

Horrors 651

Chapter 651: Clearing the Scene [2 in 1]

As an occupant of Li Wan City, the headless woman had to know that the hotel was the glutton monster's territory. However, she probably did not expect the ghost to awaken from its slumber the moment that she stepped into the hotel.

Assuming that they were not too far away from their prey, a Red Specter only needed one second to kill a normal person in ten different ways, and that was why she had been so willing to step into the hotel. From her perspective, she would have done the deed and retreated from the scene before the glutton woman woke up. She was unable to match the glutton ghost's strength, but the glutton ghost was definitely going to have a hard time chasing her across town.

The plan was indeed perfect, but unfortunately, her opponent was Chen Ge. The moment that she treated Chen Ge as a normal person was the moment that she had lost the game. In a Red Specter's eyes, a normal human was nothing more than food that could provide them with resentment, and in Chen Ge's eyes, a normal Red Specter was food that could improve his employees' power level. It went both ways, and that was the fairness in Chen Ge's eyes.

With the exceptional handling of the timing, the headless woman was so focused on Chen Ge that she charged to the spot where the kitchen led out to the corridor, and that was the moment that the glutton monster chose to leak out from the kitchen.

They were so close that the headless woman lost her chance of evading, so she had no choice but to suffer the first blow from the glutton monster. Then, she tried her best to escape.

The glutton monster seemed to have seen through the headless woman's plan. The enormous body that was possessed by hatred and hunger barreled forward like the stampede of a giant elephant. The haze dispersed, and the whole building rocked as if coming alive. The blood veins on the walls pulsed with their specific rhythm, and they detached from the walls like threads of chains. They intertwined over the entrance of the hotel, sealing up the headless woman's retreat.

Without attempting to shield the resentment in her eyes, blood poured out from the stump on the headless woman's shoulders. She knew that she did not have the upper hand, so she did not blindly go up against the glutton monster. Instead, she gathered her strength and pooled the blood vessels around her body.

The decapitated skull was sewn back to her body. This should be what she had looked like at the moment of her death. She was wearing a pajamas, every inch of the clothes dyed red by blood.

The lash of blood veins aimed at her. The woman tried to evade, but the blood was moving too fast for her. Unable to escape, she used her own blood to wreath her body to shield herself from the impact.

Without even moving a finger, the glutton monster only needed to manipulate those thick chains of blood veins to give the headless woman a hard time.

“The difference in power is so big!” The best possible result for Chen Ge was an evenly-matched situation, best if the two Red Specters were equally weakened after the battle. However, based on what he was seeing, the glutton monster was going to experience a landslide victory. She could easily torture the headless woman and kill her without suffering an injury.

In Xiao Bu’s game, Chen Ge had controlled Xiao Bu to leave once the two Red Specters started fighting each other. He had no idea what had actually happened later.

“Should I try to help the headless woman even the playing field somewhat?” Now, three choices were placed before Chen Ge. One was to help the headless woman fight the glutton monster. After the glutton monster was apprehended, he would turn to deal with the headless woman. There were too many extenuating factors to this plan. For one, the headless woman could use Chen Ge as a shield and escape when he tackled the glutton monster. After all, there was no sign that she was willing to work together with Chen Ge.

The second choice was to do nothing. After the glutton monster heavily injured the headless woman, he would have Zhang Ya deal with the glutton monster. That was the safest plan, but the biggest issue was that Zhang Ya had given no indication that she was willing to show herself. No matter how hard Chen Ge tried to summon her, she gave him zero response.

The third choice was to turn and leave. Other than Zhang Ya, Chen Ge did not even have a complete Red Specter. He could rely on the advantage of numbers to take down a Red Specter, but when the enemy was a Greater Red Specter, his only choice was to run.

“Perhaps I’ve come too soon. If I had one week, I might be able to help Xu Yin find his heart, and Bai Qiulin might have successfully digested Xiong Qing’s heart. By then, I would have two Red Specters on my side, and the options given to me would be much greater.” Chen Ge lamented over the short number of hours in a day even though he had used every moment that he could to the maximum potential. He worked day and night—any other person in his place would have collapsed already.

Chen Ge stopped to consider for one or two minutes, but the situation inside the hotel had started to change. The large body of the monster started to split open to reveal many small gaps, and a woman’s voice could be heard coming from within.

“Hungry...” It was impossible to tell which of the gaps first issued this voice. Initially, the voice was very weak, but gradually, all the mouths started to make this voice. Endless mouths opened and closed in unison on the large body. It was a scene that was hard to describe. The headless woman felt the pressure, and she started to move even faster. From the beginning, she never thought of fighting—her goal all along had been to try and escape.

“Hungry, hungry, I’m so hungry!” The glutton monster wailed, and the mouths on the body tore open. A large number of blood vessels weaved together, and it appeared like numerous slimy tongues were reaching out from inside the many mouths.

“This thing is too powerful.” With his Yin Yang Vision, Chen Ge managed to clearly see the minute differences of the many mouths on the monster’s body. It appeared like they belonged to different people. “She keeps the ‘mouth’ of the ‘food’ that is sent into her stomach? The mouths on her body belong to her victims?”

The blood red tongue slithered toward the headless woman. The space for the headless woman to evade was getting smaller. She was forced into the left corner of the lobby, but eventually, one of the tongues managed to curl around her leg.

“This is not good!” Chen Ge stood up. The power level between the two Red Specters was too drastically different. The battle might end in the blink of an eye. It was time for him to make the choice. “Even if I help the headless woman, she might not accept my help. However, if I escape, the glutton monster will only become stronger after consuming the headless woman.”

A normal Red Specter might go into a long slumber after consuming another Red Specter, but Chen Ge felt like this glutton monster might have the ability to shorten that hibernation time down to its minimum. She had been claiming that she was hungry. The monster’s body was like a black hole that could never be filled, so it was not crazy to assume that she might possess a digestive power that was far greater than other Specters.

“The gluttonous woman is tasked with protecting the hotel, and the hotel is placed at the middle of Li Wan City. Obviously, the shadow has great trust in her—that is the only reason he has given her such an important location to watch over. She’ll become scarier after consuming the headless woman, and that will not be good for me when I fight the shadow in the future.” Chen Ge looked far into the future. He did not limit his sight to the situation that was only before him. “If only Zhang Ya was here, this wouldn’t be that complicated then.”

Chen Ge turned back to look at his shadow. He had originally only intended to glance at it, but he noticed with a shock that his shadow was shifting at an incredibly slow speed.

“Zhang Ya has been hiding inside my shadow. What is she up to?” Chen Ge did not have the time to stop and think because the headless woman’s scream echoed throughout the lobby. Chen Ge turned back to the battle, and he saw the headless woman voluntarily break off her left leg that was caught by tongue. After it detached from her body, the leg dissolved into a mass of blood vessels, and they were dragged by the tongue back into the glutton monster’s body.

With the taste of fresh blood, the monster became more crazed. Her whole body was shaking with pure excitement. The lips kept opening and closing as more blood tongues reached out toward the headless woman.

Forced the corner, the headless woman knew that there was no way that she would be able to escape. The blood vessels on her body started to shrink and travel to the area around her neck. It appeared like she had decided to abandon her body and only escape with her skull.

BANG!

At the most crucial moment, the hotel entrance that had been locked by the gluttonous woman was suddenly shoved open. A little boy wearing a patient’s garb ran into the lobby, crying and yelling. He looked just over four years old, and the shirt that he was wearing was tattered and torn. He looked so pitiable.

Chen Ge was about to make his move, but when he saw the boy, he stopped. Even in this situation, Chen Ge still maintained his superhuman calmness. With one glance, he realized that the boy was wearing a patient’s garb that was different from the ones that he had seen at Li Wan City’s hospital.

Therefore, this boy should be the patient that had transferred over to Li Wan City from the cursed hospital, the scariest existence in Li Wan City's hospital.

"With those blood stains on his body, he has to be a Half Red Specter, but since the boy has appeared now, it means that the pair of red high heels shouldn't be too far behind!"

The hotel was the most dangerous but also the safest location in all of Li Wan City. To be able to push a Half Red Specter to such a state, that went to show the power level of the red high heels.

After the entrance of the hotel was broken down, the boy ran into the lobby without stopping to take a look. From his perspective, the thing behind him was the scariest presence, but to his despair, after he strode into the building, his understanding of terror was given an update.

The thick, large blood veins interconnected, and not far away from him, a monster with many mouths was rampaging. Tongues slithered out from the blood veins like they were trying to consume all the living organisms inside the building. The boy's face blanched instantly. He wanted to retreat, but that chance was deprived. A pair of red high heels was placed just outside the hotel entrance.

Compared to the pulsing blood veins and the disgusting monsters inside the hotel, the pair of red high heels looked so elegant and pretty.

Chen Ge did not expect the red high heels to show up at a time like this. However, to his greater astonishment, even when the red high heels had noticed the glutton woman, they still stepped into the hotel without much hesitation. He had no idea whether this was because the red high heels had such great confidence in her power or because she desperately needed to get some information from the boy, which compelled her to commit to such a rash act.

The hotel door opened, and this gave the headless woman the chance to escape. The blood vessels that had gathered on her body exploded, and her skull dragged her lifeless body out of the door. The headless woman had been holding back her power. She was not as strong as the gluttonous woman, and she was in her territory, so she did not have the geographical advantage. This was the best solution that she could come up with.

The needles of blood vessel pierced into the blood veins and tongues like knives. The gluttonous woman and Chen Ge had greatly underestimated the headless woman. Knives seemed to present a great torture to the headless woman when she was alive, and knives were related to her cause of death. That pain and hatred were strongly seared into her soul. Even if she was dead, she could not forget that sensation. She channeled that feeling into her blood vessels, and that made the blood vessels that burst from her stump take on a different quality compared to the blood vessels wielded by other Red Specters. Hers were exceptionally sharp.

This should be her trump card. The blood veins and tongues were sheared away, and the headless woman cut herself a way out.

For a food aficionado, having their feast interrupted was a very unpleasant experience. The glutton woman had just tasted blood, but someone had come to interrupt when she was about to feed. From her perspective, those who dared disturb her meal had to possess the realization that they would eventually be served on her table. She needed extra comfort from food to console her ugly, twisted heart.

“Hungry! I’m so hungry!” The walls peeled back, and Chen Ge discovered with a shock that the layout of the hotel was not so different from Doctor Gao’s underground morgue. The ceiling, walls, and ground were all made from flesh and bones.

“The walls of the underground morgue were made from dead bodies, and the walls of this hotel should be made from the remnant of the female boss’ meals.” From a certain perspective, the glutton monster’s hotel was like a miniaturized underground morgue. It was truly ironic that a restaurant had been combined with a morgue. If Chen Ge did not witness this in person, if he had just someone else tell this story, he would not have believed it.

The glutton monster possessed absolute control of this building; the whole hotel was like her second body. The ground was shaking, and the stairs were collapsing. All the decoration in the room toppled over, and the front door that the boy had crashed through was shut again. Blood veins crawled over the entrance to completely seal the exit. In other words, if they did not deal with her, none of them were going to leave this place, figuratively and literally.

“The only option now is to fight our way out; the situation now is more advantageous toward me!” Chen Ge was someone who could find the silver lining at any moment. If there was a single positive attribute about the man that was praiseworthy, he was able to find hope no matter how deep the abyss that he had sunk into. “With the red high heels’ appearance, if she works together with the headless woman, it should be enough to hold back the glutton monster. If I aid them from the side, even without borrowing Zhang Ya’s power, there should be a fair chance for us to take down this female boss!”

Chen Ge hoped that these Specters would live to appreciate his timely rescue. In any case, Chen Ge did not show himself instantly. He stood in preparation, hiding in the dark, waiting to strike when the time was right.

“It was little wonder that Li Wan City was deemed a 3.5-star scenario. Just the Red Specter inside a single building is this impossibly powerful. I wonder what the strongest monster here looks like.”

Whether the glutton monster was the shadow’s ally or not, Chen Ge decided to kill her. This monster had been consumed by her hunger. She could not be communicated with at all; in other words, the chance of her becoming an employee was zero. “Her life must have been incredibly painful; it’s time for her to find salvation.”

After locking the hotel, the glutton monster attacked the boy, the headless woman, and the red high heels at the same time. The ginormous body nudged forward, causing the entire building to shake. The monster and her disproportionately small head screamed in unison. The mouths on her body tore open at the same time, revealing teeth that were tainted by blood.

The blood veins inside the hotel continued to pulse. The glutton monster moved forward. She seemed to intend to use her many mouths to chew up the food before her eyes.

The situation grew dangerous, but from his hiding spot, Chen Ge’s eyes lit up. “This female boss is not completely immune. Based on everything so far, she has at least two weaknesses. First, her movement speed is very slow, and she is not agile; second, even though there are endless mouths on her body, all those mouths listen to the command of the mouth on her head. Compared to that impossibly large body, the small head appears much too fragile!”

Chen Ge was unsure if the glutton monster kept any trump cards that she had not shown. He silently summoned Xu Yin and Bai Qiulin, planning to find the opportunity to attack the female boss' weakness.

Chapter 652: Red Heart [2 in 1]

Inside the hotel, the glutton monster had the undisputed advantage—that was why she was confident enough to attack all the Red Specters inside her hotel at the same time. However, she had greatly underestimated the power of the pair of red high heels and the headless woman. When their lives were threatened, both Red Specters showcased immeasurable strength.

With the ability to cut with her blood, the headless woman was not exactly defenseless even though it was true that she was on the defensive side. Whenever her blood flew past, the flesh would be cut, and blood sprayed. From the direction she was moving, she was trying her best to meet up with the red high heels.

The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

The headless woman voluntarily moved to join the red high heels and the boy. However, it was unclear whether she was trying to share the glutton monster's aggression with them or wanted to join hands with them to defeat the monster.

The cage that was formed by the tongue and the blood veins was slowly tightening, and the space afforded to the three Specters was getting smaller and smaller. Initially, the tongues and the blood veins did not directly attack the pair of red high heels, but as time passed, more and more blood veins turned their attention to the heels. They appeared like they were going to swallow this pair of heels that carried curse and bad luck whole.

The thick blood veins lashed out from all sides like a cluster of evil snakes. At that moment, a woman's laughter suddenly rang out in the lobby. The laughter was clear and crisp. It was also seductive and mellifluous like one could picture the beauty of its owner from the sound alone.

"The laughter seems to come from the red high heels." There seemed to be a kind of unique magical power within the laughter, one that could influence the listener's emotions. After the laughter travelled into Chen Ge's ears, the blood in his body started to flow rapidly. Blood red rashes appeared on his skin like part of his blood vessels had popped from the sudden increased rush of blood.

Compared to the low snarl of the glutton monster, the laughter from the red high heels appeared to constitute an opposite extreme.

"Hungry, hungry... hungry!" The glutton monster obviously heard the laughter as well. Perhaps it was envy or some other reason, but Chen Ge could sense the anger coming from the monster.

"How come it feels like the red high heels are mocking the glutton monster? Is this some kind of provocation?" The crisp laughter echoed in the lobby and it slowly turned from a sweet melody to a maddened shriek. Near the end, a tall-looking woman started to materialize above the red high heels.

She was on the slender side and was taller than Chen Ge. Every inch of her body was wrapped in bloody bandages, so not one part of her skin was showing. There was a grace about the woman that could not

be denied. She must have been a great beauty when she was alive. However, from the way she presented herself now, it appeared like she had done a full body skin transplant procedure before she died.

The bandaged feet reached into the pair of heels. The feet squeezed into the shoes, and blood leaked out from between the gaps of the bandages. It appeared as if the wound on her body had not recovered.

“This is sheer madness.” Chen Ge did not even dare to imagine how seriously the woman must have been injured underneath the bandages. “If I knew this, I wouldn’t have interacted with her on the bus.”

The blood veins and tongues shot toward the red high heels. The woman stood where she was, showing no intention of moving. When the blood veins neared, the woman raised both of her hands. The bandage that was wound tight to her body showcased her perfect proportions, but none of the ‘people’ there were in the mood to admire her posture. Blood leaked out from the bandages, and an echo of unhinged laughter issued from the woman’s lips. Pain was weaved into the madness and with ease, she tore down the tongues and blood veins. Then, she proceeded to move forward with quick speed.

“She’s going to attack on her own?” Chen Ge could not understand what the red high heels was doing. Even though she appeared powerful in terms of presence, she was still weaker than the glutton monster in terms of strength. “Or is it because she has a very powerful special power?”

Every Red Specter had their own distinct special power, it had everything to do with their last memory during their moment of death. For example, the headless woman yielded blood that could cut through stuff; Xu Yin, on the other hand, became more powerful as the wounds on him increased; Xiong Qing, who suffered from hemineglect, had half of his body made completely out of blood vessels, and he could adopt it into any shape that he wanted.

Based on appearance alone, Chen Ge could not tell what the red high heels’ special power was, but since they were technically in the same boat, the more powerful the red high heels was, the greater the advantage Chen Ge could reap.

Trapped inside the cage made from blood veins and slithering tongues, the headless woman and the boy could not escape even if they wanted to. Based on their power, they were unable to fight against the glutton monster, so their only option was to follow behind the red high heels. With the headless woman and the boy’s help to deal with the attacks that came from the back, the pressure on the red high heels lessened. She tore down the blood veins and tongues in her march forward.

“What is she planning to do?” The sight before his eyes could only be described as a bloody hell as the red high heels, who looked impossibly small compared to her adversary, continued to move forward.

There were so many blood veins that some were bound to cut through the red high heels’ line of defense, but strangely enough, Chen Ge noticed that even though the blood veins hit the red high heels’ body, it did not seem to leave any serious impact.

It felt as if the bandages were not hiding a solid body but a glob of liquid blood. Under the control of the red high heels, when the blood veins attacked her body, she could move the structure of her body around to lower the damage received to the bare minimum.

Her attacks rendered ineffective, the glutton monster grew more agitated. The mouths on her body protruded forward like they were trying to reach toward the red high heels to tear her open with her many teeth. The glutton monster was normally hibernating in Li Wan City's hotel, and due to her size, she moved very slowly. The other Red Specters knew that she was not to be trifled with, so they rarely came to her territory. This also meant that the glutton monster rarely had the chance to feast on Red Specters.

Excited by the prospect of a rare meal, the glutton monster's body continued to grow. She turned into a mountain of meat and more blood veins crawled out from her body and they focused their attacks on the red high heels. She suddenly went on a rampage, and she controlled her blood veins to forcibly separate the red high heels from the headless woman and the boy. She used seventy-five percent of her power to focus on the red high heels while the remaining twenty-five percent attacked the headless woman and the body.

As many of the blood veins as the headless woman cut down, more tongues would take their place. This was an uneven battle. Even if she cut and slashed the blood veins until they burst, it caused no damage to the glutton monster. However, once she was captured by any of the tongues, she would lose the chance to fight back. She would be dragged toward the glutton monster and sent into her giant stomach.

"The female boss only needs twenty-five percent of her power to block the headless woman's way, and that does not seem like it's a hard thing to do either." Chen Ge's palms were slick with sweat. He was still looking for the perfect opportunity.

The threat posed by the red high heels was far greater than the headless woman. Even if she was surrounded by the majority of the glutton monster's forces, the red high heels still managed to slowly close the distance between them.

Initially, the glutton monster still had some caution around the red high heels, but later, her mind was probably taken over by the desire to feed. Her eyes were bloodshot, and she abandoned her previous caution. With a scream, she charged toward the red high heels. All the mouths on her body were gaping. It was as if she wanted to tear the woman before her into pieces and stuff her right into her mouths.

A silvery tingle of a laugh reappeared in the lobby of the hotel. The woman opened her arms. Her perfect body formed a great contrast to the unyielding sight of the female boss. The bandage around the former's body started to fall, starting from the top of her head.

"Do you think I'm pretty?" This simple question was like the most horrible curse. The red in the glutton monster's eyes dissipated immediately. The large body reared backward, but it was already too late.

The bandage came off completely. Every drop of blood on the woman's body carried intense hatred. They splashed onto the glutton monster. The blood acted like a burning flame. The blood haze was seared through, and all of the mouths on the glutton monster's body were wailing in pain.

"Each drop of blood represents a curse. Just what happened to this woman when she was alive? How could she manage to gather such a deep-rooted sense of hatred?" Chen Ge was thankful that he did not provoke the woman. Perhaps with just a drop of her blood, she would be able to curse a person for life.

Black and red smoke came out from the glutton monster's body. Her large body was dwindling at an observable speed. The cursed fire was still burning, and they left behind ugly wounds.

"Hungry! Hungry!" As the body withered away, the glutton monster's twisted head was screaming madly at the red high heels. It appeared like feasting was the only way for the monster to alleviate the pain. She did not care about the thing that she had just sent into her stomach. Even if it was a curse, she wanted to swallow it whole.

The blood veins tore away from the walls and formed a cage around the red high heels. The glutton monster leaned her still large body toward the red high heels, her mouths still open as she crashed toward the human shape that had previously been wrapped inside the bandage.

The glutton monster's physical body was incredibly strong because she was able to resist the curse. Even with the curse burning, she was able to move freely.

"The red high heels' curse is slowly making its way through the female boss' body. It'll take some time before either party will be able to take the other down." Chen Ge paid close attention to his surroundings. He was worried that the red high heels' blood might accidentally splashed onto Xu Yin, so he did not order Xu Yin to join the fray.

The glutton monster was weakening, and some of the blood veins were decaying. The walls started to crease, and a black liquid leaked out from them. The pressure on the headless woman decreased. Without any hesitation, she decided to abandon the red high heels and escape while she still could. The boy who wore the patient's garb next to her had the same idea on his mind.

The two Specters combined their strength to tear at the weakest part of the wall formed by the blood veins. The layers of tongues and blood veins were torn down. The glutton monster wailed from pain. After all, those blood veins and tongues were an extension of her body. Pain and uncontrollable hunger mingled together, which introduced a change on the glutton monster's body.

The large body started to shrink. The limbs that were previously covered by flesh and blood started to show. It turned out that the female boss had been crawling on the ground. There were dark chains tied around her four limbs. Perhaps they had been there for so long that the chains had practically grown into her flesh, and they could not be removed unless the limbs were chopped off.

"Wait, so the monster is actually forcibly detained here?" The monster tipped her head back and yelled into the sky. The chains that were connected to the hidden room inside the kitchen were yanked straight. Unable to move freely, various negative emotions coursed into her mind. She had gone on a complete rampage.

Her skin cracked open, and endless blood vessels poured out from her body. The thick blood veins on the walls also opened their lips. A normal person would have a hard time imagining a scene where everywhere was red, and amid the shade of red, there were endless mouths opening and closing.

"Hungry! Hungry!" Like Chen Ge suspected, the glutton monster possessed a super powerful digestive ability. The blood vessels that she had collected over the years had reached an impossible level. She let go of them all at once, and instantly, a crimson wave swept and swallowed the hotel.

The blood wave tore away half of the headless woman's body, and her most important skull was bitten down on by the lips that were appearing on the blood veins. The boy who wore the hospital gown turned practically invisible; he would be dispersed with the slightest blow of the wind.

Even with Xu Yin and Bai Qiulin blocking before Chen Ge, when the red wave reached him, the air in his lungs was sucked out of his body. It felt like if the wave persisted for another second, he would die from asphyxiation.

"This is such a scary opponent." Chen Ge bit on the tip of his tongue to use the pain to supercharge his mind. Chen Ge turned to look at the red high heels who was closest to the glutton monster. She suffered the most when the red wave hit.

The red high heels were toppled on the ground, and the bloody bandage disappeared into nothingness. A blurry shape was lying on the ground, coiled by several blood veins. Even though the blood veins that dared to get near her would decay at lightning speed, the glutton monster did not care about it anymore. Hunger had taken over every faculty in her mind, and she swore to send everything into her stomach.

"Hungry! I am so hungry!" After unleashing all the blood that she had collected over the years, the female boss' body started to shrink like a deflated balloon.

"Temporarily, she won't be able to unleash another attack." Chen Ge looked at the glutton monster whose attention was captured by the red high heels, and he realized that now was his chance.

He flipped through the comic he was carrying, "Men Nan!"

A boy who looked about five years old in a red shirt appeared beside Chen Ge. There was endless animosity in his eyes.

"There are three heavily injured Red Specters—consuming any of them will allow you to digest them for a very long time! I'm very generous toward you, aren't I?" Chen Ge knew what Men Nan was going to say, so he cut to the chase first.

"Three Red Specters?" When Men Nan first appeared, he noticed the atmosphere was not right, but when he poked his head out from behind Chen Ge, he almost collapsed to the ground on his butt from shock and fear. "Greater Red Specters? Have you lost your mind? Why did you go after things like that?"

"After you consume her, you'll become a Greater Red Specter yourself!" The opportunity was fleeting, and any hesitation would lead to a loss. Chen Ge knew that very well. He grabbed Men Nan and started to charge forward.

"Let me go!"

When Chen Ge stood up, the glutton monster immediately noticed him. She controlled the last few remaining blood veins that she had to stop Men Nan. At that moment, she was in desperate need of rejuvenation. The blood veins dragged the woman inside the bandage slowly toward the jaw that was waiting.

“Xu Yin!” Men Nan blocked the blood veins, and Chen Ge finally showed his trump card. Due to his personality, Men Nan was not a good attacker. So, Chen Ge’s initial plan was only to use him to distract the glutton monster’s attention, and the real source of his attack was Xu Yin.

“Head! Her weakness is her head!” Static appeared in his ears. Blood dripped, and the melancholic Xu Yin slithered through the intertwining blood veins like a sword. He leaped high into the air before landing on the female boss’ shoulders. He poked his ten fingers that were sharp like blades into the glutton monster’s neck!

Looking down on his prey, into the female boss’ eyes that were dominated by gluttony and hatred, his arms started to pull!

“Is it painful?” The blood sprayed, and instantly, it started to rain blood as all the blood veins started to collapse. Fighting two Red Specters at the same time, and if counting Men Nan and Xu Yin, one would take four Red Specters to deal with the glutton monster.

“Men Nan, go take a look at the Red Specter whose head was separated from her body. Bai Qiulin, I need you to go capture the boy in patient’s garb who was close to scattering!”

The female boss was dead, so Chen Ge started to take over the scene. Half of the headless woman’s body was shattered, and wounds covered the remaining half and her head. The situation of the red high heels was not much better. The body that was wound inside the bandage was slowly disappearing, and the shoes that once looked so bright started to lose their luster.

BANG!

The glutton monster’s enormous body collapsed to the ground. The red high heels’ blood curse was still burning. Xu Yin evaded the curse and returned to Chen Ge’s side

He opened his palms before Chen Ge, and sitting inside it was a red-colored heart that was still pulsing.

Chapter 653: Police and Criminal [2 in 1]

As large as the female boss was, her heart was disproportionately small. It glistened and refracted the light like a blood red ruby. It was not discolored or tainted in any way. “Who would have thought an ugly monster like that would have such a pure heart?”

Chen Ge reached out to touch the glutton monster’s heart. He wished to study and find out what exactly a Red Specter’s heart was. However, when his fingertip landed on the heart, negative emotions swept at him like a wave. Blood rushed through his body, and an indescribable desire to feast echoed in his brain. He was so hungry that he could have taken a bite out of himself.

“So hungry!” The desperate snarl escaped from Chen Ge’s lips. The man had to take several steps back from the heart before he felt more like himself again.

“Just how many living humans and ghosts has this thing ingested?” Gasping hungrily for air, Chen Ge’s back was soaked in sweat. He held his hands back and swore to not easily handle anything related to Red Specters anymore.

“The heart of the glutton monster is the pure desire to feast. It is an endless need that can only be satisfied with maddened consumption.” Chen Ge understood why Xu Yin did not take in the glutton monster’s heart directly. This was not something that could be handled by a normal Specter. “Back when we killed Xiong Qing, Xu Yin gave Xiong Qing’s heart to Bai Qiulin. Now I wonder if Bai Qiulin has been affected by Xiong Qing or not.”

Feeling Chen Ge’s gaze on him, Bai Qiulin thought that it was time for him to report to duty, so he dragged the barely-surviving boy over. In a perfect contrast to Xu Yin, for Bai Qiulin, only his heart was dyed red by blood.

“Oh! Bai looks perfectly normal. Perhaps it’s because Xiong Qing was too weak to leave any effect on him.” Chen Ge opened the comic to pull the boy into it. He planned to slowly interrogate the boy and get more information about Xin Hai Central Hospital from him after the Trial Mission was over. After dealing with the boy, Chen Ge turned back to look at the heart in Xu Yin’s hand.

He could see that even just carrying the heart put a great amount of pressure on Xu Yin. He would definitely end up in trouble if he was ordered to consume the heart. Furthermore, Xu Yin had never shown any interest in consuming another person’s heart. Instead, he wanted to find a heart that belonged to him.

“Then, what should I do with this?” The glutton monster’s heart was a very valuable reward. It technically contained everything that was about the glutton monster. With this in Chen Ge’s possession, he might even have the chance of cultivating a Red Specter who could have a better handle of the hunger in the future!

This thing was too valuable. Even the shadow and Doctor Gao would definitely be interested in it.

“If Xu Yin is tasked with acting as the keepsake of the heart, he would separate out a part of his power to resist the negative emotions the heart will bring. That will definitely affect his ability during battle.” During dangerous situation, Xu Yin was Chen Ge’s main fighting force, so having Xu Yin handle the glutton monster’s heart was a giant waste.

“But other than him, who would be able to resist that overwhelming wave of negative emotions?” Chen Ge had Bai Qiulin give it a try, but he only persisted for several minutes before his expression became contorted. He had gone under the influence of gluttony, and it was clear that he was slowly spiraling out of control.

“Is there no other way than to give this away? But it will be such a loss.” The red high heels probably desired the glutton monster’s heart. Gifting it to her would probably earn Chen Ge a valuable ally, but the man thought that was such a ridiculous waste of resource.

“Normal Specters are too weak to sustain a consumption of such a powerful heart. They will most likely disperse from eating this heart. Only a Red Specter is able to resist that enormous will to feed.” Chen Ge stared at the beeping heart in Xu Yin’s hands. The blood red heart was buried deeply inside the meat mountain and was thus spared the effect of the blood curse.

“Leaving it with Xu Yin will only create a burden. The only choice I have left is Zhang Ya.” Chen Ge called Xu Yin to get close to the candlelight and had Xu Yin place the glutton monster’s heart on his shadow. Ever since he entered Li Wan City, Chen Ge’s shadow had gradually been changing. It was not until he

was trying to madly summon Zhang Ya earlier that he had noticed this change. He had no idea why Zhang Ya was doing this, but he believed that Zhang Ya would not harm him.

The candlelight cast its flame on Chen Ge's body, but the strange thing was that the shadow that he formed was in the shape of a woman. Chen Ge looked at his own shadow silently. Xu Yin had the obvious desire that he did not wish to get any closer. After getting permission from Chen Ge, he finally placed the glutton monster's heart on Chen Ge's shadow.

Then a strange thing happened. Once the heart that glistened like a ruby left Xu Yin's grasp, it started to bounce violently, and soon, a woman's shadow appeared above the heart. Chen Ge felt the woman looked so familiar. Eventually, he matched it to the woman that he saw in the boss' room, the woman in the pictures, the woman that he called his mother. That should be the real appearance of the ruby ghost.

"So, she still had this trick up her sleeves." Cold sweat poured out of Chen Ge's forehead. If he had made his employee consume this heart, that employee might have transformed into a second glutton monster.

The woman's wail gradually weakened before dissolving into droplets of blood that landed on Chen Ge's shadow. His shadow was like a lake whose bottom could never be seen. The droplet of blood landed on the shadow and caused a ripple before disappearing completely.

After the glutton monster's heart completely melted, Chen Ge's shadow became even darker, and the silhouette of a woman became clearer. For some strange reason, Chen Ge's heart started to race. He looked at his own shadow and had this sensation that a young lady was waving at him from the other side of the shadow. If he reached out toward the woman, he would be dragged into the shadow and stay there with her forever.

"Zhang Ya?" The name floated up in Chen Ge's heart. The hair in the shadow bloomed like it was being caressed by the wind—this, Chen Ge accepted as a response.

"She seems to have grown stronger..." Chen Ge had been trying to increase the power level of his employees, but after such a long struggle, he realized that the combined strength of all of his employees still would not match that of Zhang Ya. To make matters worse, the difference between the power level only continued to grow. "Perhaps this is what they call talent."

At Jiujiang Medical University's underground morgue, even though Zhang Ya had been injured in the battle as well, she had still managed to get something from Doctor Gao's wife. It was the same thing when she crossed swords with the shadow. Then, she forcibly stole a few drops of blood from Doctor Gao. Now, she had consumed the glutton monster's heart. Just how strong Zhang Ya had become, even Chen Ge himself could not tell.

"I am not someone who likes to rely on others, but based on this situation, it does not appear like I have a choice." His lips turned involuntarily upward. Chen Ge glanced at the headless woman and the pair of red high heels. "If you're naughty, I'll feed you to her."

The red high heels were collapsed on the ground, and they looked no different from a normal pair of shoes. The woman had probably exhausted so much of her energy that she had trouble even holding her form. After all, during the battle with the glutton monster, she had single-handedly suffered seventy-five

percent of the damage, and it was she who managed to land the crucial blow on the glutton monster, which provided Chen Ge with the opportunity that he needed.

“You’ve helped me once, so I’ll treat you in kind. I’m not going to take advantage of you. When the mission is over, I’ll bring you back to a safe place and even purposely construct a home for you.” Chen Ge had personally witnessed the terror of the red high heels’ curse. He picked up the heels using an abandoned table cloth and placed them on the counter.

“Then, it’s your turn. You chased me for a whole damn street, and I think you owe me an apology.” Chen Ge had Xu Yin, Bai Qiulin, and Men Nan apprehend the headless woman before he dared get close to her. The headless woman seemed to have some prejudice against men, and she refused to even look at Chen Ge’s group.

“It’s fine if you don’t want to communicate with males. I have female ghosts in my employment as well.” Chen Ge summoned Duan Yue to communicate with the headless woman. After a long communication, Duan Yue returned to relay the information. The headless woman’s condition was definitely not good. She had lost half of her body, and her head was heavily injured. She had trouble maintaining her form from dispersing, much less getting into battle.

“Even though you’ve chased me for a long time, I am a generous person who will put aside most grievances. After we leave this place, I’ll find you a safe place to allow you to recover.” Chen Ge pulled the headless woman into the comic.

“Hey! I know you have limited space at your Haunted House. Why don’t you just give her the spot that I normally occupy?” Men Nan said in the tone of an adult. He jogged with his short legs to stand behind Chen Ge. “I’ve not returned home for a long time already. There might be some problems at the Third Sick Hall. Once the door goes out of control, the consequences will be imaginably bad.”

“I promise you, after the sun comes up, I’ll immediately take you back to the Third Sick Hall.” Chen Ge squatted down and very seriously reached out his hand. “Here, pinkie promise.”

“My God, can you be more childish?” Even though he grumbled on his lips, Men Nan still pinkie promised it with Chen Ge. “But why did you suddenly change your mind? I swear you must be up to something since you granted me this so easily.”

“I merely realize how dangerous it will be for a door to go out of control, so I understand it’s for the best if I send you back as soon as possible.” Chen Ge stood up and voiced the thought that was inside his heart.

“Yes, that is what I’ve been telling you since the beginning, but you refused to believe me. If something really happens, it’ll be too late to start undoing the error.” After getting the promise from Chen Ge, Men Nan finally sighed in relief. “Seeing how sincere you are, I’ll help you one more time. By the way, where are we? Why are there so many Red Specters inside a small hotel?”

“We are currently inside a door that has gone out of control. This is Eastern Jiujiang’s Li Wan City.” Chen Ge said that in a matter-of-fact tone. He waited for a long time but did not hear a reply from Men Nan. He turned back to look. “What’s wrong?”

Men Nan, who was only slightly taller than Chen Ge's knees, froze where he was. He seemed to have a hard time believing his ears. "We're inside a door that has gone out of control?"

"Yes."

"Inside the world behind the door?"

"Bingo."

After this simple exchange, Men Nan collapsed to the ground. He looked at Chen Ge blankly, and no words came out of his lips. It was as if the boy's mind had suddenly short-circuited.

"What's wrong with you?" Chen Ge quickly got down to look after the boy. He still cared about Men Nan after all.

"It's nothing." Men Nan waved his hands. "I just want to feel the ground underneath my feet. I fear I might not have the chance soon."

"Stop being so dramatic. There's no need to be afraid. I'm here, aren't I?"

"It's because you're here that I'm so afraid! If not for the fact that I wouldn't reach your neck, I would have jumped up to strangle you at least twice already! Have you lost your f*cking mind? It's one thing for you to find your way into a door, but you had to choose one that has already gone out of control! I was wondering how you managed to find somewhere so dangerous! Is it so hard to live your life peacefully? What is so wrong with wanting a peaceful existence?" Men Nan was finally acting his age. He was on the verge of tears as he threw the tantrum.

"Understood, I know what you're saying. Don't worry, if we manage to survive this, I'll definitely send you home." Chen Ge was quick to console Men Nan. After a long time, when the boy's emotion was stabilizing, Chen Ge tried to ask probingly, "Is it so dangerous inside a door that has gone out of control?"

"Of course! Think about it. It is an enclosed building behind a single door, so the number of Red Specters and monsters that you have to deal with is limited, but things are different for a door that has gone out of control. It will pull all the buildings around the area into the nightmare world, and no one is able to tell how many Red Specters and monsters are hiding here." Men Nan waved his hands weakly and pain was clear on his face. "I am not good at fighting, and I've been tricked by the ghost stories society at least once. My power is incredibly weak, and that is why I want to quickly fix the window in the Third Sick Hall. If anything outside infiltrates the Third Sick Hall, then my home will be ruined."

"But that's perfect, isn't it? If that's the case, I can prepare a new home..." Chen Ge was halfway through his sentence when he noticed that the boy was going to go berserk again, so he quickly stopped himself. "You have a point there. After leaving Li Wan City, I'll immediately send you back to the Third Sick Hall."

After pulling Men Nan into the comic, Chen Ge summoned all of his employees to give the hotel a quick scrub. The curse of the red high heels was more powerful and terrifying than he had anticipated. The blood veins and the remains of the glutton monster that came into contact with the curse dissolved into ashes and dispersed into the wind, leaving behind the four iron chains.

“There are still many issues with the glutton monster; I need to get to the bottom of this.” Chen Ge entered Room 1 to untie the old man. “Do you see the iron chains on the ground? Are you the one who locked up the woman behind the fridge?”

Experience came with age. When the old man saw the situation at the hotel, he summed up everything in his mind. Therefore, he explained everything to Chen Ge.

The family of three were not locals of Li Wan City. They operated a rental apartment at another spot in Eastern Jiujiang. The upstairs apartments were rented out while the ground floor was made into a restaurant.

Then, one day, the old man’s wife suddenly contracted a strange disease. She would not be full no matter how much she ate, and once they stopped her from eating, she would be hurting and panicking like they were torturing her. They had taken her to plenty of doctors, but it was no use. The wife’s illness became more serious, and during extreme hunger pangs, she would even bite at other people.

They exhausted all their savings to cure her illness. Until one day, the wife and the old man who just came back from another doctor visit rode the last bus on Route 104, and they arrived at Li Wan City.

The old man was too cowardly to get off the bus, but his wife was led by a blurry shadow into a ghost apartment. When she returned, the wife’s illness had a conspicuous improvement. He was overjoyed, thinking that they had run into their savior, but that was just the beginning of the tragedy.

The wife would always wander out at night, and the old man eventually found out that his wife had gone out in search of ‘food’. To prevent discovery by the police, their whole family moved to Li Wan City, and what happened next matched the details in Xiao Bu’s game.

“When she was alive, it was me who locked her up. If I didn’t do that, she might even bite at her own flesh. After she died, it was a shadow who locked her up...” The old man glanced at Chen Ge and had trouble continuing. “That shadow has the same silhouette as you. He brought some ‘food’ to come and feed my wife regularly until she became the thing that you saw.”

“The shadow looks like me?” Chen Ge nodded. He had understood everything. The glutton monster was the shadow’s creation. The meaning of her existence was to stay guard over the center of Li Wan City.

“I’ve basically visited all the locations pinpointed by the black phone. It is about time to visit Fan Chong’s residential area.” Chen Ge’s motive had been achieved. He pulled all his employees into the comic and used the rope to retie the old man and placed him in Room 1.

“It’s time to leave.” Chen Ge walked out from Room 1 and planned to go upstairs to find the other passengers when something unexpected happened. The entrance of the hotel was suddenly pushed open, and two men strode into the room.

“Don’t run your mouth, and do not do anything extra! Understood?”

“Yes, I understood all that! But the problem is you’ve got the wrong person! Trust me! He has already left my body!”

Hearing these familiar voices, Chen Ge basically lifted his head out of habit. When he saw the two at the door, his pupils narrowed instantly.

“Lee Zheng? Jia Ming? Why are they here?”

Chapter 654: All the Tenants [2 in 1]

When Chen Ge saw Lee Zheng and Jia Ming, the two at the door saw him as well.

“Chen Ge?” Lee Zheng and Jia Ming said in unison. Neither of them had expected to run into Chen Ge here.

“Why are you here?” Lee Zheng had one hand behind Jia Ming. Even though he was extremely surprised by Chen Ge’s appearance, his hand had not moved an inch.

“Don’t get too close to him, he might not be Chen Ge,” Jia Ming whispered in warning. He looked quite scared. “Have you forgotten what I told you before? The shadow looks exactly like Chen Ge!”

Standing from the perspective of an outsider, there was nothing wrong with what Jia Ming said. A living person appearing at the hotel in the middle of the night in a small town shrouded in blood fog... there had to be some hidden issues about this.

“You posed me so many questions, but coincidentally, I also have many questions to ask you.” Chen Ge also did not dare to put his guard down around Lee Zheng and Jia Ming. Before he arrived at Li Wan City, Lee Zheng had sent him a series of messages, telling him that Jia Ming had escaped from police custody and all the police officers were out and about trying to recapture the criminal.

However, just two hours after that, Lee Zheng and Jia Ming both showed up in Li Wan City. No matter how he thought about it, there was definitely something strange about this development. Lee Zheng had his hand hidden behind Jia Ming, so the barrel of his gun was probably poking right into Jia Ming’s back to prevent Jia Ming from doing anything irrational. Since the man was packed, Chen Ge did not dare act too rashly. Guns were ineffective against Specters, but it would definitely be effective against him.

“In any case, we should all calm down first.” Maintaining the stalemate in the lobby would only be a waste of time. Chen Ge decided to show his hand first. He took out his phone and showed Lee Zheng his call record. “Inspector Lee, I am Chen Ge. There is no doubt about that. I am here because I received an SOS call.”

Chen Ge pointed at the phone records between Fan Chong and himself. “This man was once my Haunted House’s visitor, and he has been acting strangely recently. He told me many strange things, and out of curiosity, I left him my contact number. But to my surprise, he went missing tonight, and I have no idea whether if he is still alive. I am the last person he contacted, so to investigate his disappearance more thoroughly, I rushed to Li Wan City as fast as I could.”

Lee Zheng asked Chen Ge a few more questions. Seeing as Chen Ge answered all of them correctly, he sighed slightly in relief. “After Jia Ming escaped from the hospital, we searched for him through the city and eventually the team managed to confirm his escape route was heading toward the eastern part of town.

“Initially, we thought he was trying to run into the mountains to hide, but after expanding the search zone, I discovered something weird through the surveillance. When he was walking past one of the junctions, Jia Ming covered up his face. Even though he was still wearing his original clothes, his gait was strangely unnatural. I compared the surveillance again and again before coming to the conclusion that Jia Ming probably found someone to take his place at that junction.

“After ordering the rest of the team to continue with the original search, I turned down the other side of the junction to continue the search. The heavy rain proved too difficult for the search effort. It was very hard to look through the rain, but thankfully, the effort was reward. In the end, I caught up to this b*stard at the end of the road. After a round of chasing, I only managed to detain this guy after we entered Li Wan City.”

After hearing what Lee Zheng had to say, Jia Ming waved his hands hurriedly. “Everything I did was because I was forced to by the shadow. If I did not follow his orders, he would have had more than one hundred ways to make my life a living hell.”

“You were forced? How come it feels like you’ve purposely been trying to lure me to this place? What are you planning with this shadow? Admit everything honestly, this is the last chance you have.” Lee Zheng had entered Li Wan City because he was trying to capture Jia Ming, it was an acceptable reason, but for Chen Ge, it also felt quite forced. He had this feeling that there was something off about Jia Ming and Lee Zheng, but he could not really tell what was really wrong about them.

“Inspector Lee, this place is very dangerous. Come in here first, don’t stay at the entrance for too long.” Chen Ge activated the recorder and proactively walked toward the hotel entrance. “Did you run into anything scary on the way here?”

“This blasted place sure is strange. It is raining so heavily outside, but there is not one patch of ground in this small town that is wet. I believe it probably has to do with this blood fog.” Lee Zheng did not answer Chen Ge’s question. With his hand on Jia Ming, he shoved the man into the hotel.

Chen Ge was familiar with how scary Li Wan City was, this place was crawling with ghosts and murderers. Technically speaking, Inspector Lee could deal with murderers with his gun, but how did a normal person like him deal with all those ghosts and monsters?

From how they acted, Jia Ming and Lee Zheng were merely nervous—there was no trace of terror in their eyes.

“Could the shadow be hiding in one of them? Is that why the monsters and ghosts in Li Wan City actively stay away from them?” One was the police, the other a criminal, but Chen Ge had no idea whom might be the hiding place for the shadow. “I cannot jump the gun too soon. Both of them might be who they say they are, and the shadow might be hiding somewhere else.”

Ever obtaining the black phone, the shadow was the most difficult adversary that Chen Ge had faced. He believed that the shadow had gotten both Jia Ming and Lee Zheng here at the same time to confuse him. Chen Ge was cautious around Jia Ming and Lee Zheng, but the two did not trust Chen Ge entirely either. They already knew that the shadow had the ability to transform and mimic another person. Perhaps from their perspective, it was not that hard to believe that the ‘Chen Ge’ before their eyes might be a disguise taken on by the shadow.

“Take any seat you wish. Mind waiting for a moment? I have a few friends who are waiting for me upstairs.” Chen Ge headed up the stairs.

After he turned around, he heard Jia Ming whisper very softly to Lee Zheng, “I’ve told you everything I know about the shadow, and now you’ve met him in person. This proves that I am not lying! Chen Ge is the shadow! We need to leave this place as soon as possible before it is too late! He will definitely kill us to get us silenced!”

“You worked so hard to lure me here just to let me see something like this?” Lee Zheng retorted in a chilling tone. “Since you are able to lure me here, then you would have some method to lure Chen Ge here as well. Plus, it is still undecided whether he is the real shadow or not.”

“It cannot be clearer, and you still want to suspect me?” Jia Ming raised his voice. “Think back to the things that this man has done in the past. Do you think those things are doable by a normal person? He is merely making use of you and the entire police force; he is using all of you to cover up his sin.”

“Cover up his sin? Do you even understand the definition of sin?” Lee Zheng pressed Jia Ming onto his seat at the dining table. “Be honest and be quiet. Stop disturbing me with your misinformation, and don’t do things that you shouldn’t. I know how to make my own judgment.”

Lee Zheng and Jia Ming conversed softly as Chen Ge walked away. When he reached the top of the stairs, there came a knock from the hotel front door.

“Is someone there?” A young man who carried a black schoolbag stood at the entrance. He looked rather polite and weak. “I wish to stay here for the night.”

The young man was in the middle of his puberty, and his voice was changing. Other than that, he looked like a normal high-schooler who probably ran away from home. Pushing his spectacles up his nose, he took a long detour away from Lee Zheng and Jia Ming. He carefully moved to the counter. “Is someone here? Is the boss around?”

Chen Ge, who stood on the second floor, saw everything clearly. “The boy looks similar to the boy that I saw on the high-schooler’s phone when I was on the bus. Therefore, he should be either Bei Wen or Bei Ye.”

When he was taking the last bus on Route 104, Chen Ge had run into an unassuming high-schooler. He had gotten onto the bus because he was in search of his missing schoolmates, and he had shown Chen Ge the picture of his mates. In a pure stroke of luck, the high-schooler that he had described seemed to match the high-schooler who helped Gu Feiyu when he took the bus. To prevent an accident from befalling the high-schooler, Chen Ge had chased him off the bus and promised him to get to the bottom of the truth and help his friends if it was possible.

“When I was playing Xiao Bu’s game, I did run into a high-schooler at the hotel.” Chen Ge gripped the railing, and his gaze wandered between the high-schooler and Lee Zheng. “In Xiao Bu’s game, there were four tenants at the hotel, they were the woman, the high-schooler, the police officer, and Xiao Bu. Now that the police and the high-schooler have showed up, isn’t it time for the woman who can change her skin to show up?”

The world behind the door was created from the memory of the door-pusher. The world inside the game recorded Xiao Bu's personal experience. Now that the door had gone out of control, all the nightmares that she had experienced would be turned into reality.

"Why would Xiao Bu have other people play this game? Does she merely want to prove that she is innocent? To garner sympathy from others? Or is this a tool to help her escape? The game contains the key that might release her from the nightmare, is that it?"

With Chen Ge's aid, Fan Chong had cleared the game, and it was around then that the accident had befallen the guy. The shadow had reached out to harm his whole family. Fan Chong was currently missing, and there was a great chance that the shadow had already taken control of his big brother, Fan Dade.

"The shadow should know about Xiao Bu's game, so why didn't he destroy it? Is it possible that there is something he needs inside Xiao Bu's game?"

"The door in Li Wan City was pushed open by Xiao Bu, and to have full control over this door, one must have full control over Xiao Bu. If I consider it that way, the shadow was probably laying a trap with the game as well. In any case, the most important thing now is to find and save Fan Chong—he is the one with the information about this issue."

Chen Ge had assumed control of the hotel. After dealing with the glutton monster, this hotel was nothing more than a shell, so there was no reason for him to stay there anymore.

He pushed open the door to the guestroom. Scissors and the drunkard were squeezed next to the window. They already had the rope around the doctor. Should anything happen, they would send the doctor out first.

"How is the situation outside? Just now, it felt like the whole building was shaking. It was like there was an earthquake." When the drunkard saw Chen Ge walk in, he rushed over to the man to ask for information with a worried face.

"The boss and the chef were killed by the headless woman, and then she died in a stalemate facing off against the ghost inside this hotel."

"The ghost inside the hotel is also dead now?" The drunkard breathed out a long sigh. "Then we should take a rest here. When the sun comes up and the blood fog disperses, we should have no problem leaving this horrible place."

"The hotel is not as safe as you think. Without the ghost to guard over this location, more people and ghosts will be attracted to this place." Chen Ge walked to the doctor and lowered his head to inspect his body. "Can you walk now?"

The veins on the doctor's neck were pulsing. He used every ounce of his energy to shake his head. "I feel much more conscious, but I still cannot lift up my limbs. Other than that..." Scissors next to him seemed to understand what the doctor was trying to do. He reached out to lift up the torn corner of the doctor's pants. There was a large piece of skin around the doctor's calf that had turned ash gray.

“Before I arrived at Li Wan City, I heard people say that once you stay too long inside the door, you’ll start to grow these gray patches on your skin. And if you have this skin discoloration, you are unable to leave the town anymore.” The doctor looked depressed. “I am stuck here forever.”

“The legs are grown on your body—no one will be able to stop you as long as you have the wish to leave.” Chen Ge’s original plan had been to drive the last bus on Route 104 directly to Fan Chong’s home and make use of the red high heels and the smiling man to force their way through the shadow’s trap. Obviously, the plan needed to change. With the blood fog swallowing up the small town, the door had already been activated before they even arrived. Chen Ge could only change up his plan to adapt to the situation. He would make use of the knowledge that he had garnered from Xiao Bu’s game to take down as many ghosts as he could and use the enemy to empower his own people.

Having visited most of the places mentioned by the black phone, Chen Ge felt that it was about time to finish the main objective.

“We’ve received a few customers downstairs. I suspect they are locals here, so they might be disguised monsters and ghosts. Be careful when you go down. In any case, there is nothing wrong with being more cautious.”

After giving a few more orders, Chen Ge had the drunkard carry the doctor, and they exited the room. When they returned to the first floor, Chen Ge noticed that other than the police, Jia Ming, and the high-schooler, there was a newcomer.

She was a woman with voluptuous curves and a sweet, candy-like face. However, she was a conservative dresser with long sleeves and a jacket that covered her whole body. She was even wearing a pair of gloves to ensure that not one inch of her skin was showing.

“Where’s the boss? I need a single room.” The woman was dragging a large box. She ignored the rest of the people in the room. She turned toward the kitchen with a smile. “I’ve brought the thing that you need this time.”

When she walked past Chen Ge’s group, Chen Ge did not catch any trace of perfume on the lady, but instead, he could smell a light scent of decay.

“The boss is not available. He has left the hotel, and there’s no one inside the kitchen.” Chen Ge reached out to block the woman’s way.

“Who are you? Are you a close friend of the boss?” The woman’s beautifully-constructed nose leaned to Chen Ge like she had sniffed something unusual from Chen Ge’s body. When the woman leaned closer, Chen Ge caught a glimpse of the woman’s collar. There was a complicated wound around the woman’s neck that looked like a tattoo. It gave the impression that the skin underneath her clothes was sewn together.

“I am not familiar with the boss, but I hope you’ll conduct yourself more prudently. I am now the shot-caller in this place,” Chen Ge replied with a polite smile. In reality though, if there were no outsiders around, he would have summoned his employees to apprehend the woman and start to interrogate her about Li Wan City.

The woman stood on her tiptoes to peer inside the kitchen. Even though Chen Ge had already had his employees clean up the place, once one looked closer, one could still see the many suspicious problems.

“It doesn’t matter to me who the shot-caller is. I just wish to know if this place is still open for business.” The woman dragged the box forward. “There have been fewer and fewer people coming from outside lately, and do you know how much trouble I had to go through to gather these things?”

Chen Ge had a rough idea what was inside the box. “Of course, we’re open for business. Leave the box with me, and you can stay here for as long as you like.”

“Thank you. Do you mind if I go into the kitchen to grab something to eat? The blood fog this time is thicker than usual, and I am already feeling quite puckish.” The woman came up with many reasons to enter the kitchen.

“Then, you’d better get seated. Food will be served soon.” Chen Ge waved at the drunkard and told him to get Scissors into the kitchen, find some ingredients, and whip up something to eat.

After the two entered the kitchen, the door of the hotel was pushed open again. A man who carried a strange smile on his face entered the hotel. There was a large blood stain left on his shirt. He appeared to be injured. He did not say a word after entering the hotel but found a quiet corner and posited himself there.

Not long after that, a dripping sound came from the front door, and the smile on the man’s face froze.

Several seconds later, the door opened, and a woman in a red raincoat also strode into the hotel with her head lowered.

Chapter 655: The True Strength of the Shadow [2 in 1]

The scent of blood permeated the air. It was not raining outside, but the red raincoat that the woman was wearing was dripping wet. Her black hair stuck to her face, and the water droplet slid down her collar. The woman entered the hotel with her head lowered—she did not look up at anyone as she wandered to an empty seat and sat down.

“We should stay away from her.” Jia Ming opened his lips to whisper as he stood up and nudged to the other side of the table. He did not discuss this with Lee Zheng beforehand, so when he stood up and moved away from Lee Zheng, other people could see clearly that Lee Zheng was holding a gun in his hand.

“Sit right here honestly and stop moving!” Lee Zheng pressed Jia Ming back to his original seat. He used the corner of his eyes to silently scan the woman in the red raincoat and then lowered his voice to ask Jia Ming, “Do you know this woman?”

“She’s a madwoman. Everyone who wears red clothing in this place is a mad person. If you want to live, stay away as far away from them as you can. Do not try to interact with them.” Jia Ming’s body was shivering lightly. “This is what the shadow told me. If you want to die, then go ahead, but don’t drag me down with you!”

“The color red represents some kind of special meaning here?” Lee Zheng had more questions that he wanted to ask. Ever since he entered the small town, he had noticed many strange things, but since he possessed too little information, it was hard for him to tell whether Jia Ming was lying to him or not.

“Red represents extreme danger. Just stay away from them. That is the rule that you need to follow inside the door.” Jia Ming’s voice became smaller and smaller. “The shadow has left my body, but he used this body to conduct many things, so I still know some of his secrets.”

“Inside the door?” Lee Zheng jotted down every single sentence that came out of Jia Ming’s lips. “Are there any other rules that I need to pay attention to in this place?”

Probably realizing that he was unable to escape, or perhaps deciding to change his plan because he had encountered Chen Ge, Jia Ming became more honest and cooperative. “Do not enter any buildings with their doors closed, and do not walk past any buildings with their doors opened. Gray represents relative safety, and red represents danger. However, if you see the color black, don’t even waste time trying to run; it’ll be better to use the final moments that you’ll have to come up with your last words.”

When Jia Ming and Lee Zheng were conversing, the sound of footsteps once again came from the hotel entrance. Everyone turned to look in unison.

“This place sure is crowded tonight.” A man wearing a black coat and dragging a large case entered the room. Five bloody red female skulls were tattooed on his arm, and there was a bone whistle dangling on his lips. No one in the hotel answered his greeting, but that did not dampen his mood. He greeted the people inside the hotel one by one, but when he noticed the woman in the red raincoat, his body froze before walking swiftly past her to reach the counter. “Boss, I wish to stay the night.”

His voice lowered conspicuously as if worried that he might disturb the woman in the red raincoat.

“There’s another customer?” Chen Ge walked out from the kitchen pushing the cart. They had ransacked the kitchen, but other than some unknown meat that was already cut and prepared, the only food item that remained was some cake. Naturally, the boss did not prepare the cake for the customers. From the menu inside the kitchen, it was clear that all the items on the menu were those favored by the female boss. In other words, the menu at this restaurant was made just for one customer, the female boss. The cake still needed post editing before it could be completed. For example, there was ketchup or raspberry sauce in the kitchen, but parts of the cake were red in color.

“A Red Specter that likes dessert? That is quite an interesting feature.” Chen Ge pushed the cart out. He had decided to transform this hotel into a scary scenario related to food after the mission was completed. He had been inside the kitchen for several minutes at most, but when he came out, he realized that the number of visitors in the lobby had grown. Of all of them, the appearance of the woman in the red raincoat surprised him the most.

Speaking of which, after the door in Li Wan City had gone out of control, it had transformed the small town into a unique location where living humans were able to be seated at the same table as a Red Specter.

“Perhaps such is the reality behind the door. There are ghosts formed from a persistent will and humans who stumbled into the nightmare.” Chen Ge served the cake that was not dyed on the dining table.

“Please enjoy the meal. I am not going to collect any fees; I just need you all to answer a few questions for me later.”

“Are you sure? You’re not going to open this to take a look? Perhaps you might see something that you might be interested in?” The woman was tightly wrapped inside her clothes. She dragged her box and walked toward Chen Ge. After straightening up, she removed her fingers from the box and placed it right under the seam of her clothes. The ‘this’ that could be opened probably referred to two different things.

“There’s no need. If it was necessary, I would have done it myself.” Chen Ge held the heavy backpack on a single arm. The hammer had just tasted the glutton monster’s tongues and blood veins, so the heavy scent of blood on it had not dispersed.

“Fine, suit yourself.” The woman dragged the box and retreated several steps. The coquettishness on her face had already disappeared, and she shifted her expression as fast as one would flip through the pages of a book.

“Hey, where is the boss? I need to talk to him. About the thing that he told me to investigate last time, I’ve already gotten some leads.” The man who was tattooed with women’s skulls walked to Chen Ge, also dragging his case.

“He has left the hotel and left this place to my care temporarily, so now I am the shot-caller. How may I help you?” Chen Ge had a smile on his face. In terms of service provided, he was definitely much better than the previous owner.

“The boss is not in?” The tattooed man was very clever, so he instantly caught up to the problem. He smiled in embarrassment at Chen Ge. “Then I suppose I’ll return another day. Sorry for the disturbance. See you again.”

Then, he was turning to leave without even taking his case.

“Wait a minute, perhaps you did not understand what I mean earlier.” Chen Ge had Scissors stop the tattooed man. “I am technically the owner of this place now. Since the boss gave you some task earlier, you can just report the result to me, and I’ll relay the information to him.”

The tattooed man stood where he was, and his eyes kept darting involuntarily to the kitchen. The more he looked, the more agitated he became. “Are you sure that is a good idea?”

“Why would you think that is not a good idea?” Chen Ge leaned slightly to the side to allow the tattooed man to glance into the crumbled wall inside the kitchen.

“Since you are the boss’ friend, then naturally, you are my friend. Since we are all friends, of course, this cannot be a better idea.” The tattooed man instantly changed his stance. The honesty and sincerity on his face formed a great contrast to the five evil-looking female skulls tattooed on his arm. “There are too many outsiders here. Do you mind if we go to somewhere quieter?”

He turned to head up the second floor. It looked like he was very familiar with this hotel; he appeared to be a regular here.

“Scissors, come with me.” Chen Ge had Scissors follow him—he did not treat the man as an outsider at all.

“Me?” Scissors was startled. He did not expect Chen Ge to bring him along when he was about to be shared some valuable secret. Just how much trust did Chen Ge have in him?

“Quick, our friend is waiting.” Chen Ge and Scissors followed the tattooed man up to the second floor.

“Just now, I saw the hidden room inside the kitchen has collapsed, but that female monster was not inside it.” The tattooed man sucked in a cold breath. “She is detained inside this hotel, but currently, she is not where she should be—the only explanation is that she has disappeared.”

“You are a very clever person,” Chen Ge said emotionlessly. “I do not like to interact with people who are too clever unless they prove useful to me.”

“Bro, don’t be like that! I assure you that I’ll be useful to you, and you’ll be surprised at how useful I might be.” The tattooed man held the bone whistle in his palm, and he paused for a long time before continuing, “I know the way to leave this place. It is related to a door.”

“This is barely considered a secret. All of you came from outside the door, so when you find the door, you’ll naturally be able to exit through it.” Chen Ge used a single sentence to choke the tattooed man. “Stop trying to play tricks. I know more than you might believe. I advise you start giving me a reason to keep you around.”

“Other than that, I know the door’s location.” The tattooed man’s fingers closed over the bone whistle tightly. “Everyone who was brought in here by the ghost fetus had black cloth over their head. When they woke up, they were already deposited on the streets. I’ve asked many people, and the location that they woke up at after removing the black cloth was different every time.”

“Wait a minute, you were brought in here by the ghost fetus? The ghost fetus is actually not a flash of dark shadow? Why would you not refer to him as a shadow but a fetus?” Chen Ge did not seem to care about how to escape from this place but showed more interest in the small details.

“Bro, the things that you focus on are just... something else. You must have seen the shadow since you’re here. After all, when you were asked to make the choice at the ghost apartment...” The tattooed man stopped himself halfway, and he looked at Chen Ge and Scissors with disbelief. “Wait a minute! Don’t tell me you entered this place on your own? You didn’t even pass through that door?”

“If you don’t want to die, I advise you just answer my question.” Chen Ge took out Doctor Skull-cracker’s hammer to show that he was serious.

“Bro, calm down. I was just shocked. Of course, occasionally, there are some unlucky b*stards that wandered into the blood fog due to various reasons, but they rarely survived here longer than an hour.” The tattooed guy looked at Chen Ge, who held the hammer, and Scissors, who looked scary. “A situation like yours is extremely rare.”

“Now can you tell me more about the ghost apartment and the ghost fetus?” Chen Ge lowered his voice, and his gaze was getting sharp.

“Patience is a virtue. Since you’re outsiders, I’ll tell you about some of the rules here. Believe me, this is for your own good.” The tattooed man looked outside, and after making sure that there was no one paying them any attention, he continued. “There are many unfortunate events happening all over the world every day, and this contributes to an endless parade of unlucky individuals. Some managed to survive the most difficult hurdle in their lives with hope and faith in their hearts, but others sunk deeper into despair.

“I’ve interacted with at least ten people that came from outside. They all ran into the shadow at the lowest point of their lives. Everything happened the same way. Initially, they would hear their own voice coming out from their shadows. With the guidance from the shadow, they were told to take the last bus on Route 104 to come to Li Wan City. Once they entered the ghost apartment, salvation would be waiting for them.

“The owner of the ghost apartment is also a shadow, but no one has ever seen his real face before. He has always been a shadow in our eyes, a shadow who might materialize next to you at any moment and transform into your identity. He is like the monster that is formed from the darkest shadow inside our hearts because he is incredibly familiar with our weaknesses and desires.

“The shadow refers to himself as the ghost baby. According to the previous hotel boss, the shadow was actually the shadow of a living person, but it was abandoned by that person. I know how preposterous all that sounds, but that is the truth. Li Wan City, the ghost apartment, and the strange things that happened in Eastern Jiujiang, those are all the shadow’s doing. He will stop at nothing just to accomplish a singular goal—to turn himself into a human and then transform the human who once abandoned him into a shadow.

“Resentment will fester and corrupt. Initially, the shadow was just a shadow, but as he consumed more despair and resentment, he has turned into a...” The tattooed searched his brain for a long time but failed to land on an appropriate term. “In any case, it is something incredibly scary. He placed most of his body and negative emotions inside an unborn child, and that is the original form of the ghost fetus. He only left a small part of himself at the fetus’ side to protect it while the rest of him continued to move his plan forward.”

“How do you know all this?”

The shadow was cautious and watched his every step. Chen Ge knew that it would not have voluntarily shared this information with some outsider unless this was the information that the shadow was willing to reveal to lay down a trap or something of that sort.

“The hotel boss and I were the earliest living humans to enter the door. We’ve lived here for so long and figured out the truth from the shadow’s words and actions.” The man removed his coat to show a black-red rope that was tied around his stomach. The rope seemed to have been tied a long time ago, and it had never been removed. In fact, the rope had grown into the man’s flesh. The stranger thing was, with the rope as some kind of margin, the tattooed man’s upper body was perfectly fine, but underneath the rope, his skin was ashy gray.

“This rope is made from the blood vessels taken from the boss’ mother. Without it, I would have died already.”

“But that cannot prove that you’re telling me the truth.” Chen Ge had his own judgement to everything. He would not believe everything other people told him, and that was one of the reasons he had been able to survive so many Trial Missions.

“I cannot prove conclusively the validity of my words. I am merely sharing with you everything I know. I hope you can sense my sincerity so that we can work together in the future to escape from this place.” The tattooed man put his clothes back on. He understood Chen Ge’s caution. In fact, if Chen Ge believed him too easily, he would have been concerned. “To continue the topic earlier, I’ve asked around and finally landed on one of the shadow’s secrets.

“Everyone who is here had a black cloth placed over their head at the ghost apartment. However, they would only pass through the door to enter this world after some time had passed.” The tattooed man’s eyes narrowed like he was about to say something important. “The ghost apartment is at a place adjacent to Li Wan City. It’s an abandoned housing project known as Ming Yang Residence.

“Many who were sent in there were not satisfied. They wanted to escape, and they’d move to explore the outer fringes of Li Wan City. However, none of them ever returned. Initially, I also thought that the door might be at the ghost apartment, but after asking many locals, I realized that the door might be in Li Wan City.”

The tattooed man felt like he had discovered a great secret. “After people entered the ghost apartment, their main consciousness would flag as the evil within their heart was purposely pulled forward. However, there were some who managed to keep their sanity intact. They did not lose themselves, and they remember that they were not pushed through the door but told to move down a particular direction for a very long time. After several years of investigation, without arousing the shadow’s suspicion, I believe I’ve found the door’s location.”

“It’s in a residential area on the outskirts of Li Wan City, right? If I’m not mistaken, it should be one of the rooms in the first block on the first floor.” Under the tattooed man’s shocked scrutiny, Chen Ge revealed the location that the former had taken years to uncover. “Never mind, I guess you’ve given me more than enough useful information. At least now I know that the ghost apartment is at Ming Yang Residence and the shadow has placed most of his ‘body’ into an unborn child.”

Chen Ge asked the tattooed man a few more questions. He realized how unusual this man was. He had a natural closeness to ghosts and spirits, kind of like a weakened but adult version of Fan Yu.

Chapter 656: Shut the Door

The tattooed man told Chen Ge everything that he knew, but whether he could be trusted or not, that was up to Chen Ge’s own discretion. Chen Ge narrowed his eyes as he scanned the five female skulls on the man’s arm. With Yin Yang Vision, he realized that the heads were wailing, and they probably represented five different spirits.

“I’m not the one who killed them; I’m merely their vessel.” The tattooed man quickly waved his hands. “Due to my unique body, I’ve been able to see ghosts since I was small, but that power weakened as I grew up. However, it is still there. Probably because of that, the shadow came after me and used my body to keep some unique spirits.”

The man pointed at his arm. “These five women were once the ghost fetus’ mother—they were personally handpicked by the shadow. They were living humans whose body features were different from others, but probably because there were too many negative emotions in the ghost fetus, it died five times in the womb. Its resentment was growing so much that sometimes I could feel it myself. Be it the mothers or the shadow, they seemed to be afraid of the ghost fetus.”

“Even the shadow is afraid of the fetus?” Chen Ge could not understand why someone would fear their own creation, but he did not focus on this topic. “I am willing to cooperate with you, but the premise is that you have to listen to my orders.”

“A wise choice. Actually, I still know some other secrets about the shadow. After we escape from this place, I will tell you more about them.” The tattooed man was worried that Chen Ge might kill him after he had outlived his usefulness, so he quickly explained that he still had other values to be discovered.

“Sure.” Chen Ge smiled lightly. He did not really care that much. After all, there was a momentous difference to his and the tattooed man’s goal. The tattooed man wanted to escape, and most of the locals probably had that goal in mind, but Chen Ge’s goal was to find a chance to kill the shadow. Of course, it would be better if he could capture the shadow alive.

Everyone understood the dangers of a door that had gone out of control, even Doctor Gao stayed away from this place, but for Chen Ge, once he had completed his preparation, even an uncontrollable door could be turned into a giant treasure.

Returning to the first floor, the tattooed man pushed the case to the corner. The bone whistle that he was holding earlier had disappeared—he had probably placed it inside his pocket. Seeing how obedient the tattooed man was acting, walking behind Chen Ge, the woman was confounded. She had met the tattooed man before and understood how powerful he was. “You two...”

The woman leaned forward and purposely brushed against the tattooed man when he passed her. She seemed to have something to say, but the tattooed man ignored her and walked on ahead. Considering the situation that he was in, he was not going to do anything to arouse Chen Ge’s suspicion.

“Scissors, go to the entrance to take a look. See if there’s anyone else out on the street and then close the door.” Scissors moved to oblige—he had complete trust in Chen Ge. There were flickering shadows in the fog, and there was even someone waving at them, but the shadows kept their distance like they did not dare wander too close.

“There are only some shadows on the streets—I don’t see anyone alive.”

“Then close the door. It’s their loss to not come in here.” With such a large commotion at the hotel, the locals of Li Wan City must have noticed it, so it was perfectly normal for them to come over to check out the situation.

After the door was closed, Chen Ge scanned everyone in the room. “Everyone, due to different kinds of reason, we’ve gathered here tonight. I suppose you can call it fate. I will not harm anyone and will not do anything disadvantageous to any of you. I merely wish for us to stick together to discuss some problems, like how to escape from this place.”

Once Chen Ge finished, the tattooed man started to fidget. He tried his best to meet Chen Ge's eyes. "The more people we take with us, the less likely we're going to succeed. The shadow can transform into anyone of us, and if he finds out about our plan, we'll fail one hundred percent!"

"Yes, the shadow can transform into anyone of us, and that is the second thing I wish to tell everyone. I hope no one here will do anything irrational—I will not harm any innocent party, but that does not mean that I will not harm the shadow." Chen Ge stood at the head of the dining table, holding his backpack.

"This is so like you..." The drunkard grumbled softly. Ever since he listened to Chen Ge's advice and selected the correct antidote, the drunkard had developed loyalty toward Chen Ge that could not be shaken. Even though the man could be very scary at times, he was really trustworthy to his friends.

"This man here has stayed for a long time in Li Wan City—he knows where the door that will lead us out of here is. We'll all follow him, and I will try my best to guarantee your safety and bring all of you out of this place." Chen Ge was sincere with his words. If possible, he wanted to rescue as many people as he could. After all, for the black phone's mission, the greater the number of innocent lives he had saved, the bigger his reward would be.

"I'm sorry, but temporarily, I don't plan to leave this place. I feel like it's not bad staying here," the bespectacled high-schooler said shyly.

Chen Ge stared at the high-schooler and noticed that whenever the latter looked through the glasses, he would need to squint his eyes like his sight became worse after putting on the glasses. "If I'm not mistaken, the pair of glasses should belong to your younger brother, Bei Wen, and your name is Bei Ye, right?"

"I have no idea what you're talking about—you must've gotten the wrong person." The high-schooler tried his best to keep his cool, but he was ultimately too young. Chen Ge could easily pick up the flaws in his acting.

"On the bus coming over here, I met one of your classmates, and he told me everything." Chen Ge grabbed the high-schooler's arm lightly. "You accidentally killed your own father, but to escape from the judgment of law, you murdered your younger brother who looked just like you in cold blood, and you made it look like you committed suicide. However, in reality, you've survived just fine, assuming the life and identity of your younger brother."

With each of Chen Ge's words, the male student's face whitened by one degree.

"Initially, only I knew about this, but now everyone here knows about your secret. I wonder, with your personality, will you kill all of us to ensure that your biggest secret is not revealed to the world?"

Before Chen Ge even finished, the tattooed man next to him spoke. "If he refuses to leave, then he will become one of our impediments. Now that we've found out about his secret, he'll definitely find a way to take revenge on us. He will report our movement to the shadow. I suggest we deal with him before he has the chance to betray us."

Touching the tattoos on his arm, the man turned to peer at the knife left on the cart. “Remove all sources of danger before it has the chance to grow. We only have one chance at this—we mustn’t be too careless if we wish to escape.”

“Everyone here has their own secret. I understand if you wish to stay, but once you hear about our secret, the power of choice is taken from your hand.” The black phone had requested Chen Ge to rescue innocent victims to improve his reward, but Bei Ye was clearly not a victim, so Chen Ge was not going to go easy on the young student.

Being stared at by most of the customers inside the hotel, Bei Ye finally relented. “Alright, I will go with all of you.”

Chapter 657: Seizing Soul

Chen Ge was very satisfied with Bei Ye’s reaction. He turned to the rest. “Is there anyone else who objects?”

Practically half of the people there were on Chen Ge’s side, so they naturally had no issues with his arrangement. The small minority who objected were too afraid to voice their real opinion. Even if they did not agree with Chen Ge’s action, they were too weak to go against it.

“Since there’s no objection, we should not waste time and start moving. If we wait longer, more weird stuff might be attracted here.” After Chen Ge said that, he took the pair of high heels on the counter and placed them inside his backpack. He then called for the white cat and Scissors before heading to the door.

“Didn’t you notice how comfortable he is at this place? When all of us are assaulted by this feeling of discomfort, he is like a fish returning to the water. It feels like this chaotic and bloody small town is somewhere that is home-like to him,” Jia Ming whispered to Lee Zheng.

“What are you trying to say?” Lee Zheng frowned deeply.

“Isn’t it obvious? He is the shadow; this is where he lives; this place is his home!” Jia Ming kept trying to convince Lee Zheng. “I know that he’s not going to lead us to the exit—his real goal is to kill all of us. You might not believe me now, but time will prove that I’m right. I hope you’ll be more alert so that you won’t cause me my death.”

“Before you point fingers at others, you’d better take a good look at yourself first. The shadow escaped from your body, so of everyone here, you are the most suspicious.” Lee Zheng had interacted with many cunning criminals before. He understood one thing—the more mentally twisted the person was, the more unreasonable their worldview was. A part of their brain was flawed, and from a certain perspective, their ability to study and learn was much greater than their emotional control. A real mad person could weave an unbelievable lie that they put their full trust in without showing any remorse or guilt.

Obviously, Jia Ming and the shadow who had committed more than a few murders fell into this category.

“You’ll regret ever trusting that man, and trust me, that day is going to arrive soon.” Jia Ming did not stop with his persuasion. He realized that it was incredibly hard to shake Lee Zheng’s conviction—this inspector had a resoluteness to his belief, and he was much harder to break through than he had anticipated.

I’ve cleared most of the dangerous spots mentioned by the black phone. It is time to go take a look at the door.

Chen Ge led the passengers out from the hotel, and the tattooed man followed close behind them.

“Are you sure you want to bring all of them?” The tattooed man looked at the large group of ‘people’ behind them, and he felt unsettled.

“What are my other options? Are you suggesting I kill all those who refuse to cooperate?” Chen Ge fired the question back to the man.

“You have a point. If we keep them around, we can use them as cannon fodder when there’s danger.” Tattooed man convinced himself. He started to question his decision of cooperating with Chen Ge. However, the arrow had already been loosed. His only choice now was to follow Chen Ge to the end of the road.

“Please move faster, stop wasting time. One second wasted here reduces the hope of us escaping by one more percent.” The tattooed man turned to yell at the rest. His eyes landed longer on Lee Zheng. There were many mad people at Li Wan City, one could have one’s pick of criminals, but they had never encountered a police officer. “No matter the history between any of you, no matter why you’re here, I hope you can put that aside until after we leave this place. Now we are a shared body, and if there’s anyone who wishes to drag the group down, we’ll have no use but to cut them loose.”

When the tattooed man spoke, the five female skulls on his arm seemed to grin wickedly like they were anticipating a shower of blood. Everyone left the hotel. The high-schooler and the student walked at the back—it was clear that they were the most unwilling.

“Is that everyone?” Chen Ge turned back to look, and he noticed that the woman in the red raincoat had disappeared. The rest, including the smiling man, were following behind him. “With numbers comes strength, I will lead you all out of this place provided that none of you do anything stupid.”

If not for him being worried about Fan Chong’s safety, Chen Ge would actually have cleared out the entire small town, not leaving even a single room behind. If he did that, he would have been confident that he could convince the residents of the town to join his camp.

Unfortunately, I’m starved for time. I can only pick the important things to do, but from the looks of it, I still have the upper hand. Chen Ge surreptitiously glanced behind him. His shadow had completely changed. After consuming the gluttonous woman’s heart, the wound on Zhang Ya’s arm seemed to have recovered. *If she can hear my voice, then I have everything under control.*

Chen Ge had the courage to face any difficulty that came his way, but that did not mean that he was overconfident. After the glutton monster was consumed, the balance of power was tipped. It was natural for the shadow to do something to revert the balance. Since the shadow temporarily could not harm Chen Ge, then the logical thing to expect the shadow to do was for him to harm Chen Ge’s helpers.

After the group left the hotel, they definitely created a scene. There were shadows in the blood fog watching them, but since Chen Ge's group was so ginormous, none of them dared to approach.

"Hey, look there." When they passed the first junction, the drunkard, who was carrying the doctor, pointed ahead and whispered to Chen Ge. At the other end of the street, there was a human shape that looked very similar to the drunkard, waving at them.

"This thing again. I wish to let you go, but you're presenting yourself to me." Chen Ge did not hold back this time and activated the recorder. When the sound of static appeared, Chen Ge pointed at the shadow across the road and said, "Xu Yin."

The scent of blood caressed his nostrils, and Xu Yin stood guard next to Chen Ge. He did not rush forward as if sensing danger. After several seconds, another blurry silhouette appeared at the opposite side of the road. This new shadow though looked suspiciously like Scissors.

"A second one? No, wait! There are more!" The drunkard was already traumatized from dealing with these monsters who would wave at him. When he saw more human shapes appearing one after another, he could feel his legs going weak. In the blink of an eye, several shadows appeared on the opposite side of the street. Other than Chen Ge, almost everyone in their group was copied.

"What kind of monsters are these?" The drunkard, carrying the doctor, hid behind Chen Ge.

"These things are called Seizing Souls. They can mimic the shape of our shadows. They are formed from the excess negative emotions that overflowed out of the ghost focus. Remember, do not stare at them for too long, or they might seize the soul out of your body, and if that happens..." The tattooed man lowered his head. "If so many of them appear at the same time, it can only mean that our movement has been discovered by the shadow."

"Seizing Souls? Such horrid things, but..." The drunkard turned to Chen Ge with confusion. "How come none of them copied your shadow?"

Chapter 658: I Am One of You

The question from the drunkard stumped the tattooed man. He also had no idea why the Seizing Soul did not take on the shape of Chen Ge's shadow—this had never happened before. He sneaked a look at Chen Ge. The question was on his lips, but he was afraid of voicing it. In the end, he laughed awkwardly and changed the subject. "Just try not to stare too long at them. Seizing Souls rarely appear in a large number, and whenever they do, it means that something big is about to happen."

When the two were conversing, Chen Ge did not interrupt them. He narrowed his eyes slowly as he stared at the few shadows across from the street. *If I capture all these shadows and place them inside my Haunted House, will I be able to creature a unique scenario? To have the visitors see themselves inside the scenario and use these shadows' power to confuse them. If I can make use of them, then the more the participants in the group, the greater the horror effect will be because the real and the fake will be questioned, and no one can tell for sure if it is a ghost or their teammate standing beside them.*

The tattooed man was worried, and he kept urging Chen Ge to move. "It's best if we leave in a hurry. These things are hard to shake off and harder to kill. Before they do anything, we'd better leave."

“What’s the hurry? Their resilience is perfect for a slow training. I will teach them to become individuals that will contribute to the wellness of the society. I will help them find worth in their existence and let them understand the joy of serving them and becoming the object of reverence for others.”

Other people did not know why the Seizing Souls did not dare to mimic Chen Ge, but the man knew the reason perfectly well. Zhang Ya was hiding inside his shadow. Instead of saying that these Seizing Souls were afraid of Chen Ge, they were more afraid of offending Zhang Ya.

“Please just listen to my advice. It is not safe to stay here—there is no need for us to get entangled with them. They are merely lackeys that the real shadow is using to slow us down. The real threat will come after this. The longer we stay here, the more time we’re giving the shadow to set up its trap. Do you understand that?” The regret of the tattooed man cooperating with Chen Ge grew with every minute. This man was smart, brilliant, and hardworking, but at times, he could become cunning, unreasonable, and brutish.

He would never follow the moral code binding the general public. He had his own way of doing things, but at the same time, he appeared like he had no control over his own actions. He lusted after the exciting and loved interesting things. The gene for violence seemed to be written inside his DNA.

The tattooed man had seen many movies about crazed murderers, and as a quintessential patient with psychopathic personality disorder, he knew how the movies had exaggerated the characterization. Even the most brutal criminal would not appear so openly maddened in public.

A real maddened criminal was someone like Chen Ge. When you passed them on the street, you would never realize and could never discern the imbalance inside their heart. They could not control the aggression that they were born with and rarely showed sympathy or remorse with the acts of violence that they had conducted. This was the common similarity shared by most psychopathic criminals. Incidentally, the tattooed man recognized this similarity in Chen Ge, and to make matters worse, the man did not seem to realize how dangerously unhinged he was.

The tattooed man had never once met Chen Ge’s eyes before, and he did not mean any offense by that—he merely did not dare to look Chen Ge in the eyes. He was the one of the first to move into Li Wan City, so logically, he had seen the shadow many times before. Perhaps it was his imagination, but he kept getting this similar feeling that he got from the shadow when he dealt with Chen Ge.

“You’re right; now is not the time. We need to find that door that has gone out of control first.” Chen Ge led the group toward Fan Chong’s home.

Several minutes later, after they passed another junction, Lee Zheng’s voice came from the back of the group. “Wait! Someone has gone missing.”

Lee Zheng had the most unique identity of everyone in the group, so everyone froze when they heard his voice.

“Who has gone missing?” The tattooed man turned to look and discovered that the woman who had been dragging the large box earlier had disappeared into the blood fog. “Did she run away?”

“There’s no need to search for her; she’s not coming back to us,” Bei Ye said softly. He pointed at the other side of the junction. “She went over there.”

Following the student's finger, they saw the woman. The box that she was dragging had disappeared, and only half of her body remained. There were signs of sewing on the woman's body, and all of her remaining skin appeared normal. It seemed like the woman had the habit of cutting off her skin that had gone gray and replacing it with the normal skin of her victims.

"When did she leave the group? Has she been preparing to escape?" To stabilize their morale, the tattooed man had no choice but to return to confirm the woman's situation.

"I have no idea; I wasn't paying her much attention. The woman stayed at the back of the group, and it sounded like there was something earlier that dragged her away." The high-schooler carried his black schoolbag and carried a spring knife in his palm. Since Chen Ge had exposed his identity, he removed the glasses and abandoned the disguise.

"We've been targeted by the thing in the blood fog. We need to stay together, especially those at the back." Chen Ge did not care about the woman and Bei Ye, but he did have his concern for Lee Zheng. After all, the inspector had helped him many times.

"Could the culprit be the woman wearing the red raincoat?" Jia Ming whispered softly. "When we left the hotel, I saw with my own eyes that she was walking behind us. But when we reached the first junction, she had disappeared. I find that highly suspicious."

Chen Ge knew that the culprit could not be the woman in the red raincoat, but he did not want to expose his relationship to her, so he did not answer and merely urged the rest to pick up their speed. The blood fog surrounding them thickened like this creepy small town was awakening. The blood red eyes that hid inside the blood fog were following their moves with evil intention.

They strode down the street for twenty minutes before they reached the residential area where Fan Chong lived. The blood fog there was much thicker than anywhere else in the small town. Standing several meters away, they could barely make out the shape of the buildings.

"This has gone much smoother than I anticipated—the exit is right before us!" The tattooed man was practically buzzing with excitement.

"Calm down, the closer we are to the exit, the higher the chance of danger." With them finally arriving at their destination, Chen Ge appeared surprisingly detached. He lifted his head to look at Fan Chong's home, but the fog was too thick for him to peer through even with the help of Yin Yang Vision.

Both Fan Chong and Fan Dade have gone missing, and something has probably happened to the computer with Xiao Bu's game as well. It is to be expected that the shadow has laid a trap here. No matter what we do next, I have to be extra cautious.

"Quick! Look at this! There is a message left in blood here! Someone knew that we're coming here!" The drunkard stopped at the entrance to the residential area. On the gate of the compound, a sentence dripping in blood was written. "I am one of you?"

The blood was still wet, and it slid down the iron gate.

Chapter 659: Who Can You Trust?

The sentence left on the gate was meant to sow chaos. Whether the sentence was telling the truth or not, the sentence would plant the seed of suspicion inside their hearts, slowly breaking up their temporary union from within.

“This does appear like what the shadow would do, so he probably really did leave this behind.” Jia Ming nudged Lee Zheng’s shoulder. “He likes to hide the truth in the lie and the lie in the truth—the shadow is very good at psychological tricks like that. It’s not dissimilar to people who tell you what they’ll play during rock-paper-scissors. The shadow has a penchant for psychological warfare. He has possessed innumerable people, seen the darkness inside many people’s hearts, and lived through endless lives; he is a psychological master that no one can surpass.”

“Then do you think that the shadow is currently among us or not?” Lee Zheng gripped his gun tightly. In this unknown environment, only the gun could bring him some semblance of security.

“Based on my understanding of the shadow, he probably has already assumed the identity of one of us.” Jia Ming slowed down his words. “Anyone here could be him, including you and me. And I can tell you in assured tone that the one that he assumed will be the person that you suspect the least.”

“The person that I suspect the least?” Lee Zheng looked around the group before his eyes landed on Chen Ge. Of everyone there, he knew Chen Ge the best, and he had confirmed that Chen Ge would never be the shadow.

“When you think it is him, it will never be him; but when you think it is not him, then he will take you down when you least expect it. He will never give you a chance to resist,” Jia Ming said darkly.

“You’ve said so much, but it all amounted to nothing. How come it feels like you’re merely purposely trying to confuse me?” Lee Zheng furrowed his brows. “You’re just trying to clear the suspicion away from yourself, aren’t you? To prove your innocence, you decided to drag everyone else into the mess.”

“I’ve told you many times, the shadow has already left my body. Why won’t you believe me? There is not a good person here. The two of us came from the outside world, so we are familiar with each other. Thus, in this situation, we should abandon our preconception and get to know each other again.” Jia Ming did not trust anyone other than Lee Zheng. He had been possessed by the shadow before and knew firsthand how scary the shadow could be.

“Let’s not forget you’re the reason I’m here. So, this could be your plan from the beginning, and you’re showing me these things on purpose. You want me to mistake Chen Ge as the shadow and then have me be your witness,” Lee Zheng replied coldly.

“I had no choice when I lured you here. If I did not follow the shadow’s instruction, I would not be alive, talking to you now. The shadow is much scarier than you can imagine and also much crueler. Those who are deemed useless to him are killed without hesitation. Do you know that? From his perspective, anything that cannot be used by him in this world could become his impediment, so killing them is the most suitable choice.”

“I still cannot trust you fully, unless you can help me find the shadow.” Lee Zheng lowered his voice. “The shadow lived inside your body for several years, so you are the one who understands the shadow the most. Who do you think he has taken the identity of now?”

“The biggest possibility is Chen Ge. Think about it, how can there be so many coincidences? We happened to come here, and we happened to run into him? He was trying so hard to prove his innocence earlier, and he had me lure you here to be his character witness. Things really cannot be clearer.” Jia Ming shrugged. “This Chen Ge is a fake one; he plans to turn the false Chen Ge into the real Chen Ge because, after killing the real Chen Ge, he’ll be the only one left, thus assuming the identity of the real Chen Ge.”

With the repeated persuasion from Jia Ming, Lee Zheng’s gaze started to change.

“Actually, you should have realized this sooner. Have you ever considered this questions—why would the shadow have the appearance of Chen Ge, and what is his purpose of doing all these things?” Jia Ming sighed in relief when he saw Lee Zheng’s conviction being shaken. “Of everyone here, we are the two who entered this place together, so we only have each other to trust. Other than yourself, anyone here can be the shadow.”

“I still cannot trust your words so blindly, but I will find a chance to test this guy.” Lee Zheng looked at Chen Ge, and his gaze was complicated.

“You can test him all you want, but I hope you’ll remember this. The shadow will transform into the person that we think is the least possible. He flits through the gaps in human hearts. We are no match for him, and the only way to survive is to not become his enemy.” Jia Ming knew about the relationship between Chen Ge and Lee Zheng. He was trying to persuade Lee Zheng when his eyes accidentally wandered to Lee Zheng’s shadow.

“The person you least expect...” Jia Ming’s eyes suddenly widened. He quickly turned his head around to pretend to look elsewhere to hide the panic in his heart.

“What’s wrong with you? What is it this time?” Lee Zheng pushed the barrel of the gun into Jia Ming’s back.

“It was nothing. I thought I saw something running through that building earlier.” When Jia Ming spoke, he did not turn his head around. His heart was quivering with emotions.

The more impossible you think it is, the more likely the shadow will be that person. I personally lured Lee Zheng here, and from my perspective, he is the only person that I can trust, but seeing this from another perspective, could it be that he has taken the bait on purpose? Use me as a meat shield to disguise himself? Actually, he is the real shadow, and I am the temporary pawn that can be abandoned at any moment. No one will believe the words of a criminal, especially when he is detained by a police officer.

The more Jia Ming thought about it, the more afraid he became. It felt as if cement had been poured into his neck, and it was unable to move. Now, he lacked the courage to even look at Lee Zheng—he was afraid that he might accidentally expose his weakness and ruin the shadow’s plan.

“Now is not the time to ramble among ourselves. Let’s go in. Even if the shadow is one of us, it won’t make too much of a difference.” Chen Ge disliked this kind of guessing game. If not the presence of familiar individuals, he would have used his most familiar method of elimination to find out the truth. Ignoring the sentence on the gate, Chen Ge was the first to step into the residential area.

“I know the door is on the first floor, but as for the actual room itself, we’ll need to search further.” The tattooed man followed behind Chen Ge. When he entered the area, the skulls on his arm all showed fearful expressions.

Chen Ge had been to Fan Chong’s home several times, but the layout of the buildings there was different from the one in his memory.

“This place seems to have retained its look from several years back.” Chen Ge looked at the surface of the buildings, which was corroded by the blood fog. He could make out a few unclear words. “Li Wan Hospital’s family apartments? This residential area once had this name, did it? Li Wan Hospital refers to that private hospital in the town, right?”

“That private hospital was built much later—the real Li Wan Hospital was taken down decades ago,” the tattooed man explained. “Li Wan City once had a hospital that specialized in the treatment of infectious diseases, but it was closed down for some mysterious reasons. Some of the more important labs have been moved to join Jiujiang People Hospital and a hospital in Xin Hai.”

Chapter 660: It’s Not That Complicated

Chen Ge knew that Fan Chong’s residential area was old, but he did not realize it had once been the family apartment for hospital staff, and the bigger surprise was that there had once been a hospital specializing in infectious disease treatment located in Li Wan City.

“I heard that from the locals that stayed here,” the tattooed quickly explained, afraid that Chen Ge might get the wrong idea. “Before the door in Li Wan City was opened, this was already a strange place. If any of you have stayed in Eastern Jiujiang, you should know that the older generation refuse to live near Li Wan City, on the account of how ‘dirty’ this place is. Actually, their ‘dirty’ has two meanings—one was because a serious infectious disease has swept this small town before, and the other was that there have been many inexplicable events happening here.”

“Can you still find that hospital now?” Chen Ge stood before the first building.

“You’re one with strange interests. How come it feels like the more dangerous a place is, the more interested you are?” The tattooed man thought about it before shaking his head. “I don’t know its exact location. According to rumors, the hospital has been flattened to the point that even the foundation has been uprooted. They dug a hole around the building and basically allowed the whole hospital to sink into the ground.”

“They buried the entire building? Is it because not even a brick of the old hospital is allowed to escape?” Chen Ge turned around to look at the tattooed man. “But how come I have not heard of such a big story before? Do you know what the disease that ravaged Li Wan City so many years ago was?”

“I’m sorry, I’m not clear about that. Some said it was leprosy; others said it was a mutated strain of smallpox. There are all kinds of rumors, and there are only two that I can confirm. This disease is not only airborne, but it can be contracted through water as well, and the chance of contraction through water was several times higher than airborne infection. The second fact is that patient zero was a child, but it is unclear whether it was a boy or a girl.”

“It is a waterborne disease, and the first patient was a child, huh?” Chen Ge was suddenly reminded of Eastern Jiujiang’s dam and the large hole at its bottom as well as the Eastern Jiujiang’s Fresh Water Plant that was strategically built next to the dam. That was the location where Chen Ge first crossed paths with the shadow.

Is the shadow intending to use the water plant somehow?

The lead in Chen Ge’s mind was getting clearer and clearer.

There’s monster hiding inside the underground hole at Eastern Jiujiang’s Dam, and that dam provides the water for the water plant to be cleansed. If the shadow mixes some kind of substance into the plant, then all the citizens in Eastern Jiujiang will be affected without even knowing it themselves.

Chen Ge did not voice his latter postulation, but he had a rough idea of the shadow’s plan. The shadow was made up from an impossibly large amount of despair and negative emotions. It was impossible for him to give birth as a man, and no mother was resilient enough to carry a fetus like that, so the shadow turned his focus to the method of Bury Seed.

He planned to plant himself into another child and use the whole of Eastern Jiujiang as his source of nutrients. Chen Ge still had not understood the actual steps of the shadow’s plan, but he understood that the scale of the shadow’s plan was much bigger than he had previously anticipated.

Ghost fetus is a four-star mission, but just what does a four-star mission looks like? Will it involve all of Eastern Jiujiang?

Chen Ge had not conducted a four-star mission before. The only connection that he had was the several missions that he had completed to unlock the mission School of the Afterlife.

Ghost Fetus was a four-star mission, and the Cursed Hospital was a four-star mission. Coincidentally, Chen Ge had just confirmed from the tattooed man that after the hospital in Li Wan City was levelled, part of the staff had joined a hospital situated in Xin Hai, and the name that he mentioned was similar to the name of the hospital that he had seen sewn on the boy’s patient garb.

The two new four-star scenarios provided by the black phone seemed to be connected, and this gave Chen Ge a headache. All the clues that he had found out so far crowded his mind, forming a death knot.

Four-star scenarios are too dangerous. Even with Zhang Ya, it might not be insurance enough. I have to squeeze every last drop out of this 3.5-star mission! As long as I can capture the shadow, I can force out the truth from his mouth!

To see through the levels of complicated connections to get to the core of the truth was an ability that Chen Ge did not possess, so he planned to use his own method to discover the truth.

Nothing is that complicated—everything can be made simpler!

It had not been that long since Chen Ge obtained the black phone, but he had grown at an impossible speed. However, the direction of his growth seemed to be against what the black phone anticipated. Chen Ge was barreling down a path that no one could really tell, but for now, it was smooth sailing for the man.

The shadow's earlier proclamation suggests that he is hiding among us, then I'll pay close attention to everyone here. If they're alive, I'll watch over their moves, but even if they die, I'll carry their bodies with me. If all else fails, I'll turn Li Wan City around from its foundation. I refuse to believe I am unable to find him!

If the shadow was a master at psychological combat, then Chen Ge was the other extreme. They possessed similar appearances and had commonalities in their personalities, but the way that they dealt with a problem was vastly different.

"There's not time to waste, follow me!" Chen Ge removed the hammer from his backpack and activated the recorder. He was very calm. Li Wan City was merely a 3.5-star scenario, and most of the isolated scenarios had been taken down already. With the guide that he had obtained from Xiao Bu's game, the difficulty of this mission had been lowered to its minimum, and he decided to abandon his previous disguise.

He called Zhang Ya's name, and the shadow behind him rippled—it felt like a woman putting on make-up, trying back to smile at him.

"Today, you appear to be more unusual than before."

Chen Ge dragged the hammer and entered the building. There was firmness behind his every step, and with his every step came a strange sound from his surroundings like there were many people crowded around him.

"Be careful!" The tattooed man stopped at the entrance. The five skulls on his arm were wailing like they were trying to escape from his body. This had never happened before. "None of these women killed by the ghost fetus are willing to come near this place—there has to be something very dangerous hidden here, but the door leading out of this place is situated inside this building as well..."

"Stop hesitating. Since you have made the choice to believe him, have faith in the man." Scissors licked the wound on the corner of his lips. He had learned from the tattooed man how to put on a better disguise as a deranged murderer.

"He might not look like it, but he's quite trustworthy at the most crucial moment." The drunkard carried the doctor and also entered the building.

Seeing them enter, the tattooed man gritted his teeth, used his arms to cover the five tattoos, and strode into the building.

"Do you think we should follow them?" Jia Ming did not dare look at Lee Zheng. He thought that he had disguised it well, but even he did not realize that he had started to follow Lee Zheng's opinion, and that was very different from when they first entered Li Wan City.

"Let's follow him, I have some questions to ask Chen Ge anyway." Lee Zheng and Jia Ming entered the building. The blood fog thickened. A man with a smiling face stood outside the building for a long time before joining the rest.