fear radiated out from within. Even though his facial expression did not change much, he made sure the edge of his eyes shuddered and his pupils darted anxiously around.

The new passenger was increasingly satisfied with Chen Ge’s reaction. He loved those who were ‘weaker’ than he was. “What is your name?”

“My name is Chen Ge. I’m a theme park worker. What about you?” Chen Ge curled deeper into his seat like he was afraid that his question might offend the man, so he quickly added, “But it’s fine if you don’t want to tell, I’m just asking for fun.”

“You can call me Scissors. I’m going to Li Wan City to look for a person, a dead person.” Chen Ge did not ask for the details, but the new passenger simply unloaded his story on Chen Ge.

“I’m also going there to find a person. One of my friends has gone missing, and the last clue that he left me was this bus. I initially refused to believe it until I saw the bus appear with my own eyes. You have no idea how long I hesitated before I could summon the courage to get on the bus...” Chen Ge’s description was incredibly detailed, and it sounded suspiciously familiar to the doctor who sat in front. He realized Chen Ge had edited the high-schooler’s story and placed it on his own.

“Looks like I’m not the only one with such an experience.” The smile on Scissors’ face slowly rescinded. A look of contemplation cast over him, and when he was not consciously putting on a show, the expression on his face returned to normal. This was how he looked in his everyday life.

“We’re all the same.” Chen Ge bent down, pretending to tie his shoelaces. His fingers silently brushed against the blood stain that had landed on his shoes when the passenger was waving his scissors around. Chen Ge rubbed his fingers together and surreptitiously moved his fingers to his nostril. His senses were heightened, much better than a normal person, but even at such a close distance, he could not detect a scent of blood from the ‘blood stain’.

This is not blood. Chen Ge’s suspicion was confirmed. Normally, if one was carrying a bag of ‘body parts’, unless they were specially treated with coal or plastic wrap, there would definitely be a smell.

This man should be no different from the doctor, a normal person who is heading toward to Li Wan City to find their ‘final hope’.

Chen Ge could place himself in the passenger’s shoes. He knew that it was dangerous on the bus and knew that the destination was filled with murderers and ghosts, so he decided to put on this disguise to hide among the maddened and insane.

As detailed as the wolf disguise, a lamb will always be a lamb. Chen Ge looked at the man's fine fingers and he shook his head slightly. He grumbled internally, *With the way he's holding the scissors, the first person he'll hurt in a confrontation is himself. In a heated struggle, there is no way he will still have enough calmness to remember to cut his enemy. The better way is actually to hold the scissors by the point where the blades were attached and use the sharp edge as some kind of pick.*

This man who called himself Scissors had exposed way too many weaknesses. A normal person might be scared by his scary appearance and maddened speech but not Chen Ge. He was a Haunted House operator, and from a professional perspective, Scissors' work had left much to be desired.

Scissors did not pose much of a threat, so Chen Ge turned his focus back to the other passengers. They were reaching Li Wan City soon; he could not allow these passengers to wander too freely. Before a plan was formed, another contingency was introduced—the phone in Chen Ge's pocket suddenly vibrated. Chen Ge put on the earphone and answered it. It was Fan Dade's voice that came through.

"Boss Chen! I notice a problem! Since the living room door was open, I headed out to take a look. There were only footprints that headed up in the staircase and none that went down. That thing is still probably inside the house! Should I leave this place while I still can?"

"There are only footprints that head up?"

"Yes, something just doesn't feel right tonight. Everything appears out of place! Boss Chen, where are you now? I don't think I can hold out any longer!"

"Hang in there a little while longer, I'll be there soon!"

Chapter 627: City Called Nightmare

"Boss Chen, I don't think I'll be able to stay in this house any longer. I'll wait for you downstairs," Fan Dade stammered. The footprints in the staircase made him panicked, and the man's flight of footsteps could be heard through the phone.

"Don't panic, he might be hiding under the staircase. Tell me the size and shape of the footprint..." Before Chen Ge could finish, the call was cut off. "When one is caught in panic, they will do things that are illogical, but I can't tell for sure if Fan Dade was someone who would react in this way."

Putting phone away, Chen Ge picked up the backpack from the ground, with his eyes zeroed in on the road ahead. "The next stop is Li Wan City. I'm here, but where are you?"

Darkness and rain blotted out everything. No one could tell that countless monsters who lived in the shadows were all heading toward a small city at the fringe of the metropolis. Li Wan City was right ahead!

The driver, Tang Jun, slammed on the gas pedal. The old bus rushed through the rain, continuing its acceleration. The rain pelted the windows, and the bus was shaking so badly that it felt like the whole vehicle might collapse on the spot. However, none of the passengers on the bus seemed to mind.

When the blurry shapes appeared, everyone held their breath. Lighting flashed across the sky, and that brief moment of brightness lit up the many shadows that were shuffling through the darkness, and in return, the shadows also spotted the bus on Route 104, which was trundling through the rain.

“We’re almost there.” The doctor was the first to stand up from his seat. He could perceive the changes in the atmosphere of the hearse and how it differed from normal. He refused to spend yet another second on the bus.

“Hey, the three of us should leave together,” the doctor whispered to Chen Ge and the man who referred to himself as Scissors. “There is a passenger in front who is very dangerous. Once the three of us are off, we will split up and run in different directions. Whoever he ends up chasing, that will be the luck of the draw.”

These passengers who had managed to survive after taking a ride on the hearse could not be underestimated, so the doctor did not hide his plan and shared it with others openly.

Neither Chen Ge nor Scissors spoke. Scissors was suspicious that this was a plot by the doctor—the doctor was trying to get him isolated so that he would become an easier target. However, Chen Ge had his own plan. He planned to drive the bus directly to Fan Chong’s residential area and grab the red high heels and smiling man to force their way through the trap laid down by the shadow, rescuing Fan Chong who possessed crucial information.

It was easy to get onto Chen Ge’s bus, but it was very difficult to leave. From a different perspective, one could say that this bus had gotten a lot more dangerous compared to when it was in the service of the shadow.

Walking to the exit, the doctor grabbed the rail. He had heard stories about the smiling man before, and his plan was to find a safe refuge to hide after getting off the bus. The bus had already driven into Li Wan City, and they neared the small town’s bus stop. The doctor’s heart pounded, and his muscles in his arms and legs were tense. He was prepared to jump out once the door opened.

That was the plan, but reality had other plans in mind. The bus did not stop when it passed the final stop; it did not even decelerate and rushed past.

“It’s not stopping?” A bad omen rose in the doctor’s heart—he knew something bad was about to happen that night. The bus did not stop at the station that it usually stopped at.

Other than Chen Ge, all the passengers turned to look at the driver. Tang Jun was under great pressure, and his body was shaking. He also had no idea what was waiting for them ahead—he was merely following the direction given by his boss.

“Hey, why aren’t you stopping? Hey!” From the family of three, the middle-aged man stood up from his seat, and his expression was drawn. The boy who sat next to him also poked his head up to surreptitiously look around. He did not quite understand the world of the adults; everything was always too complicated for him to grasp.

“Stop the bus! Stop the f*cking bus now!” The middle-aged man stomped toward the driver’s seat. Seeing this, Chen Ge grabbed his backpack and walked over. He kept his head lowered, and everyone

thought that he was also going toward the driver with a complaint. Seeing Chen Ge step forward, the doctor decided to follow behind the man—he wanted to find out what was happening.

“Can you hear me?” No matter what the middle-aged man was yelling, the driver’s lips were shut, and if his face was any whiter, it would have appeared like he was wearing powder on his face. “I’m f*cking telling you again! Turn the bus around! Don’t drive ahead any further!”

Tang Jun ignored the middle-aged man and focused fully on driving.

“Don’t drag us with you even if you want to die! We cannot drive ahead anymore!” This probably was not the middle-aged man’s first visit to Li Wan City. He knew more than he showed. He raised his leg and tried to kick Tang Jun’s feet again to step on the brake.

“Friend, what you’re doing is illegal.” A powerful man reached out to grab the middle-aged man. Chen Ge dragged him back and placed him next to the smiling man.

“Let me go! You have no idea what awaits us! Quickly, let me go!” The middle-aged man screamed as he struggled. “Stop the bus! Do not go further ahead! That is not a place where we are supposed to go!”

“Looks like you know some things, why don’t you come and share them with us?”

“Fog, blood red fog, we won’t be able to leave once we enter it! Quickly stop him!” The man’s face was twisted in fear. He hollered as he charged toward the driver’s seat, but he was once again held back by Chen Ge.

“What kind of fog? You have to explain clearer than that.” Chen Ge was hell bent on getting the answer out of the middle-aged man when he noticed that the bus had slowed down. The doctor tapped him lightly on his shoulder, and he raised his head to look in the direction that the doctor was pointing at.

A strange scene greeted him. Half of the city was shrouded by heavy rain, and all lights were swallowed up by darkness and despair. While the other half was completely dry. Instead of rain, a thick blood fog roamed the streets, pulsing with various types of negative emotions.

This is... a world behind the door?

Chen Ge had plenty of experience when it came to visiting the world behind the door, but this was the first time that he had seen the world behind the door in the real world and a blood fog of this scale.

This is unbelievable. It replicates the world behind the door perfectly!

The shock in Chen Ge’s heart could not be put into words. Li Wan City was practically torn in two, one half covered by heavy rain, and the other swallowed by blood fog. It was amazing how clear the distinction was between the two worlds.

Is this the effect of the door going out of control? The city will be consumed, and nightmares become a part of reality?

On that rainy night after midnight, Li Wan City revealed its real appearance. During Chen Ge’s previous three-star missions, the world behind the door had often been a building shrouded in blood fog, but before Chen Ge’s eyes was half a city that was swirling with blood fog!

“Do not continue any further!” Even though the middle-aged man’s voice was hoarse from shouting, the bus did not stop.

Tang Jun glanced at Chen Ge through the rear-view mirror. The extremely courageous Chen Ge gave him the signal to keep driving while facing away from the other passengers. After receiving the order, Tang Jun stopped hesitating and stepped on the gas pedal.

His new boss appeared kind and gentle on the surface, but in reality, he was a mad person who was even crazier than the shadow. Compared to the blood fog, Tang Jun was more afraid of his boss.

The bus sped up without any warning.

The sound of high heels clicking echoed in the bus, and the smiling face sprung up from his seat with a frozen smile plastered on his face, but both of them were too late.

The last bus on Route 104 plunged headfirst into the blood fog and raced down the street that was dyed red!

Chapter 628: Reason After Reason

After the bus charged into the blood fog, the sound of heels disappeared, and the expression on the smiling man’s face froze. Things had gotten so out of control that even the ghosts had no idea how this would end.

The rain slid down from the bus windows. When the fog touched the bus, it would transmute into tiny blood vessels attaching themselves to the exterior of the vehicle. From the outside, it looked like the old bus had been given a new paintjob. Turning back to look, the road from whence they came had already been swallowed up by the blood fog. They would not be able to return even if they wanted to now.

This place is still different from the actual world behind the door. In the fog, the buildings haven’t been completely dyed red. If I’m not mistaken, the process that is happening here is not completed yet.

As the man who had caused this to happen, Chen Ge was the calmest. His fingers dangled outside his pocket, and when the bus charged into the blood fog, the black phone vibrated several times.

The situation could change at any minute, so he did not plan to take out the phone to look yet. He decided to wait until he reached a safe location first. Based on Chen Ge’s previous direction, Tang Jun headed toward Fan Chong’s home. However, as the blood clotted around the vehicle, the bus started to slow down. Even if Tang Jun slammed on the pedal, the speed did not pick up.

“What is happening?” All the passengers in the car demanded an explanation, and the pressure on Tang Jun grew. He had followed Chen Ge’s order, but now, the collective anger of all the passengers was directed at him. Gripping the steering wheel, Tang Jun was really afraid that Chen Ge might abandon him.

As a spirit who only knew how to drive a bus, it was really not worth it to make enemy out of the smiling man and the red high heels. The car slowing down was not good news for Tang Jun. He failed to complete the mission that his boss had given him, and now he had to suffer the wrath of the passengers—he had offended people on both ends.

He did not know about Chen Ge's plan and had never thought about asking for it. It would be lying to say that he did not feel any regret.

"Where do you plan to take us?" the middle-aged man demanded with an outraged face. He struggled loose from Chen Ge's grasp and went to step on the brake again. This time, Chen Ge did not stop him. The bus was already running slowly, so Chen Ge did not see the point of stopping the middle-aged man.

"Stop the f*cking bus!" The middle-aged man stepped on the brake and started to fight for control of the steering wheel. Out of his instinct as a bus driver, Tang Jun attempted to push the man away. The wheel spun in the tussle, and the hearse veered from the road, careering toward the rails by the roadside.

"Be careful!" Chen Ge screamed and moved forward to push the middle-aged man away, replacing him. When he was in the blind spot of all the passengers, he signaled for Tang Jun to open the door and leave immediately. Tang Jun grasped Chen Ge's signal and decided to trust Chen Ge one last time. After Chen Ge got hold of the steering wheel, he gritted his teeth, shoved the driver's door open, and jumped out.

"Hey, where are you going?" Chen Ge's scream was the loudest. He slammed on the brake, and before the car stopped properly, he grabbed his backpack and jumped out, following the driver.

"Stop right there!" he yelled at the top of his lungs as he gave chase.

"Stop running after him! Quick come back!" The doctor knew about the danger lurking in the blood fog. He wanted to stop Chen Ge, but he failed. After turning the corner, even though Chen Ge was screaming for Tang Jun to stop, he yanked open the backpack and pulled Tang Jun back into the comic.

"Stop chasing the man!" The doctor's voice echoed from behind him. Chen Ge jogged backward to the bus.

"Where's the driver?" The middle-aged man's expression couldn't have been uglier.

"I failed to catch up to him. This was probably premeditated. After all, he'd even figured out his escape route already." Chen Ge had just finished when the middle-aged man barreled forward to grab Chen Ge by his collar. "This is all your fault! If you didn't stop me earlier, we wouldn't have ended up in this godforsaken place!"

"You're blaming me? Do you know how fast the bus was travelling earlier. During the physical altercation, if both you and the driver had lost control of the bus and it knocked into the nearby building, do you know how dangerous that would have been?" Chen Ge had a point as well.

"Damn, damn, damn!" The middle-aged man slammed his fist against the bus. He gripped his hair so tightly like he was going to pull it out, and his expression was colored with despair. "To escape from these things, I've already sacrificed my daughter, and today, I even brought my son with me, so this is just perfect. Wonderful, it's all f*cking over now!"

"Sacrificed your own daughter?" Chen Ge's brow rose. He had encountered many bad guys before, but one like this middle-aged man... that was truly his first experience dealing with someone like that. The middle-aged man's emotion was unraveling—he wanted to vent the anger in his heart, and the kind-looking Chen Ge became his sole target. A string of words that would have caused this author to be banned sprayed out from his lips.

Forming a great contrast to the middle-aged man was Chen Ge, who was respectful and polite. His eyes jumped over the man to look at the little boy who was frozen solid in fear. There were several bruises on the boy's arm. He wanted to take a look at what was happening, but he did not have the courage to do so. He peeked up occasionally and quickly moved his head down whenever he noticed that someone was looking at him.

"How could you even do something like this to such a cute little boy?"

"This is for his own good. If we are unable to shake that thing loose, my whole family is going to die!" The more he spoke, the angrier he got. He grabbed Chen Ge's collar again. "This is all your f*cking fault!"

"If you use other people's despair to rescue yourself from your own despair, you'll only end up gaining more despair. Only by resolving the problem from its roots will you be able to seek true salvation." Chen Ge seized the man's hands. "This is the second time you've grabbed my collar; I hope there won't be a third time."

"It's pointless for us to argue among ourselves now. It's much more productive for us to try to come up with a solution instead." The doctor came out to act as the mediator, standing between the middle-aged man and Chen Ge. "There has to be someone who gave the driver the order to suddenly change his route and drive the bus into the blood fog. I've taken this bus many times in the past, and there has never been an accident. That driver is just a small lackey, so it is someone else who is out to get us."

The doctor's analysis was correct, but due to a lack of information, the direction of his analysis was wrong. "The last bus on Route 104 cut through Jiujiang, connecting its eastern and western sides. This is in service of the mastermind in Li Wan City, so it is probably the intention of said party that we're stuck in this blood fog. There is probably something or someone he needs on this bus."

"You're right, that's what I think as well. Even if the hearse had stopped at the bus stop, the mastermind would have just found another way to force us into the fog." Chen Ge grabbed his backpack and stood next to the doctor.

"The mastermind in Li Wan City? You sure know a lot of things." Seeing the doctor stand up for Chen Ge, the middle-aged man's tone softened because he was outnumbered. "Then, tell me, what do you think this so-called mastermind is after?"

"He probably wants to deal with a certain someone who is standing here with us." The doctor's words caused Chen Ge's heart to skip a beat, but when he turned around, he noticed that the doctor was actually staring at the smiling man.

"Every one of us carries our own secret, like the man next to you. He once massacred a whole bus of passengers, ruining the mastermind's plan." Since he was the reason they were dragged into this mess, the doctor thought it was pertinent to expose the smiling man.

Maintaining the creepy smile on his face, the smiling man's neck extended, and his eyes that were crawling with black lines turned to focus on the doctor. "I've killed a whole bus of people, including the driver, leaving no survivors, so... how do you know about something like that?"

Chapter 629: I've Been Here Before

Facing the smiling man's interrogation, the doctor appeared surprisingly calm like he had considered this question already. He nudged to stand behind Chen Ge and pulled the scarf to cover even more of his face. "It was a friend who told me the news about you."

"Then how did your friend come to know about it?" After his secret had been exposed, the smile on the man's face bloomed like a spring flower. Both his tone and demeanor were different from before; it felt as if the man would only experience true joy when he was murdering.

"You only killed the people on the bus. At the time, my friend was outside the bus, and he witnessed everything." (Boxno vel. co m)

"Is that so? Then, where is this friend now?"

"He's dead now. He never returned after entering the ghost apartment." When he heard that the doctor's friend was dead, there was a slight shift to the smiling man's expression. It felt like regret.

"So, I made the mistake of leaving a witness last time, but it doesn't matter. That only reminds me to be more cautious this time." The smiling man stopped hiding his murderous intention. He shuffled out to the aisle, and dark lines surfaced on his skin—they looked like black-colored blood vessels.

"Is this a man or a ghost?" The middle-aged man knew that he was no match for the smiling man either way. He abandoned his wife and son without a second thought as he ran to the front door and prepared to slip out.

"Please try to calm down. Even if you kill us, you will be unable to escape. Just as the doctor said, the real target of the mastermind is you, and we are just collateral damage." Chen Ge stood to shield the doctor. "We're in the same boat. If we turn on each other, it'll only benefit the mastermind. Doesn't it make more sense for us to work together to deal with what's to come?"

His fingers gripping the bag, Chen Ge's palm was coated with sweat. Xu Yin had warned him earlier that this smiling man was very dangerous. When the doctor was speaking earlier, the smiling man had shed his disguise. However, when Chen Ge took the podium, he had hesitated but only for a moment.

"You have a point, but why should I follow your order?" The black lines under the man's skin had connected to form something that looked like a net. It looked like they were about to yank the man's skin and flesh out. For a normal person, this would have been an insurmountable pain, but the smiling man did not show any sense of being in pain; rather, he was smiling even brighter.

He seemed to have gotten used to the sensation of pain. His hands reached toward the corners of his lips, and as he pulled on his skin, the literal yanking back of his skin helped him shed the disguise. His spine grew taller, and the already unnaturally long neck grew longer.

"Perhaps you believe that it is very easy to murder all of us, but don't forget, there is a pair of red high heels on the bus, and the owner of said heels might be following behind one of the passengers. I believe you have the capability to murder all of us, but what kind of advantage will that bring you?" The mention of red high heels gave the smiling man pause, and his hands that pulled on his cheeks lowered.

"We are not enemies. You once killed a whole bus of people, and that made you the enemy of the mastermind, but what does that have to do with the rest of us? The mastermind has dragged us into this to deal with you, so from a certain perspective, we should be ally because we have the shared enemy!"

Chen Ge pointed at the blood fog outside the window. "The road we took to come here has already disappeared. We know nothing of this world, and no one can tell what will happen next. Under these circumstances, are you still confident that you'll be able to escape this place alone?"

The blood in the fog stuck to the bus windows, and the old bus was already completely red.

"There is not much time left to think. If you are willing, we'll both benefit, but if you aren't, then we'll have to fight it out. We might not be able to kill you but before our death, I'm sure we're able to injure you somehow." Chen Ge felt for the handle of the hammer through the backpack's fabric. He had no idea whether the smiling man would cooperate or not, and he had to prepare for all contingencies.

No one spoke, and silence fell. The smiling man seemed to be balancing the scale in his mind. Just as the tension rose, a sudden thud came from the center of the bus.

"What the f*ck? Where the hell am I?" The drunkard rolled down from the seat and collapsed to the ground. He glanced out the window, and when he saw the thick blood fog covering all the buildings, he woke up instantly.

The body gag from the drunkard softened the mood inside the bus. The black lines under the smiling man's skin slowly disappeared, and his body returned to normal. It was as if everything earlier did not happen, and the smiling man returned to his seat.

"What is going on?" The drunkard pinched his cheeks. "I just took one nap, and where have you people taken me? Where's the driver?"

"The driver has already deserted the bus. We too have to no idea where we are, but one thing's for certain, it is very dangerous here." Chen Ge sighed in relief when he saw the smiling man return to his seat. The fact that they did not resort to violence was good news for Chen Ge because, after all, he still planned to borrow the smiling man's power to deal with the shadow.

"The driver has deserted the bus? Wait a minute, this is so messy. Let me sort through it for a moment first." The drunkard counted on his fingers. "First, I had a bit too much to drink, then I waited at the bus stop for a bus. I appeared to have fallen asleep on the bus, and there's nothing wrong with that!" The haze of alcohol surrounded the drunkard. He spoke with a heavy nasally voice, and he slurred his words. "By the way, why did the driver desert the bus? Did we get hijacked? Why didn't you wake me if something like that happened?"

If there was anyone who dared to hijacked Chen Ge's bus, then they were truly the luckiest b*stard alive.

"Nothing like that happened, but then our current situation might be ten times more dangerous than a hijacking." Chen Ge did not ignore the drunkard simply because he was just a normal person. "There might be crazed murderer hiding inside the blood fog. If you fall into their hands when you're alone, you might end up getting dismembered."

"Murderers? Dismembered? What the f*ck? I'm calling the cops!" The drunkard yanked out his phone, but there was no signal after they entered the fog.

"The fog has blocked all signal. Save your energy. If we aren't able to escape from this fog, we'll all die here." Chen Ge consoled the drunkard and turned to face everyone else. "The bus attracts too many

eyeballs being stuck in the middle of the road. I think we should find a place to hide first and observe our surroundings before deciding our next step.”

“I have no issue with that.” The doctor was the first to agree, and the other passengers soon followed suit.

“Okay, then we should leave the bus. Staying here will make us an easy target.” Chen Ge grabbed his backpack and the travel bag with the white cat inside and was the first to leave the last bus on Route 104.

He used Yin Yang Vision to scan the surrounding buildings. His expression shifted. “I’ve seen these buildings in Xiao Bu’s game before!”

At the time, to look for the first save point, Chen Ge had practically run up and down the streets in the game countless times.

“The game mirrors real life; this should be very advantageous to me.” With the map of the city still memorized in his mind, the disturbance of the blood fog on Chen Ge had dropped to the lowest.

Chapter 630: Thriller Paradise Begins

The ‘door’ in Li Wan City had already gone out of control, and the blood fog had consumed half of the town, blurring the line between nightmare and reality. Currently, Chen Ge had no idea whether he was inside the door or not because with the blood fog covering everything, blood vessels crawled on the surface of all the buildings.

If we walk down this path, we’ll be at the building where the phone spirit’s body was discovered. Maybe I should go to the roof to check the water tank.

In real life, the body of the phone spirit, Tong Tong, had already been taken away by the police, so if there was still a body inside the tank, then it could only mean that Chen Ge was in the world behind the door. The world behind the door had been created from the memory of the door-pusher, so as long as Tong Tong’s body existed in Xiao Bu’s memory, there would be a high probability of a body being abandoned inside the water tank.

Of course, this was merely Chen Ge’s speculation, and he had no way of verifying it.

Fan Chong lives in the same residential area as Xiao Bu’s classmate. It is quite far from here, and if I go there, we will definitely run into some things.

Chen Ge looked behind him. Everywhere he saw was the blood fog. The road they took had already disappeared, and this world behind the fog appeared to be one-way only.

Assuming that this is really the world behind the door, the only way to leave this place will be through the door. Li Wan City’s door is in the building opposite from Fan Chong’s home, so it looks like no matter what, we’ll have to take a detour to his home tonight.

Finding the excuse, Chen Ge planned to share the result of his analysis with all the passengers and ask them to follow him to the residential area.

“I’m giving them a clear direction, helping them to find their way home.”

The blood vessels gathered on the exterior of the bus. It felt like the fog was alive and was slowly consuming everything that came from outside.

“What are you grumbling about?” The passengers left the bus one after another. The doctor sidled up to Chen Ge. “We should stay together. No matter what, we can’t afford to get separated.”

“Okay.” Chen Ge turned to look at the bus door. The drunkard stayed with the family of three, the smiling man stood to the side, and the ‘murderer’ who called himself Scissors stayed alone at the back.

“Before ensuring the safety of the building, it’s best not to wander too close to the buildings. Scary stuff like chopped arms or floating heads might come out from them.” Chen Ge had seen similar things in Xiao Bu’s game, and in a way, he was very experienced.

“I hope you’re joking.” The drunkard was completely awake—how could he not be? If he could leave Li Wan City alive, he would not go near alcohol anymore.

“Of course, I am. I have no idea what will really happen—it might be scarier than what I described.” Chen Ge pointed at the building where the phone spirit’s body should be found. “Let’s go take a look. We’ll scan through every floor, and after confirming there is no danger, that shall be where we should hide temporarily.”

“It looks like you know this place well,” the middle-aged man uttered with a drawn face. The distrust in his voice could not have been more obvious. “There are so many buildings around us, so why would you point us toward this building? You have set a trap inside there, haven’t you?”

“You’re being unfair.” Chen Ge smiled at the middle-aged man. “I wouldn’t have to rely on traps to kill you.”

The middle-aged man’s face shifted immediately, and then Chen Ge shrugged. “I’m joking of course; I’ve never even killed a chicken in my life before. The only reason I can maintain my calmness now is because I play horror games for a living.”

Chen Ge turned around to point at the building that he had chosen. “Of course, there is a reason for me to choose that building for us. As they say, knowing your enemy is winning half the battle. We will hide inside the building and observe the bus through the window. Since the mastermind sent us into the blood fog, he will definitely send someone over to check up on us. We have to at least know our adversary’s appearance and ability to come up with a valid plan. Furthermore, visibility is low in the fog. If we stay too close to the bus, we might be discovered by the enemy, but if we stay too far, we won’t be able to see anything, so after combining all the above factors, I believe this building is the most suitable.”

After giving his argument, even the smiling man nodded in agreement. The middle-aged man could not argue with such solid reasoning, but he still felt weirdly unsettled. “Then you will walk ahead, and we’ll follow behind you.”

“No problem, but make sure you don’t get left behind,” Chen Ge promised easily. He carried his two bags and scouted ahead. The doctor followed closely behind him.

“There has to be something wrong with this guy.” The middle-aged man grabbed his wife’s arm. His wife was like a puppet, allowing him to take charge over her without resistance.

“Really? I think he makes really solid points in his argument.” Since the family did not move, the drunkard stayed as well. The family of three looked the least threatening to him, so he decided to stay with them.

“He sounds logical, but it’ll be too late for regrets if he’s hiding something from us. It’s never wrong to be careful.” The middle-aged man picked up the boy. They moved to follow Chen Ge but maintained a fair distance between them.

The smiling man did not choose to follow Chen Ge but walked to the other side of the street alone. From Chen Ge’s side, he could only see a blurry shape through the fog.

Scissors was at the back of the group. His face was pale, and whenever he moved, there would be two footsteps. The few walked through the fog. When they neared the building, someone pulled on Chen Ge’s shirt.

He turned back to look and saw the doctor pull down the scarf to whisper, “I don’t think it’s wise for us to enter any building inside the blood fog. We’ll be lucky if it’s empty, but I’m afraid they might be occupied.”

“It’ll be fine. I promise to be careful.” Chen Ge noticed that the doctor was suspiciously knowledgeable like he had been to this place before. The pair entered the building. In the dark corridor, surrounded by the peeling paint on the wall and the blood fog that pervaded every inch of the building, just standing there would make anyone uncomfortable.

The weird-smelling wooden doors were pushed open, and Chen Ge went into every room to check.

“You really plan to inspect every single room?” The doctor appeared hesitant. “What if we run into something?”

“Finding them proactively is still better than allowing them to ambush us.” Chen Ge moved quickly; he did not stop to rest. It was like he did not understand the feeling of fear. They soon reached the top floor.

On the ground floor, the family of three and the drunkard stayed. They were grouped together, not knowing whether they should climb up the stairs or not.

“That man seems to have reached the top floor already.” The drunkard stood at the stairwell and looked up through the gap.

“There’s no reason for us to follow him. Staying on the ground floor will grant us a quick escape.” The middle-aged man was quite a cowardly person.

“Daddy...” The boy in his arms seemed to notice something as he stared at the dim corridor behind the middle-aged man.

“You’re right.” The drunkard kept looking upward, but it was too dark to see anything. He narrowed his eyes and had a sneaking suspicion that there was something on the stairs of one of the upper floors that was poking out. He wondered if that was some kind of decoration.

“Let him scout the way forward—we’ll just wait until he’s confirmed it’s safe.”

The middle-aged man wanted to say something else when the boy whispered again, “Daddy...”

“Yes? What is it? I can hear you just fine, shush!”

“There is a doorknob in the corridor that’s moving. Look, there.” The boy raised his hand to point at a spot deep inside the corridor.