

## **Horrors 741**

### **Chapter 741: Familiar Feeling**

The strange feeling from the back of his neck grew stronger. Chen Ge's eyes moved away from the mirror and slowly turned around to look behind him. Hair skidded across the tip of his nose. Chen Ge was greeted by a scarred face and a pair of eyes filled with venom.

An upside-down man was standing behind Chen Ge, staring at Chen Ge with his inverted facial features!

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Inside the 'haunted' toilet, a man was attracted by the strange mirror before him, then he felt something strange on the back of his neck. He turned around and saw this inverted face staring at him. No matter who it was, they would definitely be spooked by this experience.

Qu Changlin, who was hiding inside the toilet, had his ears perked up, ready to feast on the visitor's scream, but he waited for a long time, but all he heard was an eerie silence.

A gap broke open next to the edge of the mirror. Using the lamp in the corner of the toilet, Qu Changlin could roughly make out a figure in the dark. He was tall with one hand stuck inside his pocket and the other holding an old backpack.

Time seemed to have frozen. After who knew how long, Qu Changlin saw the man slowly raised his hand. Just as he thought that the man was about to clamp his hand over his lips to stop himself from screaming, the man's palm reached toward the face hanging behind him.

"It's just a mannequin? This is strange. How could a mannequin possess such a despairing gaze?" the man mumbled to himself. He seemed to be deeply attracted by something. He put down his backpack and used both of his hands to carefully examine the skull that was hanging upside down.

The finger caressed the mannequin's cheeks almost lovingly before travelling to its eyes and lashes. Seeing this, Qu Changlin, who was hiding behind the mirror, felt a chill run through his body. Various scary thoughts filled his mind, and the hand that was holding the remote was already drenched with sweat.

...

Chen Ge examined the mannequin's eyelashes. When he first laid eyes on the mannequin, he had already been mightily impressed. It was completely different from the mannequins available on the market, and it was even different from the mannequins at his own Haunted House. This mannequin was mixed with the creator's emotions, and each detail was perfect.

With the skill of Mortician's Make-up and Dollmaker's Talent, the mannequins created by Chen Ge's hands had the most realistic appearance, but even so, the mannequins could only be seen as the perfect vessel. Without the control of his employees, they would appear rather lifeless.

As for this mannequin that fell from the ceiling, even though due to material restrictions, the realism was not comparable to Chen Ge's mannequins, the eyes were so lively!

“He uses very common materials, so how did he manage to create such a lively pair of eyes? Just how many pairs of eyes has the creator observed to be able to come up with something like this?” Chen Ge held the mannequin’s head carefully. He did not think that it was that scary. If anything, there was an admiration rolling in his eyes. “I’ll need to create a lot of mannequins, and that is such a big workload for one person. In the future, as the number of scenarios increases, the number of mannequins needed will shoot up as well. I will need to find an assistant. This person’s talent is not bad. With some training, I’m sure they’ll be a valuable addition to the Haunted House.”

Chen Ge’s brain turned very fast. Even when he was standing alone in the toilet, holding a mannequin’s head, he was still thinking about his own Haunted House. “To have talent like this stay inside the toilet to scare others is such a waste.”

Chen Ge let go of the mannequin, and the latter swung lazily before the cubicle. Chen Ge walked to the fifth cubicle.

“Is someone inside?” He did not know what kind of impression he would have given the worker hiding in the dark. In any case, Chen Ge did not care; he merely wanted to find the mannequin’s creator.

“Where are you? Are you playing hide and seek with me?” Chen Ge sounded weirdly excited, like a child discovering a new toy.

In this strange environment, hearing Chen Ge’s voice, the hiding Qu Changlin felt his heart quivering. He even suspected that the shock had been too much, and the visitor had gone insane. The sound of knocking came from the fifth cubicle. Hearing that, Qu Changlin’s heart started to race.

For some weird reason, in that moment, it felt like the role of the hunter and the hunted had swapped. The person hiding in the secret room was the victim, and the man wandering outside stubbornly was the real culprit.

“If you’re not going to open the door, then I’m coming in, okay?” Even though it was phrased like a question, Qu Changlin did not hear any hesitation from the speaker.

BANG!

The door of the fifth cubicle was pushed open, and Chen Ge looked in with some disappointment. “Then everything should be inside the last cubicle.”

He walked to the door of the last cubicle, but Chen Ge did not stride in directly. He leaned against the door to listen for any sound coming from inside the cubicle. Timing was crucial to activate traps inside the Haunted House, so there had to be at least one employee handling one scenario because not everything could be controlled remotely.

Chen Ge looked around. “This place is only so big. Where could he be hiding? The last cubicle should contain some scares as well, but if I was the employee, I wouldn’t pick to hide there.”

Adopting the worker’s perspective to view this problem, Chen Ge suddenly lifted his head to look at the crack in the ceiling where the mannequin dangled from.

*Is the worker hiding in the ceiling?*

A brave idea popped up in Chen Ge's mind. He walked to stand beside the mannequin and looked at the hole above him.

*Someone has to be controlling the mannequin. I wonder, where will the lines connected to the mannequin lead me?*

The monsters and ghosts that other people avoided were openings for Chen Ge. He stood beside the mannequin and thought for a while. Qu Changlin, who was behind the mirror, had his heart gripped by a vise. He had no idea what the man was going to do next.

Chen Ge walked back to the cubicle and summoned Ol' Zhou after taking out the comic from his backpack. He pointed at the hole in the ceiling, and Ol' Zhou nodded.

Chen Ge kept knocking on the door of the last cubicle, and while the employee's attention was thus distracted, Ol' Zhou sneaked into the hole in the ceiling.

For Qu Changlin, this was incredibly strange. The sound of knocking kept coming, but he could not see anyone.

*What is he doing?*

Qu Changlin held the remote with both hands. Sweat slid down his face, and the constant knocking annoyed him. The torture lasted for a minute before it got the better of Qu Changlin.

*Either you come in here or you get out. Who are you trying to scare by wasting your time here?*

He pushed the door open a gap, wishing to confirm Chen Ge's location. But at that moment, he felt something brush against the back of his neck like a centipede crawling over it.

He scratched behind it, and his fingertip touched something that felt like a ball of watergrass. Subconsciously, Qu Changlin turned to look behind him.

A pale face with an upside-down smile was hanging behind him. "Found you."

#### **Chapter 742: When You Try to Mix with Others, It Only Makes You Look More Alone**

Qu Changlin had worked at Nightmare Academy for three years, and he had never expected such a day to ever come. The face was only a few centimeters away from him, and he could see every detail on it clearly, including the corner of the lips that was curved upward, the stubbles that needed a quick shave, and the eyes that were radiating iciness no matter where they looked.

"My boss wants to meet you." The man's lips opened and closed. It looked like he was speaking, but Qu Changlin did not think that he could hear anything. Perhaps the nerves responsible for auditory stimuli had stopped working, or perhaps his whole brain had gone into shut down.

This was no longer that important. It did not even cross Qu Changlin's mind to understand why there was someone hanging behind him. His heart returned to normal after two seconds. Blood rushed to his brain instantly, and as he regained control of his body, Qu Changlin reacted the way most normal people would.

“Who’s there?” His voice shook. Qu Changlin rammed into the door before him, and the thin mirror was pushed open. He wished to run out, but the door of the fourth cubicle was locked by someone.

Trapped inside the cramped space, Qu Changlin leaned against the door of the cubicle. His eyes were glued to the secret room where he had been hiding earlier. There was nothing inside the narrow space. Qu Changlin had his hands on his chest, certain that he had seen someone there earlier. His head had been dangling downward, and he had been hanging behind him!

“Where did he go?” The scene from earlier had become an emotional scar in Qu Changlin’s heart. If he did not get to the bottom of this, he believed that he would never have the courage to stay inside any dark, small spaces again.

The air-conditioning in the Haunted House blew. The temperature was very low, but sweat kept pouring down Qu Changlin’s forehead.

*The cubicle door is closed, so the visitor should still be here.*

Misery loved company. Just as Qu Changlin was contemplating this serious question, there suddenly came a knock from the cubicle door behind him.

The banging on the door was like a note from hell. It held a unique rhythm, and the constant knocking felt like it landed on Qu Changlin’s heart. He wanted to move, but his legs refused to listen to his orders. They turned into noodles and failed to support his body anymore. The man slid down the wall.

An extra person somehow appeared in the secret room. He wished to run out, but the cubicle door would not open. Qu Changlin realized that he was trapped in a corner. He stomped on the ground as he struggled to stand up.

*If it is the visitor who is knocking on the cubicle door, then who was the person that I encountered inside the secret room?*

Qu Changlin leaned heavily against the cubicle door. He reached into his pocket, attempting to find his phone and report the situation to his boss. However, just as he started to dial the number, before he even had the chance to say anything, he heard a completely unfamiliar voice. “It’s useless even if you try to hide. He will follow you home, hiding inside your shadow, leaning in from your window, lying in wait underneath your bed.”

The voice came from outside the cubicle, from the person who had been knocking constantly on the door. The man did not purposely use a scary voice to scare Qu Changlin. Rather, the man’s voice was level, like he was merely describing the truth.

Qu Changlin clamped his hands over his lips. The call was already connected, but he did not dare to speak. He could see a cold gaze looking at him, but he did not dare turn back, did not dare move a muscle; it was as if his whole body was frozen.

*What should I do now?*

...

Chen Ge was leaning over the wall of the fifth cubicle. He looked down at Qu Changlin, who was curled into a ball on the ground, and his eyes were burning with admiration.

*He can stay inside this toilet with a horrible stench for so long even without wearing a mask. Professional etiquette aside, his professional skill is at least eighty marks.*

With one hand on the wall, Chen Ge's other hand was holding the mannequin that dangled from the ceiling, and he shook it constantly. The knocking sound that Qu Changlin had heard was actually the sound of the mannequin's head banging against the door.

The sound of a head banging against the door was naturally different from when one used one's hands. Without the man knowing about it, Chen Ge was conducting a simple test on Qu Changlin.

*Good ability, very professional. The only thing left is his personality and morality.*

When Chen Ge was contemplating that question, Ol' Zhou silently materialized behind him. He was holding a thick notebook about human anatomy.

"What's this?" As Chen Ge flipped through the notebook, he found that it was filled with pages of hand-drawn mannequin blueprints. They ranged from various styles and models.

"According to the clues, there is a spare red table lamp in the haunted house. I found this notebook underneath that lamp. It doesn't seem like he wants people to see this." Ol' Zhou had spent quite a bit of time with Chen Ge, so he knew his boss very well and would sometimes prove to be quite astute and caring.

Hearing Ol' Zhou's words, the image of Qu Changlin in a ghost outfit hiding inside the toilet where visitors would rarely enter appeared in Chen Ge's mind. Out of boredom, he used the light from the table lamp and studied the profession of mannequin making.

The front part of the notebook was mostly hand drawn designs by Qu Changlin himself, but the latter part felt more like his diary.

"1st September, the number of visitors coming to the Haunted House continues to drop. I can hear people walk past the door, but no one comes in. Sad.

"3rd September, I've updated the mannequin in the toilet. I only need to spend an extra fifty RMB on each mannequin, and they will bring a realistic feeling to the visitors! I'm sure everyone will be impressed!

"4th September, the cold drizzle washed out my face. Boss didn't agree with my update idea. Oh well, the Haunted House is not doing so well—this is not his fault.

"15th September, a visitor finally wandered into the toilet today! Let me think, how shall I scare him? Ha ha ha ha!

"30th September, Xiao Die said that she wishes to focus on her career at the moment and has no time for a relationship. I will need to work harder so that I can support her in the future.

"15th October, why do they always say that I'm a boring person? I've done so many things that I didn't like so that I won't stand out anymore, but how come they still see me as a strange guy?

"30th October, so Xiao Die already has a crush.

“1st November, a new month has begun. I swear to become a more interesting person that can get well with others. Yes, you can do it!”

There were many other similar short entries. Each one of them sounded optimistic, but Chen Ge could sense the melancholy behind it. He put down the notebook, and his eyes wandered to the words on the walls of the fifth cubicle.

Unlike the Third Sick Hall, the scenario was decorated by their corresponding workers. Qu Changlin was responsible for the toilet, so the words on the walls should have been handwritten by the man.

The ghost story in the toilet was about a boy by the name of Xiao Lin. He was hated by everyone due to his prankster nature. In the end, everyone decided to gang up against him.

It was a simple story, but it reflected Qu Changlin’s life. The Xiao Lin in the story should be talking about him.

“Not all fish stay in the same ocean, so why push for things against nature?” Chen Ge thought about it and decided to stop messing with Qu Changlin. He called Ol’ Zhou to return to the comic, and he pulled open the door of the fourth cubicle.

#### **Chapter 743: When You Bloom**

After forcing the cubicle door open, Chen Ge immediately squatted down when he saw Qu Changlin collapsed on the ground. “Are you alright?”

Seeing the man enter, Qu Changlin’s first reaction was not to ask for help but to try and retreat as fast as he could. He held both of his hands over his face, like if he could not see anything, the monster outside the door would not exist.

“What’s wrong? Are you hurt? Do you need me to call the emergency number?”

Chen Ge’s voice was laced with concern. In Qu Changlin’s memory, ghosts would not ask questions like that. The fingers that shielded his face opened a slight gap, and Qu Changlin peered at Chen Ge through it.

It was a common, honest face with concern in the eyes. How could someone like that be a bad guy? Qu Changlin gradually put down his hands. He was about to ask Chen Ge for help when he was suddenly reminded of something. After he was scared by the hanging man inside the secret room, there came a constant knocking from the door of the fourth cubicle, which meant that there should be a second ghost prowling the scenario!

Suppressing the anxiety in his heart, Qu Changlin tried his best to calm down, but when he spoke, his voice was still shaking. “Did you hear some kind of weird knocking earlier? It had a constant rhythm and sounded completely different from a normal knocking sound!”

“A knocking sound?” Chen Ge scrunched up his brows before relaxing them. “I think I know. You probably heard this.”

Taking one step back, Chen Ge grabbed the mannequin that was dangling in midair. He nudged it slightly, and the mannequin's head bounced into the door again and again. "When I came in, I saw this mannequin swinging back and forth. Its head was bouncing against the door, which is probably what you heard."

After hearing Chen Ge's explanation, Qu Changlin fell into deep contemplation. The knocking definitely did come from the mannequin, but now, there was another question in his mind. He found Chen Ge's voice suspiciously familiar. When the ghost threatened him earlier, it was this voice that had spoken to him!

"Let's get out of here first, this place smells." Chen Ge reached out to grab Qu Changlin's arm, trying to help him get up.

"Don't come near me!" He swung Chen Ge's hand away and sat between the cubicle and the secret room.

"Why? What are you so afraid of, or are you still acting? Then, what shall I do to cooperate?" To ease the pressure on Qu Changlin, Chen Ge moved out of the way and allowed the former a free route toward the exit.

"Acting?" Qu Changlin lay on the ground for almost a full minute before he calmed down. After confirming that Chen Ge did not mean him harm, he slowly let his guard down. "Are you one of the visitors?"

"What do you think? Could I be one of the workers here and you're the visitor?" Chen Ge attempted a joke, but the way he looked at Qu Changlin was like how one would appreciate a piece of moving art. Qu Changlin tried to stand up by pushing both hands against the ground, but he failed. He was about to try it again, but he suddenly realized how preposterous that would have appeared to the visitor.

To preserve his own pride as the Haunted House's worker, Qu Changlin coughed drily and said in an unnatural tone, "That's right, you're lucky enough to have found the hidden plot inside this scenario! I am the key character at this scenario. Unfortunately, I'm currently injured by a spirit, and I need you to help move me to the headmaster's office."

"You're the key character here? But according to the entry I read in the diary and the words written on the walls, shouldn't the main character that this scenario is based on be called Xiao Lin?" Chen Ge was not purposely trying to make Qu Changlin look bad; he was merely curious about everything.

"Ha ha, actually, I am that Xiao Lin," Qu Changlin admitted shyly.

"But the Xiao Lin in the story is only a child, whereas you look almost thirty already. At least the hair on your head points toward that."

"You..." Qu Changlin had just experienced the scare of his life, and he was still recovering. That, combined with his natural reticence, meant that he did not know how to respond to Chen Ge.

"In any case, you need to rest. The headmaster's office, is it? Okay, I'll take you there." Chen Ge gripped Qu Changlin's arm. "Can you stand up?"

Qu Changlin held the wall as he stood up. His legs were weak, and he tittered like a toddler learning how to walk for the first time.

“Aren’t you a bit too in character?” Chen Ge then proceeded to do something that surprised even Qu Changlin. He picked Qu Changlin up on his back. “Lead the way then.”

“Okay...” Qu Changlin did not know how to feel. Just minutes earlier, he had received a message from his boss telling him to scare this visitor, but several minutes later, he was being rescued by the same visitor. The phone in his pocket vibrated several times. Qu Changlin silently took it out. His call to the boss had already disconnected. The phone was filled with messages from his boss.

“What are you doing? I told you to go scare him, not to reform him!”

“Where is the modified mannequin that you often boast about? Didn’t you tell me you’ve placed multiple traps inside the toilet and could scare even the boldest of individuals?”

“Why are you climbing on his back now?”

Reading the messages on his phone, the bitterness in Qu Changlin’s heart grew. He did not like to speak and was not good at maintaining interpersonal relationship. He really did not know how to answer his own boss now. His boss continued to message him, but Qu Changlin stopped looking at them. Helplessness and worry overwhelmed him. He felt like a failure, and his head sunk even lower.

“This Haunted House is quite scary. When I entered the toilet earlier, I was given quite a fright by the mannequin that dropped down from the ceiling. Especially the mannequin’s pair of eyes, they look so real. The creator must be a genius.” Chen Ge made it sound like this observation was made casually.

“You think that mannequin is scary?” Qu Changlin’s lowered head slowly lifted.

“I’ve been to many Haunted Houses, and this was the first time that I’ve been scared by a mannequin. The creator must be a genius, and he must have spent a great load of time studying this. The design of the toilet is quite amazing as well. The visitor knows that there will be a scare inside the fourth cubicle, so when they open the door, their attention is attracted to the mirror. So, when the mannequin suddenly drops down from the ceiling then, it creates such a scary effect. This is an ingenious design.” Chen Ge was sincere with his praise.

Hearing the compliment, color returned to Qu Changlin’s eyes. “Actually, there are seven traps in total hidden inside the toilet. This time, there was an accident, and only one was triggered.”

“That’s impressive. Even with just one trap triggered, this is already one of the scariest experiences that I’ve had inside a Haunted House, but the story behind it annoys me somewhat.” Like he was talking to a friend, Chen Ge’s tone was friendly and natural.

“The story? I think it’s fine...”

“I got the gist after reading the diary entries and the words on the walls. Xiao Lin is a child that no one pays much attention to. No one wants to be his friend, so he tries to get other people’s attention by playing pranks, but in the end, everyone in the class ganged up on him.”

“Is there a problem with that story?”



“No, the story is fine, but I personally feel like Xiao Lin’s tragedy could have been easily avoided.” On the surface, Chen Ge was discussing Xiao Lin’s story with Qu Changlin, but he was actually sharing some of his personal thoughts. “When a person tries to mix in with the rest, he will only make his life that much more tiring. To give up on one’s hobbies and habits just to pander to others is truly a sad life.”

Qu Changlin nodded slightly but did not respond.

Chen Ge did not mind it and continued talking. “I’m sorry, I’m afraid I’ve wandered too far from the topic. Actually, it’s because I see my past self in Xiao Lin. Like him, I used to be alone and afraid; my goal in life was to make friends with everyone. Eventually, I confessed my feeling to a girl whom I had a crush on, but she rejected me.”

Qu Changlin listened to Chen Ge’s experience and found resonance without even realizing it. “It must have felt awful to be rejected.”

“Naturally, the pain stuck with me for a long time. During that period, I tried my best to stand tall again, but only those who have experienced this will be able to understand how difficult that really is!”

Chen Ge practically took the words out of Qu Changlin’s mind, and the latter found himself nodding along.

“Relationships are something that is very hard to explain. One day, I overheard a conversation between my friends. The girl that I had a crush on actually hated how I always try to pander to others. At that moment, I understood, I needed to rediscover my true self.”

A melancholy not reflected by his age coursed through Chen Ge’s voice.

“I moved to a new company and started a new life. I stopped trying to live my life for other people’s sake. I gave my new life and new job my best, trying to become my best self. Now, I am successful both career-wise and relationship-wise. I am even my own boss, and I don’t need to care about pandering to others anymore.”

Just hearing Chen Ge say that, Qu Changlin felt rather jealous, and he breathed out sincerely, “You are an amazing person.”

“It’s not me that’s amazing. If one is willing to change, anyone can be that amazing, including the Xiao Lin in the story.” Chen Ge stressed on the word change. “Everyone is their own main character. What we need to do is to spend time and effort on things that can make us truer to our real self.”

Chen Ge’s words left such an impression on Qu Changlin that his eyes were glistening. “Brother, actually, I have a similar experience to yours. I did have a crush on a girl, but now, I’m a bit lost...”

“There’s no need to be lost, just remember this.” Without raising his head, Chen Ge moved past the door of the storage room where Xiao Die <sup>1</sup> should be. “Be your best self. When you bloom, the butterfly will come.”

## **Chapter 744: Stairs**

Chen Ge's words hit the softest part of Qu Changlin's heart, and a seed started to germinate there. The encouragement from this stranger formed a stark contrast to the messages from his boss, and the bitterness that had been hidden inside his heart for years finally exploded.

*It's about time for a change.*

This thought expanded in his mind at an uncontrollable speed. He clenched his fists tightly, but after a while, he slowly calmed down. Life was not a fairy tale; the premise of living one's dream was to first stay alive.

Qu Changlin was isolated by the workers at Nightmare Academy, which was why he had been arranged to monitor the toilet with its repulsive stench. He was bad at interpersonal relationships and lacked confidence in himself.

Being reminded of those facts, he sighed softly. "I wish to change, but change needs courage and ability, and I have neither of those..."

"You underestimate yourself too much. Even though we don't know each other, I can already see several positive points about you. Perhaps you simply haven't met someone who knows how to appreciate your talent. The scenario you're responsible for is so scary, and the mannequin inside it is horrifying, but you can stand the horrible stench and monitor everything in the dark. From how I see it, you have the talent to become one of the best Haunted House workers." Chen Ge slowed down his steps. "I hear there is a Haunted House in Western Jiujiang that is currently thriving, and it has a very good review online. If you really want to initiate a change, you can try your luck over there. After all, if you want to change, might as well start at the best location. Regardless of the result, at least you've given it your all."

Qu Changlin remembered Chen Ge's words and slowly nodded. Actually, his suspicion had not been vanquished, but he tried to ignore it. After all, this was his first time running into such a helpful visitor inside a Haunted House, and it was natural for him to be weirded out.

With the guidance from Qu Changlin, Chen Ge carried him to the headmaster's office. "We've arrived. Now what?"

"Just put me here." Qu Changlin shielded his phone with his hand. Reading the messages sent by his boss, he felt rather guilty toward Chen Ge. The man had lent him an ear and even helped to organize his life, but he was supposed to scare him with malicious intent. That did sound rather immoral.

"You need to be careful on your own. Right, how about you give me your phone number? If you run into any trouble, feel free to call me." Chen Ge was being very friendly, and that only made Qu Changlin feel much worse.

"Okay." Just outside the headmaster's office, while the camera was watching, the two exchanged numbers.

"I've explored the toilet, so I think I shall move onto another scenario, see you later." Chen Ge smiled and took out the diary from his backpack to see where he should head next.

Seeing Chen Ge walk away, Qu Changlin did not know what to say. He sensed a unique power from the man, one that could give people around him hope and warmth.

The phone in his palm kept vibrating. Qu Changlin lowered his head to look—it was his boss calling him. The latter probably saw Chen Ge leave on the surveillance footage, and he quickly called to demand an explanation. After he accepted the call, before Qu Changlin could say anything, he heard the yelling from his boss.

“What the hell are you doing? How many times did I stress for you to scare him and not show weakness? What have you done? Look at yourself!” Qu Changlin held the phone, leaned against the door, and did not say anything.

“Why aren’t you speaking? Remember the promise you gave me? Didn’t you swear that you would let him walk in but crawl out? What happened in the end?” The boss was angry. After all, his best employees went to visit another Haunted House, and all three of them came back unconscious. Now, the competition had come to visit his own haunted house, and four of his employees had already been scared! No one would be able to suffer something like that quietly.

“I said that I would let him walk in, but I didn’t promise that it would be him who crawled out. Now, he walked in, but I crawled out; I didn’t go back on my promise, did I?” Qu Changlin put his phone to the side. He was in no mood to listen to his boss’ scolding, but he thought that hanging up would be too rude.

“Say that again? Qu Changlin! If you dare, say that again!” On the other end, the boss was so angry that his voice was shaking. Hearing no answer from Qu Changlin, he did not even end the call but took out the walkie-talkie to give orders to the remaining actors at his Haunted House. “I don’t care what kind of method you use, I need you to scare that visitor by the name of Chen Ge! I will not allow him to ruin the name of Nightmare Academy!”

“Boss, he has cleared all the previous scenarios already. I think it will be very difficult to scare him.”

“I don’t care what you think! For now, I need all of you to gather!”

After the call ended, Qu Changlin could not hear his boss’ voice anymore. He leaned against the door, and it was hard to tell what he was thinking.

...

*The classroom, storeroom, toilet... Let’s see, where should I go next?*

Chen Ge flipped through the diary and started to read the fourth entry.

This entry was related to the stairs, and it recorded a classic ghost story known as the thirteenth step.

Every stairs at Nightmare Academy had twelve steps, but at certain moment, a thirteenth step would appear, and those who stepped on it would see some strange things.

*When I first entered the Haunted House, the worker reminded the visitors to pay attention to the stairs. This can only mean that some of them have been trapped. This is perfect. I should go take a look. Perhaps I can run into another valuable employee like Qu Changlin.*

The toilet was adjacent to the stairs. Chen Ge walked back the corridor and reached the mouth of the stairs.

There was no light inside the staircase. The weak light filtered in from the corridor, and the deeper one went, the darker it was. The corner landing between the two floors was particularly dark.

*The stairs are made from cement, how are they going to make an extra step appear out of thin air?*

With the desire to master this 'technique', Chen Ge placed the diary inside his backpack and walked into the staircase without turning back. The background music changed, and cold air came from all corners. As Chen Ge headed up, he counted the steps in his mind.

*One, two... eleven, twelve. Everything's normal, there's no problem.*

Chen Ge was quite disappointed. He walked up two floors at one go, but he could not find anything wrong with the steps.

*Perhaps I've done something wrong.*

He ignored the other 'people' and took out the diary and started to read while standing on the stairs.

*Without any hints, how am I supposed to trigger this scenario?*

When Chen Ge was figuring out that answer, footsteps suddenly came from downstairs. He looked through the gap in the middle but saw no one coming up.

*Is it the background music?*

Chen Ge could not see any visible speakers. Suddenly, he heard a child's voice. It was very soft, and it repeated the same word again and again. "Daddy."

*Where is this voice coming from?*

Chen Ge had more sensitive hearing than normal people, but even he could not tell where the voice came from. The person seemed to be broadcasting the audio from different speakers in unison.

"Stop pretending and hiding. I've already seen you!"

Chen Ge placed a ballpoint pen in his shirt pocket, carried his backpack with one hand, and headed downstairs.

## **Chapter 745: Weight of a Father's Love**

The light in the staircase seemed to dim, and cold wind blew from above his head; the operator of Nightmare Academy seemed to have switched the air-conditioning to its lowest setting. When Chen Ge returned to the previous floor, he realized with a shock that the safety door that led from the staircase to the corridor had been locked, and a new seal had been taped across it.

"It's locked? They plan to trap me inside the stairwell?" Chen Ge stood at the door and looked out through the glass panel on the door. Shadows flitted across the dim corridor. They were of various sizes and appeared to be armed with various tools. When his attention was distracted by the shadows out in the corridor, the footsteps echoing down the stairwell returned.

“Someone is following behind me, huh?” Chen Ge was not worried. He listened carefully and realized that it was a child’s voice underlying the sound of footsteps. The boy seemed to have been separated from his father and was crying for help.

“This voice sounds weird; it doesn’t sound like that of a child but is much shriller than a normal adult’s voice. It’s like an adult with a prepubescent voice.”

Closing his eyes, Chen Ge tried to pinpoint the boy’s location. “The sound of the boy is mixed with a very weak sound of static, so it should be coming from a speaker. Even though the sound that came from downstairs is equally scary, it sounds much clearer, so the child should be located at the lower part of the building.”

As he went down the stairs, the light became dimmer and the walls dirtier. There were more conspicuous stains on the walls, and they made one feel uncomfortable. Other than that, Chen Ge discovered something interesting. At every landing between each floor, there was a black joss stick urn where three joss sticks sat. There had to be a purpose behind them, but for the time being, Chen Ge had no idea what they were for.

“The joss sticks are too damp to be lit, and some of them are even snapped...” Chen Ge squatted down next to the urn and picked it up in his palm to study. To his surprise, there was a picture placed under the urn. He picked up the picture. It was that of a man in his thirties, wearing a mask and keeping his head lowered like he was very afraid of being seen.

Chen Ge noticed that the man’s left hand was holding someone’s arm, but that part of the picture had been torn off.

“Daddy...” The voice suddenly came from behind Chen Ge.

“Are you calling me?” Chen Ge turned back to look, but there was nothing there. Narrowing his eyes, Chen Ge walked in the direction that the voice had come from, and he spotted a mini speaker hidden inside the stained wall.

“No wonder there are so many dirty stains on the walls—it makes it more convenient to hide these mechanisms.” Chen Ge’s finger swiped the front end of the speaker. “Something like this must be very expensive. If there’s a chance, perhaps I should install some in my own Haunted House. One of the reasons Nightmare Academy has grown so big is because it has mixed technology and ghost story, and that seems like the way to go.”

Chen Ge was not a prideful man. His willingness to learn was how he had managed to survive thus far.

“I haven’t checked my account for so long. I suppose there should be quite a healthy sum inside it. After unlocking the four-star mission, I should approach Director Luo to ask for a loan to purchase a set of the latest equipment for the Haunted House. Having my people control the latest equipment, hiding a scarier horror behind the darkness, that should be able to give the visitors quite an experience.”

Holding the picture in his hand, Chen Ge carried his bag and headed further down the stairs. The sound of footsteps and the boy’s crying came nearer and nearer. Nightmare Academy wished to create this impression that the ghost was catching up to Chen Ge. Using the various mini speakers installed in the stairwell and the manipulation backstage, that was exactly what they managed to do.

For a normal person, after they entered the stairwell and realized that the strange sounds were moving closer and closer, their confidence would slowly crumble, but unfortunately, that day, Nightmare Academy met their match.

After noticing the sounds getting closer, Chen Ge not only did not panic; he headed directly toward the source of the sound like he could not wait to meet the ghost in person, and that proved such a headache for the person manipulating the system in the background. He communicated nonstop with the actors to stop Chen Ge from entering the next scenario before the preparation was done.

“Using the sounds to discern the source is pointless. Each floor has been installed with those speakers, and the sounds could have come from any of the speakers.” Chen Ge stood inside the stairwell patiently. He focused. He attempted to pinpoint the third source of the sound amid the disturbance of the footsteps and the crying to triangulate the worker’s location.

Seeing this, the person thought that Chen Ge had given up. He quickly barked orders at his workers, telling them to get to work.

Chen Ge did not know about the things happening backstage. He utilized his superhuman senses and picked up two sets of footsteps coming from the lower floor, one heavier than the other.

“One of them comes from the speaker, and the other probably means that the actor is on the move.”

Without any warning, Chen Ge charged forward. The moment that he grabbed the doorknob of the safety door, there was another pale hand that grabbed the same doorknob from the other side. Two hands fell on the doorknob at once, and they lifted up their heads at the same time to look at each other through the glass.

In the corridor, there stood a girl wearing Nightmare Academy’s uniform. She wore very thick make-up, and her cheeks were pale. A purplish strangle mark was visible across her neck. The scariest thing was her eyes. A finger was stuck through her pupil, and both sides of her lips were painted with red dye.

Inside the stairwell, Chen Ge tightened his grip on the doorknob, and his eyes were glowing coldly. The image of a woman was reflected in his eyes, and a unique presence radiated off him. It was hard to describe, but in any case, he did not look like a living person.

The girl did not expect that someone would suddenly grab the door and appear behind it. Her face twitched, but she maintained her professionalism. To prevent the finger that stuck in her eye from sliding down, the girl tilted her chin upward and looked at Chen Ge in this strange posture.

“Are you the spirit inside the stairwell? The evil spirit that I will meet once the thirteenth step appears?” Through the door, Chen Ge studied the girl carefully. Hearing Chen Ge’s words, the girl was confused. It felt like Chen Ge was more in character than she was, but soon, a difficult conundrum was placed before her.

As a Specter born out of resentment and despair, how was she supposed to respond to Chen Ge?

If she said yes, then it would appear like she was more easily persuaded than required. Why should a Specter answer his question simply because he asked it?

But if she said no, then how was she going to explain the way that she was dressed?

The girl turned her neck to glance at the camera at the side. The script had not provided her the necessary lines should this situation arise.

"If you won't answer, I'll take it as a silent admission. However, I have a small complaint—where is the thirteenth step that you promised me?" Chen Ge pulled on the safety door, and it swung open just like that. However, at that moment, something strange happened.

The girl seemed to have received a new order from the backstage through her earpiece. She looked behind Chen Ge, and her expression was fearful like she saw something very scary behind Chen Ge. "He has returned!"

After saying that, the girl turned and ran away; she did not even stop to pick up the prop finger that had fallen to the ground.

"He has returned?" Chen Ge turned back to look. He assumed that it was Ol' Zhou or the Pen Spirit who had appeared.

He glanced at the girl that soon disappeared, and he was confused. "Is this some kind of a story within a story, or has a real Specter appeared? Then again, this place is built at the spot where Yin energy gathers, so the possibility of that is not zero."

Chen Ge was still thinking when the sound of footsteps and the boy's crying came from the staircase again. After hearing them for so long, it started to annoy him.

"Are you done? Fine, you want to find your father? After I find you, I'll let you experience once and for all the weight of a father's love!"

## **Chapter 746: Brother and Sister**

For Chen Ge, whether he ran into a fake ghost or a real ghost, he was not afraid. If anything, he wished that his visitation would not be smooth sailing. If there was a talented living employee, he would slowly persuade them to join him; if there was a real ghost, things would be even easier. He would capture them and take them with him to be educated.

Looking down the empty corridor, Chen Ge was about to head downstairs when one of the doors down the corridor was pushed open. It was unclear whether it was pure coincidence or another set up.

"Found the exit! F\*ck! It's been behind us all along!" A man's voice trailed down the corridor. It sounded rather familiar to Chen Ge. Soon after that, a couple raced out of the room. They were the visitors that had entered the Haunted House with Chen Ge.

The man's name was Lee Yuan, and his girlfriend was Xue Li. There was another quiet woman with them; she was reserved and passive. Chen Ge did not know her name.

"Huh? Why are you here alone?" Lee Yuan spotted Chen Ge. He noticed the unnaturalness on Chen Ge's face, standing alone in the stairwell. He waved and yelled, "Brother, there's a ghost inside the stairwell! You need to come out! Don't stay there for too long!"

"It's alright, the ghost has just left, and I doubt she'll return any time soon."

"You can't never tell with something like that. By the way, where are the three students that should have escaped with you?" Lee Yuan and Xue Li stuck close together. From their unkempt appearance, it felt like they had been through a lot.

"The four of us got separated after being chased by a ghost." Chen Ge came up with a random excuse.

"We heard the screams even though we were far away. I'm so sorry for abandoning you guys in the classroom earlier." Lee Yuan was quite embarrassed. From his perspective, he was partially responsible for what had happened to the three students. "In any case, we should move together from now on. We have already explored the art studio and music classroom. We're planning to go to the abandoned storeroom next. What about you?"

"I've already been to the abandoned storeroom; the actor there is not feeling well, so I plan to head to the bottom of the staircase next." Chen Ge took out the picture that he had found hidden under the black urn. "I plan to complete this mission of the thirteenth step."

"Thirteenth step?" Lee Yuan glanced at the picture. "Brother, listen to me. I suggest you stay away from the stairwell. I've joined a WhatsApp group for those who have visited Nightmare Academy, and according to them, the stairwell might really be haunted."

"Haunted stairwell?"

"According to the rumors, before the building was completed, there was a boy that came here to play, but he accidentally trapped himself somewhere and was never found. A small group of visitors swore that they saw a child inside the stairwell. They said that the urn in the stairwell wasn't placed there to scare the visitors but to hold the boy back so that he wouldn't wander off from the stairwell."

"Do you have more details on this boy? Like his life experience, deficiency in his personality, or his family background?" Chen Ge listed off a series of questions that Lee Yuan had not considered before.

"Er... what's the point of knowing all that?"

"What is the number for that WhatsApp group? Can I join?" Chen Ge sounded very excited. "I wish to share stories with them as well."

"Sure." Lee Yuan added Chen Ge to the group. "Those three students are so young, and they are separated from the rest of us; they must be very afraid now. Should we go look for them?"

"You can go and find them. I shall follow my own plan." Chen Ge took the picture back and turned to leave.

"Are you really not afraid of ghosts?" The voice was coarse like grinding sand. The one who spoke was the woman who had been really quiet so far.

"Are you talking to me?" Chen Ge stopped moving. He was rather surprised because he noticed that the woman had been staring fixatedly at him, or rather, at the middle-aged man in the picture that he was holding.

"Yes."

"Of course, I'm afraid, but I'm not going to show that."



"If you're afraid, then I advise you stay away from the stairwell. Nightmare Academy used to have both day and night tours, but the night tours were cancelled because people kept reporting the appearance of a boy inside the stairwell." The woman's gaze moved away from the picture to Chen Ge's face. "This is not a joke. I know it sounds hard to believe, but he really exists. Didn't you realize that even during daytime, the workers here rarely enter the stairwell or use the stairs to move between floors?"

"From the way you're speaking, it sounds like you know some insider details." Chen Ge waved the picture that he was holding. "You've been staring at the man in this picture. Do you know him?"

"He's my father. It was he who brought my little brother here to play ten years ago." The woman revealed some startling information. Not only Chen Ge, both Lee Yuan and Xue Li were stunned.

"In other words, the boy who went missing was your little brother..." Lee Yuan held Xue Li's hand and took a step backward. He felt his scalp going numb. The teammate who had been following them was the big sister of the little boy in the ghost story. This kind of mixing of ghost story and real life was a feeling that was hard to describe.

It was like the event from a fairytale suddenly happening to them. Lee Yuan and Xue Li subconsciously edged toward Chen Ge.

"So, why are you at this Haunted House? Just to visit? Aren't you afraid of being reminded of the tragedy from the past?" Chen Ge did not expect the woman to possess this identity. She did not answer Chen Ge's question verbally. Instead, she smiled.

"This Haunted House is already scary enough, and now you're only making it scarier. Can we not stay here anymore? Let's move onto the next scenario." Lee Yuan came forth to smooth over the tension. He patted Chen Ge's shoulder. "Let's move together, we shouldn't get separated anymore."

After discovering the woman's identity, neither Lee Yuan nor Xue Li wished to continue the tour with her. Just the thought made their skin crawl.

"That's fine with me, but I'm going to the stairwell next. Are you sure you want to come with me?" Chen Ge put the picture away. He did not care about the woman's warning and headed into the stairwell again.

"Why are you so stubborn?" Xue Li and Lee Yuan did not know what to say. Chen Ge was purposely heading into danger, and the man refused to listen to any persuasion. In the end, neither of them dared to follow Chen Ge into the stairwell, and they split up again.

Darkness slowly swallowed Chen Ge, and this time, he headed down the stairs to the lowest floor.

If someone had been around then, they would have witnessed a strange scene. A young man walking down the stairs with his head lowered, counting the steps on his lips like he was conversing with someone.

A glint of excitement burned in his eyes. Occasionally, he glanced at the camera, as if he was trying to memorize all the cameras' location.

## **Chapter 747: Games**

After hearing the woman's story, Chen Ge's interest in the boy in the stairwell only grew.

"He dares to wander out in daylight, so he can't be a normal lingering spirit. At the very least, he is at the level of a baleful Specter. But why would he stay here so long? Is it because he has unfinished business here? Could it be that the object of his possession is buried deep in the building's foundation?"

Chen Ge felt uncomfortable knowing that a boy's soul was unable to find peace. He decided to help the boy fulfil his last wish. Chen Ge rushed down the stairs. He did not know how to encounter the boy, so he found a blind spot from the camera and summoned Ol' Zhou.

"Just now, a woman told me a little boy is wandering in this stairwell, can you sense his location?" Chen Ge asked Ol' Zhou. He was hoping for a positive answer.

"I can't feel anything. Perhaps he's in hiding." Ol' Zhou looked around. "But this place is rather strange."

"Strange? What do you mean?"

"A normal lingering spirit wouldn't be able to appear in daylight. Even for baleful Specter, the period of appearance is only very short. If they wander too far away from their object of possession, it would cause irreparable damage, or at least, that should be the case. However, our Haunted House is an exemption. I do not know exactly why. Even in broad daylight, we can appear anywhere we wish inside the Haunted House. There is no limitation of time, and in fact, the place feels very comfortable to us."

After describing Western Jiujiang's Haunted House, Ol' Zhou turned to study the stairwell that they were in. "Even though this place is not as comfortable as the Haunted House, I can stay here for a very long time. This building appears to have shielded itself fully from the sunlight, and the Yin energy gathered here is very thick."

"You can stay in Nightmare Academy for a very long time?" For a moment, Chen Ge thought of having Ol' Zhou stay behind to act as his spy.

"Not only me, even normal spirits like the students from Mu Yang High School should be able to do it. This kind of location is too rare," Ol' Zhou said meaningfully.

"Nightmare Academy has been in operation for many years already. This is probably due to its unique geographical location and mode of operation." Chen Ge leaned against the wall.

"The negative emotions vented by the visitors pooled around this place, and combined with the natural Yin energy inside the building, if this is allowed to continue, this place will only attract more and more ghosts and monsters." Ol' Zhou's brows were heavily creased, and he looked severe. "Just like how our Haunted House occasionally has special visitors, if the people here cannot deal with them, something very dangerous might happen, and it might lead to unimaginable results."

"You have a point." Chen Ge thought silently. "So, what do you think we should do?"

"We should take over such a dangerous location. After all, we have already gotten used to the danger." Ol' Zhou sighed and offered his advice.

After a moment's silence, Chen Ge finally said, "With great power comes great responsibility. Even though I don't live in Xin Hai, I can't just let bad things happen to Xin Hai. After we deal with everything

at our place, we should contact Director Luo, and with his help, hopefully, we can take over this building and snip the danger at the bud.”

“It is lucky that they ran into someone like you, boss.” Ol’ Zhou’s brows relaxed, and he sighed.

Chen Ge and Ol’ Zhou were a dream team and formed a great contrast to the boss of Nightmare Academy and his employees. This was probably due to Chen Ge’s natural personal charm.

With Ol’ Zhou in tow, Chen Ge ran to the first floor. The end of the stairwell was not the exit but a large door painted on the wall. “The door is drawn on the wall. According to the game rules, if the visitors found out the large door was merely a painting, they would definitely panic.”

After spending so much time inside the building, Chen Ge had familiarized himself with Nightmare Academy’s layout. Both left and right sides of the building had a ‘not so safe’ safety corridor leading to dead ends. The real path was the elevator in the middle, the elevator used by the visitors when they started the tour.

There were pros and cons to this arrangement. On one hand, it could elicit the darkest fear in the visitor’s heart, but on the other hand, should they encounter a special visitor, the employees themselves had no place to run.

“Ol’ Zhou, after we find the boy, you stay near the elevator. Keep the elevator on your floor.”

“Understood.”

With Ol’ Zhou’s help, Chen Ge felt much more relaxed. However, the man in the surveillance room was in for a surprise because he was about to witness something inexplicable.

After Chen Ge and Ol’ Zhou arrived at the first floor, they soon realized that the building not only went up, it also had a staircase that led down into the basement. Staring at the basement first floor that was specially painted using red paint, Chen Ge paused. The atmosphere there was completely different to the scenarios above. The staircase was filled with dust and littered with dusty newspapers. Some of the copies even had dark brown stains on them.

Picking up a random one, Chen Ge scanned through it. “Carelessness of the father, the violation of building rules by the contractor, who is responsible for the boy’s disappearance?”

It was unclear whether the copies were the Haunted House’s doing or real articles. In any case, they were all articles about the missing boy, and they made the readers feel rather uncomfortable.

“The expert’s final analysis was that the boy should be hiding inside the incomplete underground basement.”

Chen Ge tossed the copy aside and bent down to glance at the basement corridor. There was no light, and the Haunted House seemed to have left this place untouched.

“If this is not a scenario, there should be a no-entry sign near the entrance, but there isn’t one, so this means that even though it might not be related to theme of phantom school, it is a part of Nightmare Academy. Technically, it should be a hidden scenario.”

To prevent being discovered by the camera, Ol' Zhou maintained a distance from Chen Ge. The latter walked down the stairs alone. His shoes stepped on the newspaper, and they rustled noisily. When he was halfway down the stairs, Chen Ge suddenly stopped. He turned back to look before turning back forward. His eyes landed on the last step. "This staircase has thirteen steps?"

Chen Ge was sure that he was not wrong; the staircase that led underground indeed had thirteen steps. "Is it a mistake by the builder, or did Nightmare Academy do this on purpose? Why would there be an extra step?"

Carrying the backpack, he moved downward. His left foot landed on the thirteenth step. Looking around, Chen Ge did not see anything special. However, when he tried to move forward, standing only on his left leg with his right leg moving in midair, the ground before him suddenly 'opened up'!

A man about the height of a seven-year-old child jumped out, screaming. Red paint covered his face, and he attempted to grab Chen Ge. Chen Ge's full attention was on the thirteenth step, so he did not expect there would be a hidden compartment on the ground just beyond the last step.

The man surprised him, but Chen Ge's reaction when he was surprised was different from all the other visitors. Before confirming the man's identity, Chen Ge's swung his backpack at his attacker and yelled out a name subconsciously. "Xu Yin!"

#### **Chapter 748: I Only Remember, That Day, Everything Turned Red**

After those two simple words appeared from Chen Ge's lips, it seemed like Pandora's Box had opened. The cold draft that seemed ever constant in the basement stopped, the speakers suddenly malfunctioned, and there was only one sound remaining in the world.

Drip drop, drip drop...

Blood dripped from a tall spot before landing on the ground, forming blood rosettes. A thick fog of blood materialized next to Chen Ge!

The small figure hiding inside the compartment earlier lunged at Chen Ge, screaming. Before he got near, he was smacked backward by an old backpack. He landed on his limbs. He held his woozy head in his hands. Due to the attack, he did not hear what Chen Ge had said earlier. He gritted his teeth and was about to lunge forward again, but when he lifted his head, he saw a second person appear next to Chen Ge!

Fresh blood slid down the shirt, and the pair of melancholic eyes were like two blood whirlpools, swirling with curses and desperation. The man felt like his soul was about to be sucked into them.

The figure lay on the ground, and a chill spread through his body, down to his bones. His face that was smeared with red paint was frozen. It was as if time had stopped.

*Who is that? There is no such character among the employee roster!* His Adam's apple shook, and fear was pouring out of his eyes.

Seeing the figure's shaking body, Chen Ge soon discovered that he had stepped out of line. The thing hiding in the compartment was not a ghost, just a simple human worker. Actually, before Chen Ge made

his move, he did consider the possibility that his assaulter was a human, but there was no Haunted House on the market that would hire a child to be an actor, so his first thought was that his attacker was a ghost.

The time that he had spent interacting with ghosts was far longer than with human beings. Combined with Ol' Zhou's previous analysis, the chance of ghost appearing at Nightmare Academy was higher than normal, so that had led to his quick conclusion.

However, after the figure showed himself, Chen Ge realized that the actor was actually a man with dwarfism.

*I was wondering why his voice is so weird, so different from a child's; he should be an adult pretending to sound like a child.*

Nightmare Academy had spent a lot of effort trying to create a scary atmosphere. Chen Ge remembered that there was a pair of twins working there. Their Haunted House did not have real ghosts, so they relied on other methods to create horror.

*This man is an actor at Nightmare Academy. Unfortunately, he has witnessed Xu Yin's appearance. If I don't come up with a solution, he will spread this news to the others. Nightmare Academy already suspects my Haunted House of being haunted, so if they hear about this, who knows what kind of rumors they will start?*

Of course, he was not going to kill the man because of this. Chen Ge's mind quickly turned, and he came up with a solution in few seconds. The expression on his face did not change. He bent down to give the actor a helping hand as if he had not noticed Xu Yin next to him.

"You scared me. I thought you were a real ghost. Sorry for hitting you earlier." Chen Ge tried to help the actor get up, but the man's eyes were not on him at all; he was fully focused on Xu Yin. Noticing the strange reaction of the actor, Chen Ge acted like he just discovered the anomaly. He slowly turned his head around. When he saw Xu Yin, his legs wobbled, and he landed on the step.

"What the f\*ck! When did he appear behind me?" Chen Ge looked like he had been given quite a scare as well, but he soon recovered. "The actors at your Haunted House are quite good! I've visited many Haunted Houses. Yours is the first to be able to scare me like this."

Taking a deep breath, Chen Ge asked in a curious but shaky voice, like he was meeting Xu Yin for the first time, "Bro, how did you manage to walk without making a sound?"

Chen Ge stood up and walked toward Xu Yin. He only took a first step when he heard the shrill scream coming from behind him. "Don't go over there! He..."

The man's face was scrunched up in fear. The scream probably pulled on his vocal cords because his voice was unnaturally high.

"Stop acting, I am an owner of Haunted House myself. Even though you all are very professional, you're not going to scare me with just that." Chen Ge walked stubbornly to Xu Yin and raised his arm.

"He is not one of our actors!" Following the man's blood-curdling scream, Chen Ge's hand landed on Xu Yin, and then his fingers phased through Xu Yin's body. "Hmm?"

Chen Ge acted like he was surprised by this development. He was stunned by disbelief. About two seconds later, he adopted the same expression as the man. "There are really ghosts in this world?"

When he was 'frozen in fear', the man finally lost it. He crawled up from the ground and raced down the corridor. Shocked into mobility by the scream, Chen Ge snapped into motion. He jumped down the stairs, grabbed his backpack, and started running!

"How long has there been a real ghost in your Haunted House?"

"How would I know? If I knew that, do you think I will still work here? Basement one! Basement one! This is basement one! Please send help!" The man grabbed the phone and yelled for help. He and Chen Ge raced down the corridor, and the situation was chaotic.

Seeing the man and Chen Ge run away, Xu Yin stood on the step with a confused look on his face. Ol' Zhou, who had been hiding, joined him soon after. "Our boss sure is a quick thinker. He's pushing the blame, no, I mean, he is planning something big!" Ol' Zhou did not dare to get too close to Xu Yin. He stood several steps above the young man and said, "Our boss now needs your cooperation."

Xu Yin turned back to look at Ol' Zhou. He seemed to slowly understand what Chen Ge was doing.

"Do your best to scare them. There is still time to salvage the situation." Ol' Zhou looked weirdly excited. "It is about time we do it our way."

Hearing that, Xu Yin nodded. Droplets of blood slid down his shirt. He took one step forward, and the speakers throughout the building started to blur with static.

...

The smell of blood curled around Chen Ge and the small actor's body like tight lasso. The red ghost trailed behind them and could not be shaken loose no matter what. The two flew down the underground corridor and went back to the surface using another set of stairs.

"Boss! Are you there? Anyone? Say something!" The man was so anxious that he was about to smash the phone. He waited for a long time before the boss who had been calling other people finally replied.

"Xiao Zhao, you were perfect! I saw everything on the monitor! You managed to scare that man until he fell!" Nightmare Academy's boss praised the actor, but in that situation, the actor had no mood for compliments. His throat was sore from all the screaming.

"Boss, come to first floor quick! Call people to come here! I'm being chased. I can't hold on much longer!" The actor's small legs moved quickly; his whole body was about to collapse.

"Is the visitor chasing you? Don't worry, I'll get people to go help you now!" The boss still cared about his worker.

"It's not the visitor!" the man yelled between breaths.

"Then who is it?"

"A ghost wearing a red shirt!"

"We have an actor wearing a red shirt?"

"It's not an actor!"

"Then who is it?"

"It's a f\*cking ghost! A real ghost!"

## **Chapter 749: The Rumour Is Real**

The small figure howled, and that finally brought his boss out from his joy. "A real ghost? A red ghost?"

As a Haunted House operator, he knew quite a bit about the rumors regarding red ghosts. Only people who had deep resentment and were heavily tortured before death had the chance to turn into a red ghost. Regardless of whether it was real or not, that was how most ghost stories and movies portrayed it.

"A red ghost appeared in my Haunted House, and he's not one of my hired workers, huh?" That was how things currently stood, but the boss still had a hard time understanding it; certain things needed to be personally experienced to fully grasp it. "Xiao Zhao, do not panic, I'll get people to go and help you right away! I don't care what that thing is; as long as he is in my territory, he needs to listen to my orders..."

The call was ended by the small figure directly; he did not have the time to listen to his boss boast. Inside the dark corridor, the man ran as fast as he could. This was the first time that he had felt fear inside the Haunted House.

The previously familiar environment felt unknown. A thin layer of blood seemed to cover all the props and mechanisms that he came across along the way. All the speakers malfunctioned, and the static continued endlessly. If one listened closer, there were some whispers and painful wails mixed in.

The backstage seemed to be broadcasting a recording taken at a crime scene. The feeling of despair and pain spread through the Haunted House, torturing everyone's ears, frightening their souls, pushing them to the edge of their sanity.

"What is happening? What's going on? How come it feels like the whole building is coming alive? It feels like the building is going to swallow us whole!" The man screamed for help. He felt so helpless.

"How am I supposed to know? I came here from so far to visit you. I thought that I could come here to relax, but you found me a real ghost!" Chen Ge realized that the man was running too slow. Even though Xu Yin was purposely moving slowly, if they continued at this speed, they would be caught up to. Therefore, he picked up the man directly. "Stop wiggling! Where is the exit to this Haunted House?"

"The elevator! The elevator is the only exit! For some of the floors, you need the worker's ID to access it. That is the exit!"

Chen Ge held the man by his clothes, and like a living suitcase, his body was dangling in midair, but that did not stop him from screaming.

"Okay!" Chen Ge memorized this detail and rushed to the elevator at the middle of the first floor. He pressed the button rapidly, but the elevator stopped at the first floor basement and refused to come up!

“What’s going on? Has the elevator broken down?”

“That’s impossible! The boss is conscious of the possibility of an accident inside the Haunted House, so the elevator is maintained every day!”

“Then, can you tell me why the elevator isn’t coming ?” Chen Ge hissed anxiously like he was almost breaking down. “Is there another worker in the basement? Are they hogging the elevator?”

“No, I’m the only one arranged in the basement. The scenario is normally closed, but since today we’re being visited by...” At this point the man suddenly stopped, and the horror in his eyes grew. “Wait a minute, the elevator not coming up means that someone has been holding the elevator at the basement. Does this mean there is more than one ghost?”

The man was frightened by his own thought. Without the use of make-up, his whole face was already white.

“If the ghost has taken over the elevator, then this route is not safe anymore. After all, since they can control the elevator, they could use the elevator themselves!” The elevator was completely enclosed. The man did not dare imagine being trapped inside it with a ghost.

“What do you think we should do?”

“Run! Find other people! When we’re in a crowd, it should be fine!” The man was really panicking. He had seen how Xu Yin appeared; that impactful image was seared in his mind forever. In the future, whenever he dreamed about it, he would bounce up in bed. Without a better option and with the ghost approaching them, Chen Ge grabbed his backpack and the man and rushed to the nearest scenario.

He kicked open the door, and the sound of a piano drifted out. The music was sad like something bad had happened to the pianist.

“Should we find a place to hide?” Being carried by Chen Ge, the man finally had the chance to calm down and think.

“You sure? In most scary movies, the characters die because they corner themselves while attempting to hide.” Chen Ge had far better experience when dealing with ghosts.

As they conversed, the sound of blood dripping appeared in their ears. The dripping sound was like a note asking for their lives. It was too late to leave. Following the man’s direction, Chen Ge hid them behind the piano.

The smell of blood slowly thickened. Through the gap on the bottom of the piano, Chen Ge and the man saw a pair of bloody red shoes.

The feeling of despair grew like vines. As if sensing someone’s entry, the piano played louder and more violently. The melancholic aria entered Xu Yin’s ear, and the melancholy in his eyes deepened. He turned to glance at the door and saw the room name—Music Classroom.

Various musical instruments were placed inside the classroom, and the most eye-catching was the piano placed in the middle of the room. Above the piano was a rope, like someone had committed suicide by hanging using the edge of piano as support.



As the melody from the piano changed, the rope above the piano started to move on its own like the spirit had returned.

The blood flowed, and Xu Yin stopped in front of the piano. He reached out to pull on the swinging rope and sat down before the piano. After a moment, his hands fell on the piano keys as the memory from the past rushed into his mind.

The bloodied fingers moved on the keys, and a different melody rang around the classroom. It felt like a rushing river, like moonlight, a dream that was always out of reach.

Hiding behind the piano, Chen Ge looked at Xu Yin. Suddenly, he realized that he did not know Xu Yin as much as he should. This unique Red Specter seemed to be hiding many things in his heart.

"If there's a chance in the future, I should buy a piano for Xu Yin. Perhaps he can use music to 'narrate' the words in his heart."

When the actor was scared sh\*tless, Chen Ge took out his phone to look at piano prices. He put it away after looking through few pages.

"A new piano wouldn't be that familiar. Actually, this piano from Nightmare Academy is not bad."

"Please, shush." The man held onto Chen Ge for dear life. He saw Chen Ge as his partner, albeit one that he was not familiar with.

The music suddenly stopped, and blood seeped out from underneath the white and black keys. However, upon closer inspection, this weirdly bright 'blood' was not as viscous as real blood.

Soon, the piano went out of control, and it started to play a strange tune. Xu Yin, who was seated at the piano, was surprised, and then he heard a forlorn weeping sound coming from inside the piano.

## **Chapter 750: So Painful...**

The 'blood' that leaked out from the piano keys pooled toward Xu Yin's fingers. His brows were locked, and his pair of sad eyes stared at the inner part of the piano. Following the weeping, a pair of pale hands suddenly reached out from inside the piano to grab at Xu Yin!

The fingers closed, and the pair of hands reached toward the chair, but they failed to grab anything.

*They evaded?*

The master of the hands did not panic. The 'surprise' so far was merely a test; the real terror would happen later. Reams of black hair curled around the piano strings, and a thin shadow crawled out from inside the piano. Long hair covered her face, and Xu Yin could see her bright red lips and scary expression through the gaps in her hair.

"Why don't you stay? Why don't you stay?" The woman lunged at Xu Yin like crazy. When the hair that blocked her sight part, her eyes that wore a red-colored contact finally got a good look at this unique visitor. What appeared before her eyes was a red shirt drenched in blood, wounds that had not recovered, and black threads that weaved through the flesh and blood!

This scenario was completely different from what she had expected; it was the first time that she had encountered something like that in her five years of working there!

Suffocation made her lightheaded, and the nerves in the woman's body were pulled taut. When she was almost touching the special visitor, she realized that time was slowing down, and her body became lighter as if her soul had been sucked out. She could see her body slowly approaching the visitor like in an out-of-body experience.

Chen Ge avoided Xu Yin 'narrowly' and ran out as fast as he could!

"Hey, Sister Ling is still in there!" The small man waved his arms wildly.

"Then, why don't you go back to save her?"

"Er... Sister Ling's sacrifice has brought us valuable time; we shouldn't waste her kindness."

When the man said that, Chen Ge turned back to look. Honestly, he was quite worried, too. *I hope Xu Yin won't act too rashly and traumatize the poor woman.*

Inside the music classroom, the black and white keys were dyed red. The piano had gone out of control, and it played a maddening aria. Actually, when Chen Ge entered the classroom, he had immediately noticed that there was someone hiding inside the piano. The piano in the classroom was so much bigger than a normal one. It seemed to have been modified by Nightmare Academy to include a small space inside where a person could hide.

Chen Ge madly ran, and the small actor screamed, attracting lots of attention. The actors inside the Haunted House were used to screams and cries, but as they paid it more attention, they realized that something was wrong. How come it sounded so familiar? It sounded like the cries of their colleagues!

Chen Ge led Xu Yin through the music classroom, the clinic, and sports equipment room. He used less than three minutes to race through these scenarios.

By the time the workers received the notice from their bosses and left their scenarios to gather, Chen Ge had already led the small actor to the second floor.

"Why is the elevator stuck at the basement? Your Haunted House is built on top of a ghost's liar, is it?" Chen Ge's casual observation caused the man to burst out in cold sweat. There had been a rumor about that before. He had not believed it then, but with reality placed before his eyes, he could not retort. Just the thought of the elevator that they used daily had been taken by countless spirits and ghosts; he could not stop his body from shaking. Who would dare take the elevator in the future?

"Where should we go next? Where are your people? I can't run anymore!" Chen Ge was really tired. To make it look more authentic, he had been running like crazy, and everyone who saw it would think that he was an unlucky fella.

"I don't know, the elevator is the only exit. How about we go to the other scenario first, please don't stop! You have many other scenarios you haven't visited, right?"

"Have you encountered a visitor that goes on the tour while carrying an actor? Stop wasting time! Tell me where your boss is! I'm sure he can deal with this!" Chen Ge was not going to harm the workers too much. Previously, when the actors from Nightmare Academy and futuristic theme park went to his own

Haunted House to make trouble, the Nightmare Academy's boss must have known about it. After all, without permission from the boss, the employees would not have left the haunted house on a working day.

Chen Ge's tour at Nightmare Academy had been heavily scrutinized by the boss as well. He wanted to scare Chen Ge as revenge, but he could not have anticipated that he would be roped into his own plot.

*We're both Haunted House owners, so there should be plenty of conversation topics for us.*

With that in mind, Chen Ge sped up, and with the direction given by the small actor, he arrived at the fourth floor.

"The boss is inside the headmaster's office. There is a hidden door behind the bookshelf, and behind it is the main control panel and surveillance office." Since it was an emergency, the small actor had to share that information.

"Understood." Kicking open the safety door, Chen Ge saw a group of people gathered outside one of the doors. There were males and females in different outfits, but they were all Nightmare Academy's workers. "Is everyone gathered here?"

The workers at Nightmare Academy realized that something was wrong, so they had exited their scenarios and gathered before their boss' office. Before they realized what was happening, they saw Chen Ge appear while carrying the small actor.

Hearing Chen Ge's urgent footsteps, a few of them turned to Chen Ge. They did not have a good impression of Chen Ge, so when they saw Chen Ge was carrying a Haunted House worker, their expression turned uglier. "What are you doing? Let him down! Or else..."

Before the person who spoke finished, Chen Ge rushed to their side. He put down the small actor and banged against the headmaster's office door madly. "Look at what you've done! Let me out!"

Chen Ge yelled crazily. The people wanted to stop him when they suddenly heard the change to the background music. An unknown static started to appear. This sound came from all the speakers, and even if they blocked their ears, they could still hear it.

"What's going on?" The main control room was inside the headmaster's office. The office door was locked, and the boss of Nightmare Academy was not showing himself. "Is the boss trying new thing?"

"No! Look down the stairs! What is that?"

The red blood vessels crawled down the corridor and rushed at them like a blood wave, trying to pull them down into hell.

An indescribable chill spread down the corridor. All the lights flickered, and then a red shadow appeared at the end of the corridor. He had his head lowered, touching the ugly wounds on his arms, his mouth mumbling, "So painful..."