

Horrors 961

Chapter 961: Cursed House

The video was still playing in the camcorder. It was unclear whether it was lighting or something else, but the image quality started to get blurrier like it was covered in fog. The man's statement in the video aroused the other people's attention. With them pressing, the man revealed something that had happened to him in the past.

When he was young, his house had also had an altar. The altar had been placed opposite the living room door, covered with a thick black cloth. Before the man's grandfather passed away, he had told his family, no matter what happened, to never uncover the altar, and when he was buried, they were to bury the altar right inside his coffin. Due to the issue of inheritance, the family got into a big fight after the grandfather's death. The fight soon escalated into a physical fight, and during the altercation, someone knocked the altar over. The adults were too focused on the fight to notice the overthrown altar. But the youngest grandson looked inside the altar out of curiosity. Then the grandson did something truly unexpected. He called into the altar, "Grandpa."

This voice startled the room of adults. They all turned to stare at the young grandson, and the grandson squatted before the altar, his eyes not leaving the altar like his grandfather was really inside. In the countryside, it was well known that children could see ghosts. The adults thought that their fighting had angered the old man, so they quickly replaced the altar and then followed the will, selling the old house and burying the altar alongside the old man's urn.

Things should have ended there, but the man's voice changed. On the day of the old man's burial, the grandson who saw the thing inside the altar mysteriously disappeared. He seemed to have vanished from the face of the earth. No one knew where he had gone, and no one knew what he had truly seen inside the altar. In the video, after hearing the story, none of the partygoers were afraid. In fact, some of them even challenged the owner to open the altar of his own home to take a look.

Under the influence of alcohol and the rowdiness of his friends, they walked down the corridor. Some of them were holding bottles of wine, some were carrying their phones, and one was taping down the whole experience with a camcorder. It was raining heavily outside the old house, and the group stopped noisily next to the altar. The fatty who had passed by the altar earlier stood at the front. He reached for the black cloth and pulled it away. Then a pair of fatty hands grabbed the door of the altar. As the fatty was about to pull the doors open, lightning flashed outside the window, and the lights in the house suddenly went out.

At the same time, just as the few visitors were focused on the video on the camcorder, the lights in the real scenario also went out!

The timing overlapped. Screams came from the recording and the visitors in real life; it was felt a recurring nightmare. In the darkness, there came the sound of the altar doors being opened. Several seconds later, the lights in both the recording and real life came back on. The seven friends gathered in the corridor were shocked to see the altar doors had already been opened. The seven looked at each

other before turning to focus on the fatty. The latter was confused. He said that he did not pull, that he had not opened the altar.

At this point, Chen Ge suddenly shouted at the visitors around him, "Move back a bit!"

He looked down the corridor, and sitting in the dark corner, the isolated altar had its doors opened!

"When did it open?"

"I don't know!" The police officer was helpless. "During my last visit, this did not happen."

The recording was still playing. The camcorder was placed on top of the suitcase, and the suitcase was stuck between the bed and the cupboard, making it hard to remove. Thus, Chen Ge's group temporarily ignored the altar and continued watching the video.

Light returned, and the group of friends realized that there was nothing inside the altar. They groaned about the countryside rumors and returned to the living room. They played for a while before the party spirit left them. They cleaned up a bit, pushed the trash and bottles into the corner, and returned to their rooms to sleep. The camcorder was picked up by one of them. He returned to his room, which was the bedroom Chen Ge's group was in. The man said good night to the camcorder and then switched it off.

The visitors thought that the recording ended there, but after a while, a new recording appeared. The man who had looked calm earlier was now curled inside his bed, holding the camcorder with shaking hands. The visitors had no idea what the man was doing. The man quietly poked the camcorder's lens out of the bedsheets and aimed it at the cupboard facing the bedroom. There was no light inside the bedroom. In the darkness, the cupboard did not look that scary, but the doors were not closed tightly, and there was a gap that was left open.

The image went still, and at that moment, an eye looked out from inside the cupboard!

The image shook, and it showed how scared the man in the bed was. He was forcing himself not to make any noise. The man was sure that something was hiding inside the cupboard. He aimed the camcorder at the cupboard, but the eye did not reappear. After a while, the camcorder began to run out of battery. The man held the camcorder in one hand, and his other hand reached for something, but at that moment, the camera shook because the man seemed to touch something.

Then the man's hand that held the camcorder slowly turned to aim the camera at himself. His face appeared on screen, and behind him, curled in the bed with him, was another face!

The man wanted to scream, but strands of dirty hair curled around his neck and stuffed his mouth. The camcorder fell, aimed at the door. Outside the door, the camcorder captured the image of the altar with its doors open perfectly.

After the video ended, all the visitors were drenched in cold sweat. Knowing that their guide was no longer useful, all the visitors turned to Chen Ge. He had become the uncontested center of the group.

"The most dangerous thing in this scenario is the altar. Normally, visitors wouldn't open it, but in hellish difficulty, someone has helped us open it." Chen Ge turned around and realized that the group was

quietly waiting for him to continue. "I am just a volunteer worker; don't you guys have anything to share?"

Of the team of seven, six were theme park workers, and the only actual visitor had become the leader of the group. Chen Ge wanted to draw some information from these 'visitors', so he kept them around and pretended that he did not notice the small gestures they had been making. "The recording did not tell us what is inside the altar, but the change to this scenario has everything to do with that altar. The way to escape should be related to that altar as well. I remember one of you is the detective and gets a new clue when we enter a new scenario."

"I am the detective." The man in glasses looked at his band. "The clue is hidden inside the altar..."

The visitors left the bedroom and walked down the corridor.

The man with the glasses shone the flashlight on his phone into the altar. The group bent to look and realized that inside the walls of the altar, the word 'death' was repeated again and again, gouged out with fingernail marks.

Chapter 962: Good Blessing

"Why has death been scratched into the altar so many times? This does not look like a shrine for the divine at all!" The detective was leaning at the front. When he saw the handwriting inside the altar, his face blanched.

"Didn't the recording explain it? An altar placed on the table is for divinity, but altars left in the corner are for something else." A woman gathered her courage and squatted before the altar. She looked carefully inside. It was unknown what kind of material the altar was made of. It looked like wood, but it felt slippery to the touch like one was touching a pool of drying blood. Ever since the altar doors opened, there had been this strange smell that drifted out from it.

"Forgive me for saying this, but I don't think even a ghost would be willing to stay here." The police officer stood silently behind Chen Ge. "Other than that, the last time I was here, the bloody words weren't inside the altar."

After he said that, he turned to look at the girl squatting before the altar. The girl slowly stood up with confusion in her eyes. She silently shook her head at the police officer and the woman with the black hair. The 'visitors' appeared to have different jobs in the Haunted House. The girl appeared to be responsible for the maintenance of props.

Seeing her shake her head, the police officer's face darkened even further. He told Chen Ge with some hesitation, "How about we stop moving forward? There is no need to challenge the scenarios to rashly. We will accompany you to explore the previous scenarios slowly."

The police officer was dropping clear hints for Chen Ge. We will stop trying to scare you, so please stop moving forward to make things look ugly for us. We will do this peacefully so that we all finish this safely.

"That won't work because even if we don't go looking for them, they will come and find us." Chen Ge noticed the exchanges between the visitors. He saw the girl shake her head at the police officer, and the police officer suggested that they stop their tour after seeing the message given by the girl.

The 'visitors' were afraid, and the reason behind their fear had to do with this altar. Chen Ge grabbed the altar by both hands, trying to study it from a different perspective, but he realized with a shock that the altar was fixed to the ground like it was joined to the house. The recurring Haunted House was designed by the futuristic theme park, so why should they be afraid? Even though the workers were not that courageous, since they had been selected to join Chen Ge, they had to be people who were quick on their feet and good at their jobs. Something serious must have happened to cause them to feel like retreating.

Chen Ge pretended to casually ask a question. "Did the designers of Reincarnation not expect the scenarios to have a change like this?"

"I believe so." The police officer blurted out, but after that he realized that was not what he was supposed to say, he quickly added, "When I was here last time, I heard the few designers arguing. It appeared to be about the extra changes that appeared for parts of the scenarios during hellish difficulty that were not part of the intended design."

"As impressive as the AI system is, it will not influence reality. It has to combine manpower and machinery to influence an effect." Chen Ge stared at the inside of the altar, and his nostrils twitched. He was using his latest skill—Spirit Sniff.

"You are not wrong, but not everything in this world has an answer." The police officer did not know how to explain it to Chen Ge.

"I think I get it now." Chen Ge took a deep breath. "All the scenarios are controlled by the central computer. When combining the scenarios, there will be changes and alterations, but these changes are within the acceptable range, so the designers let them be. If anything, they were probably proud of this unexpected surprise. But they forgot about a crucial element. These idiots placed some ancient objects that they had salvaged from Eastern Jiujiang into the Haunted House! The central computer controls the traps and projections, changing the plot development and various expansion. The things that possess the old objects are also quietly changing according to the scenario itself."

"What... what are you talking about?" The police officer was confused.

"My parents own a Haunted House, and I grew up in a Haunted House, so I know more about this than you do." Chen Ge signaled for the detective to move over with his phone. "The Haunted House is a place of heavy Yin energy, and if you're not careful, bad things will happen. This Haunted House purposely stored a lot of objects of misfortune in it, so it is only normal for it to attract spirits and the like."

"Do you think we will believe something like that?" The woman with black hair still did not agree with Chen Ge. She would not suffer other people critiquing the futuristic theme park; this was similar to Chen Ge's protection of New Century Park. He could empathize with that, but it did not mean that he would compromise. "Lean closer to look at the carving inside the altar."

With the light shining, the group resisted the urge to run and followed his instruction.

"The words are carved out one by one using fingernails. Some of the red traces are paint, while others are blood. Look at the words at the innermost part. Do you see some traces of something else lodged within the carvings?"

“Yes.” The group saw clearly with the aid of the flashlight. “What are those?”

“Would you believe me if I told you that is decayed flesh?” Chen Ge’s expression was scary. “There is a stench coming from inside the altar. It’s the smell of rotten flesh. It’s hard to imagine why one would purposely do something like this. If this is not the design of the haunted house, then this is proof that something is seriously wrong here.”

Narrowing his eyes, Chen Ge scanned the room. The whole Japanese house was radiating with misfortune; every object was possessed by something. They were not palpably clear, but they were definitely there.

“Then... should we retreat to the previous scenario?” The police officer wanted to go back. He had toured the place on medium difficulty and knew quite a lot about this Haunted House, but because he knew that much, he felt that much more afraid.

“You guys look like you love this theme park. Does anyone know when they started building this Haunted House?” Chen Ge sensed intense hatred and resentment from the carving inside the altar. This was the sign of a curse.

“More than a month ago.”

“That is about when my Haunted House started to gain popularity online,” Chen Ge said directly. “The futuristic theme park saw the opportunity for money, but they didn’t see the danger behind it. After all, Eastern Jiujiang is different from Western Jiujiang.”

“What’s so different?” The woman with long hair frowned. She wanted to draw information from Chen Ge. She knew that the futuristic theme park was a foreign entity in Jiujiang, but Chen Ge was actual Jiujiang local.

“You’ll see in a bit.” Chen Ge then took out a doll with half a burnt face from inside his backpack.

“What are you planning to do? Isn’t that the little girl’s doll?” The ‘visitors’ were confused by Chen Ge.

“I wish to experiment.” After saying that, Chen Ge tossed the doll into the altar and then slammed the altar doors shut. “The altar is the most dangerous spot of the whole scenario. I will guard beside it. The rest of you should split into groups of two and try to find and explore the other rooms. If you find anything or run into anything scary, scream loudly for help. I will rush over to provide support.

“Are you sure you want to stay here alone by the altar at the end of the corridor?” There was a trace of uncertainty in the police officer’s question.

“Since he has volunteered, let him be.” The man with the glasses dragged the police officer away, and the ‘visitors’ started to focus on their search. When they had wandered away, Chen Ge silently opened the altar and took out the doll to study it. Curiously enough, the half of the face that was not burnt showed a clear expression of fear.

“The doll’s expression can change? This altar seems to possess a certain meaning.” Chen Ge then placed the doll back into it. He opened the backpack and stuffed the pair of red high heels into it as well. “You are the professional when it comes to curses. I will leave this to you. I know that you are very powerful.

Placing you inside this altar contains my blessing and hope for you. One day, you will become strong enough to advance to a Demon God as well.”

Chapter 963: Let Her Follow Us

What Chen Ge did not say openly when he told the red high heels that she could also become a Demon God was that there was already a Demon God by his side, so she had better not get any funny ideas. The doors of the altar were closed again. Several seconds later, tiny beads of blood slid down the walls of the altar. Strangely, as the blood slid down the walls, it gathered to form two distinct rivulets of blood.

They are opposing forces? To be able to resist the red high heels, is the owner of the altar also a Red Specter?

Chen Ge jumped up immediately. He was thankful that he had brought all the Red Specters from his own Haunted House other than Ol' Bai.

The problem at the futuristic theme park is far more serious than I anticipated. There are Red Specters hiding in the Haunted House, and there might be more than one of them.

As he stared at the altar, Chen Ge's heart beat very fast. The red high heels' real power was stronger than Xu Yin and the headless woman, and her expertise was curses. But the Red Specter related to the altar was able to resist her, which was something that Chen Ge did not expect.

There should be more than one altar like this inside this Haunted House. Only part of the Specter's spirit is enshrined at this altar. Just what kind of Red Specter is this?

Before the blood on the walls of the altar could converge, a shrill scream came from the room furthest from Chen Ge. The other visitors all ran over to the source of the sound, but Chen Ge stood guard next to the altar. The hurried footsteps rushed down the corridor. In the chaos, Chen Ge felt a fluttery feeling above his ear like a butterfly had landed there. Before he could reach out his hand to scratch the spot, a spirit-like voice suddenly echoed in his ear.

“When a butterfly has its wings torn away, will it feel pain?”

Chen Ge's five senses were sharper than most, but he did not sense anything out of place. The voice appeared to show up out of midair. Maintaining his posture, Chen Ge was about to summon Xu Yin when the voice reappeared and repeated the same question that it had asked earlier. The ghost did not seem like it intended to harm Chen Ge. After a momentary pause, Chen Ge opened his mouth to say, “The butterfly's wings are filled with blood capillaries that are joined to its body, so having the wings torn apart will definitely be painful.”

“Blood capillaries? Are they like the red lines on my mother? Why would such beautiful wings have blood red lines in them?” The voice of the child sounded confused and also a little bit afraid.

“When a butterfly breaks out of its cocoon, it hangs upside down. That is to ensure that the blood flows through its wings through the pull of gravity. That way, the wings will have the energy to open and flap, cracking through the cocoon.” Chen Ge's voice was soft and gentle. He was like a kindergarten teacher explaining new knowledge to the toddlers patiently and kindly.

“So, it is because of those red lines that the butterfly has such a beautiful wing, isn’t it?” The voice of the child was very innocent.

“That is not entirely true. The reason a butterfly can break out of its cocoon has plenty to do with gravity, but you can’t really say that Newton has everything to do with the beauty of a butterfly’s wings, right?” Chen Ge used scientific knowledge to attract the child’s attention while he turned his eyes and tried to look from the corner of his eyes.

“Quick, come over here! Xiao Ling has disappeared!” Before Chen Ge could take a good look at the child’s face, the police officer’s scream came from the other side of the corridor. Turning his head, Chen Ge realized that there was nothing next to him. The voice of the child earlier was just like a part of his imagination.

“That was close.” Chen Ge glanced at the police officer and slowly stood up. “Didn’t you guys go off in pairs? One has gone missing, but where is the other one?”

“I was looking for information with Xiao Ling inside the room. She screamed when she opened the closet, and when I turned toward her, she had already disappeared,” the young man explained. The Xiao Ling that he talked about was the girl who had leaned to look inside the altar earlier. She was quite young as well.

“The closet was so close to you, and you’re telling me an actual person disappeared before your eyes just like that?” Chen Ge knocked on the side of the closet. “This is not a show to trick me, right? I’ve heard Haunted Houses nowadays purposely disguise their workers as visitors to try to scare the real visitors.”

The young man had a bitter expression on his face. He wanted to scold Chen Ge because it was the latter who started this tradition, but considering the situation that they were in, he decided to act dumb. “At the time, I was rummaging through the pile of trash, and then I heard the closet being opened. It was followed quickly by Xiao Ling’s scream. But when I turned around to look, the closet door was closed, and Xiao Ling had already disappeared.”

“Is it possible that she is just hiding inside the closet?” Chen Ge pulled the closet door open, and to his surprise, there was another room hidden behind the closet. The room was rectangular in shape, there were no windows, and it was completely enclosed. The walls were taped fully with talismans, and there was a line of something that looked like salt at the entrance. The girl called Xiao Ling was sitting in the middle of the room. She looked blankly at one of the corners, and her face was devoid of any expression.

“Xiao Ling!” The woman with the long, black hair rushed into the room and pulled Xiao Ling into a hug. She whispered something into Xiao Ling’s ear, but Xiao Ling did not give her any response. Then she realized the severity of the situation. She shook Xiao Ling’s shoulders with both of her hands. “Why did you run into this room all on your own?”

“There was someone calling for help from inside the closet. I opened the door and tried to get a look but was suddenly dragged inside it.” Xiao Ling pointed at her own hair. There was the bloody handprint of a child left there. “I don’t want to play anymore. I want to leave this place!”

Then, she moved to press a button on the wrist band, but she was quickly stopped by the woman. "Xiao Ling, calm down. We have barely even started our tour. How can you give up so soon?"

The two girls conversed in whispers, but Chen Ge managed to hear everything. When I entered this place, Qing Ming did not tell me that pressing a button on the wrist band means that you will be able to exit the Haunted House.

He looked at the two girls sitting among the talismans with a smile, but he did not pursue them with more questions.

"The room is filled talismans, and there is a line of salt placed by the door. This proves that this room should be the safest place of the whole scenario. The talismans and salt are things that ghosts are most afraid of. This should be a safe zone. If you are afraid, you can consider staying here."

"Is that true?" The police officer was considering it.

"Of course, there is another possibility." Chen Ge's eyes scanned the corners of the room. "Perhaps this room is the scariest place of the entire scenario. All the talismans are to suppress the evil spirit that is trapped inside this room. Well, would anyone like to take this bet?"

"Er... then, I think we'd better leave this place."

Hearing what Chen Ge had to say, the woman quickly supported Xiao Ling out of the room.

"Remember to close the closet door just in case something follows us out." Chen Ge and the policeman walked at the front of the group, and they returned to the altar at the end of the corridor. The policeman with the sharp eye very soon noticed the blood beads that refused to melt together on the walls of the altar. His eyes bulged as he grabbed Chen Ge by his arm. "Why is the altar bleeding now?"

"Am I the owner of this Haunted House? How would I possibly know the answer to that question?" Chen Ge's expression was severe. "It was not like this earlier! This is because of all the commotion that you guys made. I missed something very important."

The few visitors gathered around to take a look. They also did not expect the altar to start to leak blood.

"Shall we open it to take a look?" The police officer gritted his teeth as he leaned closer to the altar. He lightly pulled open the doors of the altar. "There appear to be more things inside."

The visitors used the flashlights on their phones to illuminate the altar. They realized that the doll at the entrance of the altar had already been shredded into pieces. It was covered in black blood stains, and strangely enough, they saw a pair of bright red high heels placed at the center of the altar.

"When did these shoes appear?" The group had no idea how to explain the appearance of the red high heels inside the altar, and they could not explain the reasoning behind the bleeding altar.

"Did you place these heels inside the altar? Just now, you were the only one guarding beside the altar."

The woman with the long black hair looked at Chen Ge, and Chen Ge responded with a face filled with indignation.

"Do you think a man like myself would carry a pair of female high heels with me for no reason?"

“Then, who could it be?” The police officer did not even dare to reach his hand into the altar; just looking at it was enough to make him shiver in fear.

“Earlier, Xiao Ling’s scream pulled everyone’s attention. Everyone rushed to check up on her, and it was during that period that this happened.” Chen Ge’s eyes scanned every visitor. “We should be more careful. That person or that ghost is just around us, and I believe that they are watching us right at this moment.”

“Then, what should we do now?” The police officer’s hand was dangling in midair, still grabbing the altar’s door.

“Close the altar doors. We have to search this scenario for clues as fast as we can. I do not believe that the thing inside the altar will be able to continue following us.” In a serious and severe tone, Chen Ge arranged a mission for each of the visitors to complete.

Chapter 964: Spider and Butterfly

Even though the old Japanese house only had a few rooms, it gave people the feeling of being trapped inside a maze. Some of the rooms were connected; others appeared like they were separated, but there was actually a panel that could be pushed open between them. The layout was confusing, and the five rooms corresponded to the human body’s five major organs. Chen Ge also found the remnants of mantra scrolls in every bedroom.

Even though the building style was Japanese, the scrolls had Chinese characters. Most of them were written in ancient Chinese calligraphy, and Chen Ge could only recognize the Five Elements (Wood, Fire, Earth, Water, Metal).

“Five bedrooms, five organs, five elements...” The sound of a wind chime tingled in his ears. Chen Ge turned back to look. He was curious about where this sound came from. This was the second time that he had heard this.

“Has anyone realized that this house appears like a person who is lying on the ground?” The police officer had started treating Chen Ge nicely. He followed Chen Ge around loyally; where Chen Ge went, there he would be.

“A person?”

“Yes, the room that we first entered in is the head. The rooms on the left and right are the arms. The rooms below are the legs. The corridor in the middle is the body, and the altar at the end appears like it’s being stepped on.” The police officer’s comment inspired Chen Ge.

“If the whole building corresponds to a person, then the whole layout is using the energy of a living person to hinder the altar.”

“A person stomping on the power of the altar?” A shine glazed the police officer’s eyes, and he shouted excitedly, “I get it now! A person literally stepping on the god! That’s why there is a pair of red high heels inside the altar!”

The first part of the analysis was okay, but the second half was all over the place. Chen Ge wanted to correct the man, but the police officer was too excited to share his discovery with the rest of visitors. Just as the other visitors were discussing this among themselves, Chen Ge stood quietly in the corridor.

“The theme of this place is a curse, and a curse can be a reincarnation. Spreading from the malice of the first person, to clear this scenario, we will need to understand what has happened here. I found the camcorder inside the first bedroom. It recorded the history of the seven young people staying overnight at this house. The camcorder did not show the ending of the seven people, but the chance of them surviving is negligible. Those were seven human lives.

“The second bedroom is filled with a bunch of clothes, and they are all covered in dirt like they had just been picked out from a swamp. Compared to the words mentioned by the owner of the house, his parents died in a landslide, and his whole family died in the cave in. So, it would be natural for the clothes on their bodies to be covered in soil. Therefore, the clothes in the second bedroom probably belong to the parents, and the reason behind their car accident may have something to do with the altar as well.”

Chen Ge scratched his chin and slowly sifted through the known information in his mind.

“Based what the owner of the house said, on the day of their parent’s accident, it was raining heavily. The road to this mountain village is hard to navigate, and the villagers’ reaction showed that landslides are a common occurrence. Since the owners were local, they should have known about that. If that’s the case, why did they venture out that day?”

The answer was quite clear. Chen Ge turned to look at the altar.

“They probably opened the altar, and even if they didn’t, they would have discovered something dangerous and been forced to leave! But they did not expect, even after escaping from this house, they still couldn’t escape from the shadow of death. That should be the power of the curse.

“Then comes the third bedroom. I found a toppled over sacrificial table, and on the table was a black and white picture of an old man. Strangely enough, the man was facing away from the camera, so his face couldn’t be seen. Other than that, I found many children’s toys in the third bedroom, and they are all hidden under the sacrificial table. The items in that room reminded me of the story told by the man in the camcorder. On the day of the grandfather’s burial, the grandson looked into the altar and mysteriously disappeared. If the grandson also died, then we have another two more dead lives.

“The similarity across these stories is that someone has probably opened the altar.”

The first three bedrooms had items once belonging to the victims, but starting from the fourth bedroom, things changed.

“I found traces of a fire in the fourth bedroom. The bedroom walls are heavily charred, and the items are seriously burned. Who lit a fire inside the room? Why would they burn up the bedroom?”

Chen Ge temporarily skipped over the question because he did not get it.

“The fourth bedroom aside, the fifth bedroom is also very weird. This should be a woman’s room. There is a mirror by the wall, many traditional clothes are in the closet, and there are make-up boxes. The owner should be a young woman, but why would a black and white picture of an old woman be placed

in a corner of the room? The feeling of the fifth room is discrepancy. The strange thing is that the old woman's picture is facing the room like she is smiling while looking at the stuff inside.

"The picture of the old man in the third bedroom was taken from the back, but the picture of the old woman was taken from the front—why? What has happened to this family?"

Just as Chen Ge was murmuring about that, that child's voice appeared again. "Losing its wings, a butterfly will be in great pain, so why would they tear out the butterfly's wings?"

This sudden appearance of the voice startled Chen Ge. "They are probably envious of the butterfly's beauty. Some ugly people like to ruin things that are more beautiful than them. That way, they hope to feel prettier."

"Ugly people? But grandma is not ugly..." the child mumbled.

"Grandma? She was the one who tore off the butterfly's wings?"

"Yes." The child sounded sad.

"You must be alone here, right? Can I be your friend?" Chen Ge tried to keep his voice warm.

"I have my grandpa, and he doesn't like it when I run about. He is afraid that grandma might find out about me, so he had me hide in my room." There was an innocence in the child's voice.

"So, the scariest person in this house is grandma?" Chen Ge slowly lifted his finger. He wanted to confirm something. A chill came from his fingertip. There was something standing next to him, and it was not a projection!

"Can you bring me to go meet your grandpa?" Before the child could answer, he was interrupted by the sound of a wind chime. This was the third time that it had chimed.

"Grandma is here. I should go back." The boy's voice dwindled. Chen Ge used his Yin Yang Vision to look and saw a boy of about five running back into the third bedroom. He was going to chase after him when he felt the wooden floors around the corridor shake. A giant spider larger than a man crawled out from the room filled with talismans. Screams echoed everywhere. The spider crawled speedily on the ceiling and wall. Her arms were like human limbs, and she had a dried human head.

"A projection?" The monster looked so real that Chen Ge was feeling numb. "No wonder they call this hellish difficulty. This is more than scary; it gives people biological discomfort."

The spider seemed to have her eyes on Chen Ge and crawled rapidly toward him. Chen Ge saw this and led the spider to meet up with the other teammates.

Chapter 965: They Turned Actual Ghost Stories into Scenarios

"Don't just stand there! Run!"

If it was another projection, Chen Ge would have ignored it, but this spider was too spine-tingling. Even Chen Ge did not want to have any contact with it. When the other visitors saw the spider crawl out from

the room, the fear collected before this exploded, and their screams filled the whole scenario. Some had their souls sucked out from them, and they collapsed on the ground.

“Get inside the room. Hide inside the room!” Regardless of its effect, Chen Ge ran inside the third bedroom. The police officer and the girl called Xiao Ling followed behind him. “Close the door!”

The door could not be locked, so Chen Ge and the police officer used their bodies to block the entrance. The corridor slowly quieted down. Every visitor had run to hide inside the bedrooms.

That should be a projection. An actual spider would have made crawling sounds and left marks on the wall.

Chen Ge signaled for the police officer to guard the door while he walked over to the sacrificial table.

Earlier, the boy ran inside this room.

Chen Ge was sure that the boy was no projection; he should be a lingering spirit.

Lingering spirits have to attach themselves to something. Even in a place with great Yin energy, they cannot leave that item for too long.

Bending down, Chen Ge looked at the toys under the table.

Could he have possessed one of the toys?

He studied the toys one by one. He placed them in his backpack and then took them out. There was nothing out of place throughout the process. His inspection was unique but effective. If there was a lingering spirit on the toy, it would be afraid.

If it's not the toys, where could he be?

Chen Ge's eyes moved around until they settled on the picture on the table. The picture frame had been left on the ground earlier. When he entered this room previously, he had replaced it on the table. The old man in the picture was turned away from Chen Ge. After looking at it for some time, it would feel like the old man might turn around at any moment.

Pictures are common objects for Specters and spirits to possess. The key here is the dead old man depicted in the picture...

As that thought passed through his mind, a child's head poked out from behind the old man's body, but he was quickly pulled back by a pair of old, wiry hands. It happened so fast that he almost thought he imagined it.

Staring at the picture, Chen Ge narrowed his eyes.

I think I understand why the picture of the old man was taken in this manner...

There were two lingering spirits inside this black and white picture—the old man and the child. The old man showed his back, but he was actually protecting the child; the child was hiding in his embrace!

The child opened the altar. To prevent him from being taken by the monster, his grandfather has been protecting him.

Chen Ge took the picture and walked to the corner of the room. He whispered to the picture, "How did you guys end up inside this Haunted House?"

The story inside the camcorder was created by the central computer, but the grandfather and his grandson were actual ghosts!

Even though they were weak spirits and any Red Specters could have vanquished them, their appearance here led to many problems.

"I have my own guesses, but if you tell me the truth, I am willing to protect you in the future." Chen Ge stared at the picture, but he got no response.

"What are you looking at? Is there a problem with this picture?" Xiao Ling walked over. Earlier, she had wanted to surrender, but she had been stopped by another woman. Currently, she was not in a good condition.

"It does look weird. Who would take a black and white picture from the black?" Chen Ge's voice returned to normal.

"This picture doesn't look like it is a prop made by the Haunted House. It's one of the old objects the owner salvaged in Eastern Jiujiang." The girl leaned against the wall, and her face was pale. "You'd better put it down. I hear these things will bring misfortune."

Xiao Ling had been holding her arm. She had already given up; she just wanted to leave.

"I knew it." Chen Ge looked at Xiao Long. "Why have you been covering your arm?"

"You might not believe me, but when I opened the closet earlier, I saw someone hiding inside, and he dragged me into the secret room." Xiao Ling let go, and Chen Ge saw a faded bloody handprint left on her arm.

"It should be one of the workers here..."

"It wasn't an actor, really..." Xiao Ling rubbed at her arm like she was traumatized. "None of you saw it, so you won't believe me! But I am sure that's not an actor here. He was very scary! Damn it! Why can't this blood stain be removed?"

Even though her arm was turning red from being rubbed, the bloody handprint remained. If anything, the color had deepened.

"Don't waste your time. You can't remove these things with conventional methods." Chen Ge stared at Xiao Ling. "You seem to know this Haunted House well. Have you visited this place before?"

Xiao Ling held her arm and looked at the police officer at the door but did not say anything.

"Perhaps your friend works here, and you have heard something from them?" Chen Ge even provided her with an excuse. "My livestream is still blocked, and there are no cameras in this room. No one will know if you tell me anything. Think about it. The only person who can help you now is me."

Xiao Ling was eventually persuaded by Chen Ge. She held her head. "I told them. I told them this would happen."

“What would happen?”

“I have a friend who handles the props of this Haunted House. She knows some inside information. When the Haunted House was being built, the upper management had a disagreement. Some of them thought it wasn’t necessary while others thought that the theme park cannot leave any chance for the competition to grow. In any case, the haunted house was built. And then another disagreement happened. Some thought that it should be enough to use all projections, and there was no need to rely on physical props. The other party insisted on retaining some authenticity, and they found various objects in Eastern Jiujiang that are related to urban legends.”

“These old objects were gathered before the Haunted House was completed?” Chen Ge felt that something was wrong. This group of people sounded like they had purposely built this Haunted House to store these old objects.

Could there be a problem with one of the managers of the futuristic theme park?

Chen Ge had interacted with the shadow in Eastern Jiujiang before. The man was cunning and ruthless. Li Wan City was just one of the ghost fetus’ many projects.

“Instead of saying that the old objects were used to decorate the Haunted House, it was more like several scenarios were made specifically for these old objects,” Xiao Ling said. “The designers generate scenarios through the central computer, and the scenarios include those old objects. The computer then works to mesh the objects perfectly with the generated scenario.

“They have turned actual ghost stories into a scenario and placed the cursed objects from those scenarios into the Haunted House. Sometimes, my friend worked overtime. She often heard strange noises coming from the scenarios at night. She notified the managers many times about this, but the response she got? ‘Doesn’t that mean we will be able to draw more visitors to come visit?’”

“Cough! Cough!” At this most crucial part, the police officer suddenly coughed, and Xiao Ling shut up.

“Don’t be afraid. I have just one last question.” Chen Ge looked Xiao Ling in the eye. “In this scenario, what are the old objects that have been taken from Eastern Jiujiang?”

“The two black and white pictures, the wind chime, and the altar.”

Chapter 966: The Undulating Curse

The situation at the futuristic theme park was more serious than Chen Ge had anticipated. He initially thought they had just stuffed some old objects into the Haunted House, but through the conversation, he realized that they did more than that; they made use of the haunted house to provide the old objects with a home. They assimilated objects with real spirits into the Haunted House, thus giving the Specters possessing the objects a new chance at ‘life’. The key difference from Chen Ge’s Haunted House was that the Specters possessing these objects were not brought under control, and they were free to attack the visitors. These Specters were shapeless, and after the visitors finished their tours, they would not realize what had happened to them in a short period of time, but the symptoms would appear after some time.

“You guys are so irresponsible toward your visitors.” Chen Ge wanted to meet the leader responsible for the Haunted House. That person had to be hiding something.

“Xiao Ling’s friend is a bit too sensitive, and that’s why she said something like that. As you know, when someone is under great tension, it’s normal for them to see stuff that’s not there.” The police officer was afraid that Chen Ge might have misunderstood.

“My friend is telling the truth, but no one cares. Everyone knows that there are no ghosts in this world, but the problem is, how can you explain the things that she saw?” Xiao Ling argued with the police officer. Chen Ge leaned against the wall and listened with interest.

Before he arrived, he had known that the futuristic theme park would have their workers act as visitors, but he did not expect the workers to be so unprofessional. Perhaps combining forty hellish scenarios was too much and broke their mental defense, or perhaps the process of building the Haunted House was too, so the basic workers knew about its hidden trapping. In conclusion, many factors had likely led to this situation, where the ‘visitors’ argued among themselves, and the real visitor became the leader.

“Stop arguing. We’re here to visit. If you do not wish to give up, we’d better work together.” Chen Ge’s voice sounded particularly sensible at that moment. His presence was like a ray of light, bringing people warmth and reliability. Xiao Ling ignored the police officer and turned her face away.

“We’re all friends here. There’s no need to get into an argument due to a small misunderstanding.” Chen Ge consoled Xiao Ling before cutting to the chase. “Does your friend know the story about the objects here? These objects, especially the altar, where did they come from?”

“They were taken from a village near the dam at Eastern Jiujiang. It had nice scenery, but the place was a bit secluded, and the locals were hostile against outsiders.”

“When they went to take the objects, did the people in the village say anything?” Chen Ge did not mind the other items, but the altar was the key problem. It was the source of the curse.

“Not many people were left at the village, and most of them were aging elders. After my friend explained her reason for being there, they chased her out. Then my friend’s manager gave a young man from the village two hundred RMB to have the man lead us into the village in the dead of the night.” Xiao Ling remembered many things.

“The village wasn’t that big, and many houses were empty. The altar was in the oldest home in the village, facing away from the sun. It was the biggest home in the village, and it had been abandoned years ago.”

“The young man that was our guide told us that many bad things had happened there.

“A few decades ago, the owner of the house married the daughter of a rich family. Even though the daughter was ugly, she came from money, and she had a good life. Then the daughter got pregnant. They hired a maid from outside to come take care of her, but strangely enough, after the maid arrived, she was never seen again. The villagers initially did not think much of this. After all, the husband and wife were kind. The real tragedy came about several weeks later when a thief sneaked into the home, but that thief went insane after he got out.

“No one knew what the thief saw inside the house. The excuse given by the man of the house was that he was too fluttered when he saw the thief. In the moment of panic, he grabbed a wooden staff and hit

the man's head, and that knocked him senseless. It was a lawless era. The man threw some money around, and people stopped asking question.

"But that was when the rumors started to fly. Some said that the owner got into an affair with the maid when his wife was pregnant. The wife got so angry after she found out that she murdered the maid and buried her in the yard. Some said the maid was actually the owner's old flame. The wife purposely tricked her into going there because she was envious of the woman's beauty, and she wanted to swap faces with her.

"No one knew the truth. A few months after the maid's disappearance, the wife became half insane. She would be found yelling and scolding the mirrors and walls around midnight. Then the owner hired a travelling priest, and it was that man who built the altar inside the old house.

"Several years later, the wife passed away. The owner raised four kids alone and was always kind to the other villagers. The villagers soon forgot about this until the day of the burial for the owner, when his youngest grandson opened the altar out of curiosity. It was a sunny day, but suddenly, winds gathered, and the rain clouds hung low. It didn't take long for the rain to pour. The burial time had been decided, and it couldn't be changed, so the family conducted the ceremony in the rain.

"When the coffin was lifted, the four pallbearers found it impossibly heavy, like there were several dead bodies lying inside. The family didn't know what to do. In the end, they spent more money to hire four more pallbearers and finished the burial.

"After they went home, they realized that something was wrong. The old man had turned around in his white and black picture, and the youngest grandson that he cherished had disappeared. The family searched for days, but they couldn't find him. There was no body. Later, someone said that the grandson drowned at the lakeside.

"The family was certain that something was off about the house, so they sold it at a low price. They thought that could spare them from the ill fortune, but I heard from my friend that they all had a terrible death.

"The tragedy did not end after the family moved away. The new family that moved in was flushed into the dam along with their car due to a landslide. Only their eldest son who was studying in the city survived it. The eldest son inherited the old house. One summer, he invited his friends there for a holiday. That night, like the old man's burial, it started to pour. No one knew what happened that night, but all seven that went there for a holiday were never seen again.

"The old house lost its owner, and the villagers knew to stay away from the place. My friend and her colleagues were the first to visit it in about five years. You know what happened next. With the young man leading the way, they got some old objects out of the house and used it to create this scenario."

Xiao Ling's story was long, but it was chronologically clear, and it helped Chen Ge understand many things.

The maid was the first to die there. After her death, she cursed the old house and was trapped by the priest inside the altar. The scariest Specter here shouldn't be the grandmother but the maid. It is her Specter that is possessing the altar!

Chapter 967: Sacrificial Teammates

“Nothing happened for so many years when the old man raised the four children, but once the youngest grandson opened the altar, tragedy struck. Everything that happened later was also related to the altar. Once the altar was opened, the people present were struck with misfortune, and there was no escaping the curse.” Chen Ge turned to look at the police officer. “When you played on medium difficulty, none of you opened the altar, right?”

“Yes.” The police officer nodded.

“Looks like opening the altar is specific for hellish difficulty.” Chen Ge waved the police officer and Xiao Ling over.

“This scenario is unique. There are at least four ghosts here. The kind and innocent grandson, the grandfather who wants to protect his grandson, the envious grandmother, and the scariest maid. The grandmother is trapped inside the room with the talismans, the maid is inside the altar, and the grandson and grandfather are inside the picture. All those are cursed items; touching them will curse you.” Chen Ge placed the old man’s black and white picture inside his backpack. “But if you do not use your hand to touch it, it’ll be fine.”

“I don’t hear any commotion from outside anymore. Shall we go take a look?” The police officer was afraid, and after hearing Xiao Ling’s story, he only got more fidgety.

“You can leave after you come up with a way to clear the scenario.” Chen Ge arranged his thoughts.

“This scenario’s themed is curses. The first curse came from the maid. The second came from the grandmother. Her personality is twisted, and her heart is filled with envy and hatred for the maid. After her death, this house gained her curse. Then those innocent people who opened the altar must’ve felt wronged, and that imbalance in the heart would soon have been twisted into a curse. In conclusion, everyone who perished here has left behind hatred and curse, creating this unbreakable cycle.”

“What should we do?”

“Either we solve the curse from its base, or we become part of the curse.”

“I don’t quite understand what you’re saying.” The police officer had no idea what Chen Ge was trying to do.

“The curse continues to reincarnate due to hatred. Since tragedy has found me, I must ensure that this tragedy finds others to accompany me. But if someone is cursed and is kind enough not to spread the curse to the next person, instead turning it into a kind thought, won’t we be able to say that they have ended the cycle of the curse?” Chen Ge’s words confused the police officer and Xiao Ling.

“And your point is?”

“As long as each of us can stand on our ground and not get disturbed by the curse, things should turn better.” Chen Ge took out the remnants of the scrolls that he found in the bedroom. The five elements were written on them. “There are five bedrooms, counting the hidden room with the talismans and the living room. This scenario has seven rooms in total, corresponding to seven individuals. The police officer said earlier that the layout is like a person stepping on the altar. I’m thinking, if we stay in separate rooms alone, doesn’t that mean every room is filled with the energy of life? The whole

scenario will come to life, and the force of the living will be strong enough to inhibit the curse from the altar.”

The police officer and Xiao Ling thought that Chen Ge was being ridiculous, but for some reason, he seemed to have a point.

“It’s not that scary when the visitors stay together in the Haunted House, so they will always try to separate them. The designers understand that. When the central computer comes up with this highest difficulty scenario, it will have that in mind. We will follow their wish then. Even though it’s dangerous, it might be the solution to this problem.” Chen Ge raised the scrolls that he was holding. “The scrolls should be able to protect us, but that is also where the brilliance of this scenario shines. There are only five scrolls, so there is bound to be an argument among the visitors.”

“The scrolls aside, based on what you said, someone is bound to be in the hidden room alone. Isn’t that a bit unfair to that person?”

“It’s more than unfair; it’s cruel.” Chen Ge smiled. “So, I suggest the person going into the hidden room can have one more scroll.”

“I can’t make this decision. We’d better get everyone to discuss this.” The police officer pushed open the door a sliver. The big spider had disappeared.

“Everyone, come out now. We don’t have much time!” Chen Ge shouted. “The key timing here is the windchime. When the windchime rings, the scenario will change. When the spider appeared, it was the third time that the windchime rang. When the windchime rings next, the ghost from the altar might come out.”

Chen Ge and the police officer shared the solution with the rest. Everyone felt it was rather preposterous, but there was no better idea. Staying there and doing nothing would only make things worse.

“We agree with you, but who is willing to stay inside the talisman room?” The man with glasses was brave when he was with the rest, but when he was left alone, he too would be afraid. “If you are willing to volunteer, we...”

“I’ll be in that room then.” Chen Ge took two scrolls. “I’m here to clear the scenario. I don’t want anyone to hold me back.”

“You’re still thinking about that?” The man shook his head. He felt like Chen Ge was dreaming. “We have no problem with you staying in that room, but you cannot take two scrolls. There’s a limited number of scrolls, and you wish to take two? What about the rest of us?”

“Fine, I’ll take one.” Chen Ge placed the scroll on the ground. Throughout this process, not one ‘visitor’ argued for his safety. The visitors got their assignment. The police officer would stay in the living room, and the woman with the long hair would stay in the bedroom next to the hidden room. After everyone got into position, the windchime rang again.

“Xu Yin.” Chen Ge stood in the middle of the talisman-filled room. He contacted Xu Yin immediately, but he did not summon Xu Yin to stand beside him. He was waiting for a chance.

“A Red Specter can move about freely. Where will the maid go?” Chen Ge smiled as he talked to himself. “Opening the altar triggers the curse. I’ve helped you separate all who have triggered your curse. Can you resist and not do anything?”

When he first entered this hidden room, Chen Ge realized that there were no cameras, so he did not hold back. Actually, when he found out that the Specter inside the altar could fight against the red high heels, he was determined to find her. A normal Specter was different from a Red Specter. Even if he could not bring her back to the Haunted House, consuming her would highly increase Xu Yin and the headless woman’s power.

The spider projection brushed past Chen Ge through its fixed trajectory. It crawled out the closet, and a scream came from outside. Then, the scenario returned to normal. Just as the visitors recovered from the visit by the big spider, a scent of blood permeated the air.

“She’s here!”

Chen Ge grabbed the closet door, and he heard a wailing song sang by a woman coming from the corridor.

Chapter 968: Moving Forward

Standing at the door of the hidden room, Chen Ge focused his ears on the song. The woman’s singing voice was strange, and she was singing some old folk song that had long disappeared from Jiujiang. Through the walls papered with talismans, just listening to her voice, when he closed his eyes, he could practically see green tiles and blue roofs, mantles of various colors like he had been transported to the past. Taking a deep breath, his lungs were filled with a scent that was unique to rouge.

“She has a surprisingly mellifluous voice. This Red Specter is rather unique.” Chen Ge snapped out of it. “My Haunted House still doesn’t have a worker who knows how to sing classical songs. If she is willing, I can help her.”

The woman’s voice was alluring and she was singing in a local dialect. Chen Ge could only understand some of it and thus had no idea what she was singing about.

“Which room will you choose? The hidden room is the most dangerous. Will you come here?” Chen Ge’s hands tightened, and right then, he heard the door wiggle. The door of the bedroom outside of the hidden room was opened!

As the door opened, the woman with long hair who sat in the room alone screamed.

“Xu Yin!” Chen Ge pulled open the closet door, and he saw a thin woman wearing a bloody stage costume standing at the bedroom door. Her fingers were pressed on the door, and hatred pooled in her red eyes. Her body leaned against the wall, and the skin exposed through the costume was covered in wounds.

“Careful!” Chen Ge yelled at the woman in the room as he grabbed her by her arm and pulled her behind him. While he blocked her from danger, Chen Ge also blocked her view. Before she could recover from the fear, Xu Yin rushed out from the hidden room and charged at the Red Specter in the costume.

“The red high heels is hindering the altar, and Xu Yin will be chasing after you. Where are you going to go?” Chen Ge glanced behind him. After Xu Yin and the Red Specter left, he stood up. He was about to leave when someone grabbed his shirt.

“Don’t... don’t go. The woman in the stage costume isn’t one of the workers!” The woman went through a lot before she could say that. Her hair was disheveled. The woman who had a bad opinion of Chen Ge finally had a change of mind. When she was in danger, the man stood before her, putting himself in danger for her. The business competition aside, the man was a morally upstanding man.

“How do you know she is not a worker here?”

“I...”

“Don’t worry, perhaps she’s just a projection. After all, this place is a combination of forty hellish scenarios. Any strange projection can appear.” Chen Ge pretended not to notice the change in the woman’s room and ran out of the bedroom. The other visitors who heard the commotion ran over, but the Red Specter had already disappeared.

“Where have they gone?” Chen Ge was not worried about Xu Yin and red high heels; they could fend off even Top Red Specters, much less a normal one.

Now I can confirm that there is indeed a Red Specter at this house, but the Specter is in a strange state, completely different from the other Red Specters I’ve met.

What was the difference? Chen Ge could not tell. The only thing he could do now was find a way to control that Red Specter.

“The ghost was inside the altar!” the police officer yelled to grab everyone’s attention. “The altar’s door has been opened! The pair of red high heels disappeared too!”

With the police officer’s aid, a beautiful misunderstanding was formed. All the visitors thought that the red high heels were the ghost in the cursed scenario. They did not think of the other possibility.

“Look! The exit!” Xiao Ling pointed behind the altar. The place was originally sealed by wooden boards. But when the Specter appeared, the boards had been moved away. The chilling wind caressed the group, and a dark path appeared behind the altar.

“The cursed house has no door. The exit should be hidden behind the altar.” The young man scratched his chin and played with his stubble. “We have not solved the puzzle, but the exit appeared on its own. Could this be a trap?”

“When I visited here last time, this was where the exit was, but when I came in earlier, I gave it a try. The board behind the altar couldn’t be moved. It’s probably because we hadn’t satisfied the conditions then.”

As if afraid that the rest would not believe him, he ran to the altar. “Look, there is a pattern on each board, and they correspond to the hint on the scroll. If we arranged them according to the scrolls, we should’ve been able to open the hidden door. But I tried that earlier. It wouldn’t work!”

"If you knew the way to leave, why didn't you share it with us?" Chen Ge stared at the police officer. He realized that these people still planned to cheat him. "Looks like you still haven't experienced the deepest despair, never mind."

When everyone realized that this was not a game but it was placing their lives on the line, they would listen to Chen Ge and help him. If Chen Ge had not come to visit and they continued to work with Red Specters, they would have faced the threat of death every day. Now, Chen Ge was there to help them solve this problem, and in return, they would have to sacrifice something.

"Come, finding the exit is a good thing. We shall move on then." Chen Ge carried his backpack and ran into the bedroom to quickly stuff the other black and white picture into his pocket. "I'm missing the windchime. Oh well, I'll come and find it next time."

What Chen Ge wanted was not the objects but the lingering spirits possessing them. He had the comic. With enough time, he could bring all the spirits with him and leave the objects behind. After getting the item, Chen Ge entered the dark path.

"The puzzle of this scenario hasn't been solved, but the exit has been revealed just like that. Is it really fine for us to enter it?" The guy with the glasses looked at the police officer. Honestly, none of them felt like trying another scenario.

"Finding the exit is a good thing. What? Are you scared?" Chen Ge walked ahead alone. As 'visitors', the rest could only follow him. When he saw that everyone had entered the new scenario, Chen Ge showed a satisfied smile. These visitors could provide him with hints. Plus, they were free labor and could help him prove some speculation. Most of all, these visitors were all witnesses, and their eyes would help wash Chen Ge off any dirty accusations.

"Even though Xu Yin and the red high heels aren't here, I still have the stench and the headless woman. I can guarantee my own safe."

Beyond the cursed house was a long corridor. Without any proper lighting, just using flashlight on the phones, they could see several wordless tombstones sitting along the corridor. This appeared to be a mass grave. There was a sign with the name 'Public Dormitory' hanging at the end of the corridor. Behind the old doors, the interior was huge.

"Is this the new scenario?" Chen Ge was the first to arrive, but he stood at the door and did not enter. After everyone entered the dormitory, Chen Ge reached into his backpack to get the comic. He silently summoned the stench and had the boy replace the boards that led back to the cursed house. After the boy left, Chen Ge closed the entrance to the dormitory. From that moment onward, the visitors had no way of turning back.

Chapter 969: Twelve Zodiac Signs

When the doors snapped shut, every visitor jumped. They all turned to look at Chen Ge.

"Not closing the door makes me feel like something is going to come in after us. To prevent us from being cornered, this feels better." Chen Ge found a random excuse and turned to the police officer. "Have you been here before?"

“Yes, the dormitory is a safe zone. It’s for the visitors to relax. After the next scenario, the tour will end.” Hearing the police officer say that, everyone felt rejuvenated. This nightmare-like visitation was finally over.

“A safe zone? Meaning this scenario is not scary?” Chen Ge rarely saw people build a safe zone inside a haunted house.

“This scenario does not have ghosts. There are twelve rooms in total, and one room is hiding a murderer. We only need to avoid the murderer and find the hidden path to exit.” The police officer did not hide anything. He wanted nothing more than to leave this haunted house.

“Where was the hidden path when you visited last time?”

“The location is randomized. Each room has a hidden path, but only one room’s hidden path is not locked. This scenario is luck based. The first room we try might get use the unlocked hidden path, but it might also lead us to a murderer.” The police officer opened his arms. “I’ve told you everything I know. If there’s another accident, it’s really not my fault.”

“Medium difficulty has a murder and an unlocked path spread among twelve rooms, but for hellish difficulty, we might have all locked hidden paths and twelve murderers, one in each room.” Chen Ge stood at the bar counter and turned to the glasses. “Detective, did you get a hint?”

“Yes, I got the message when we entered the scenario.” The man showed the message on his wrist band to everyone—‘Do not open the doors randomly.’

“Looks like Chen Ge is not wrong. All twelve rooms might be hiding a murderer, and that’s why the message told us not to open the doors randomly.” The police officer laughed drily. If that was the truth, the information that he had provided was completely useless.

“Shush, keep quiet for a minute.” Chen Ge suddenly raised his hand. Using Ghost Ear, he could hear footsteps and a woman’s maddened laughter. The sound was weak, and it came from underground.

“This dormitory is more than it looks. There might be several floors to it. This ground floor is just the surface. The difficult part is at the basement,” Chen Ge said in a low whisper, causing the listeners’ hearts to shiver.

“How do you know that?” the woman with long hair asked. She now had a new appreciation for Chen Ge.

“A real haunted house seeking the experience of terror will not set up a safe zone. An endless wave of terror is the real aim of the designer.” Chen Ge would not tell the visitors that even if the designers intended to have a safe zone, when the scenario was filled with Specters, the safe zone was useless.

“The police officer’s information is that by opening the door, we will find the exit, but the detective’s hint is to not open any doors. That is very contradictory, so who should we listen to?” Chen Ge turned to the youngest man. “Everyone has revealed their occupation, except you. We’ve been through so much, yet you still don’t trust us?”

The young man shook his head. “It’s not a matter of trust. My ability is key, and it can only be used once.”

Chen Ge did not press. Due to the limited time, the visitors split up to examine the dormitory, and they soon found many strange things.

The dormitory was the largest scenario that they had encountered. It had three floors, two floors above ground and one below ground. Each floor had six rooms, but the path that led to the basement was locked behind a steel door. There were two staircases at the sides of the lobby. They looked normal, but upon closer inspection, one would see signs of them being banged by blunt objects, and there were nails left on the door and uncleaned blood stains left on the ground.

Other than that, Chen Ge found many torn pages from detective novels. Red paint was used to highlight the time and the way of death for the characters. Complicated symbols hid in the corners of the rooms like the scrawling of a devil. Even though the scenario was not as professional as Chen Ge's Haunted House, it would score quite high; the atmosphere was well built.

"There is no exit, and the path to leave should be like what the police officer said, hidden in one of the rooms." The visitors gathered together. They were discussing whether to try their luck and open one of the doors while Chen Ge stood to the side and said nothing.

The police officer noticed this and asked Chen Ge, "What are you thinking about?"

"The clock on the wall has been moving." Chen Ge pointed above the bar counter where an inconspicuous clock hung.

"Isn't that normal?" The police officer was confused.

"Look closer. The clock is moving backward. When we entered, it was 3 am, but now it's 2:54 am."

"A clock that is moving backward? What does that mean?"

"I have no clue." Chen Ge shook his head. "Ignore it for now. Earlier, you said that the hidden path is hidden inside the rooms. To leave, we must open the doors. I've paid special attention to the twelve guest room doors and realized that each door has been stabbed with nails to create some small holes."

"Holes? Is it for us to look through?" The visitors naturally moved to gather around Chen Ge.

"Unlikely. There is another layer behind the door, it blocks the interior of the room from view." Chen Ge took out his phone. "The locations of the holes on each door are different. Some looked familiar to me, so I tried to link them together, and I made a surprising discovery."

"What discovery?"

"The holes represent stars, and connecting the dots forms a celestial sign. The first door is Aries, and the second door is Taurus. These twelve doors correspond to the twelve zodiac signs."

The visitors listened to Chen Ge's analysis, and they were shocked. They felt like even though they were in the same place, they were playing different games.

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"Then... what is the hint behind the zodiac?" The police officer was afraid of interrupting Chen Ge, so he only asked in a whisper.

“That’s the troublesome part. The twelve zodiac signs can represent many things. They can be celestial signs, they can be times, or they can be a code.” Chen Ge looked at his phone. “The term comes from Greek. The original meaning is zoo, and it’s definitely not humans kept at a zoo. Is it warning us that the tenants inside the rooms are not humans? That would match the message received by the detective.”

Shaking his head, Chen Ge frowned. “I’m not good at puzzle-solving. This scenario stumps me.”

Seeing Chen Ge troubled, the other visitors did not dare to speak.

Chapter 970: Time for Doctor Skull Cracker [2 in 1]

2

“Is there anything that we can help with?” The police officer looked at the frowning Chen Ge and leaned over with the eagerness. The visitors all depended on Chen Ge to lead them out. The mission that had been given to them by theme park had long been forgotten. After all, in this situation, their own lives were more important than the order from their superiors.

“The twelve zodiacs could be some kind of code. This scenario does not depend on luck but the ability to think analytically and solve puzzles. As long as we can resolve the mystery of the twelve zodiacs, we should be able to tell which room is safe and which room is hiding the murderer.”

After Chen Ge said that, his tone changed. “Unfortunately, the Haunted House’s central computer possesses an immense amount of data. The puzzles that it can come up with will be impossible for a single person to solve.”

“So, we still need to depend on luck after all?”

“The information that I can confirm at the moment is very little.” Chen Ge showed the group the detective novels that he had found. There were pages on them that contained the information about the time of death and the name of the victim circled in red ink.

“Assuming that the details on the pages are real, it means that at these specific times, a murder will occur, and the crime scene will be inside this dormitory. Originally, there should’ve been nothing to be afraid of regarding murders that have already occurred in the past, but as I pointed out earlier, the clock on the wall is moving backward, so there is a high chance that the murders will be reconstructed inside the dormitory.” Chen Ge raised one finger. “This is a new cycle of reincarnation. The reversing time is like a blade that dangles over our heads. The murders that have already happened are a kind of advance notice, warning about our imminent deaths.”

Opening his arms, Chen Ge placed the pages on the bar counter. “There are seven pages that I have found, and there are seven of us. Each of us possibly corresponds to one time of death. When the time arrives, the executor will appear, and that person will die.”

Hearing Chen Ge’s analysis, the few visitors started to panic.

“When we arrived, it was 3 am. It is now 2:52 am. The latest murder recorded by the pages happens at 2.50 am, and the cause of death is being cut into pieces by a saw.” Chen Ge put the pages away. “Now,

we have two options. First, we will kill off one of our teammates ourselves, so only six people remain. That way, the executioner of the seventh person will not appear.”

“How could you even possibly come up with an idea like that?” The man with the glasses was obviously not happy with this suggestion.

“The other option is for all of you to listen to my orders.” Chen Ge did not give the other visitors any time to think as he put away the seven pages. “There is one more minute left to 2.52 am. Time is literally ticking away. Other than the guest rooms, there are no places in this dormitory that we are able to hide in. Therefore, our only choice is to pick a room to hide in.

“Now, I need all of you to move to the staircase on the left, and I will open the first door from the staircase on the right. After I open the door, only two things can happen. If there is a murderer inside it, I will run over to meet up with you. If we maintain a safe distance from the murderer, he won’t be able to do anything to us.

“Assuming that there is no murderer inside the door, you will all run over to me, and we will hide inside the room and wait for the first time of execution to blow over before we decide what to do next.”

“Okay, I agree.” The man with the glasses and the young man both agreed easily. After all, Chen Ge had volunteered to take on all the risk, and he would be the closest to the danger, so they had no reason to say no. With limited time, both parties started to move. The six visitors stood at the left stairwell, watching Chen Ge as he opened the door by the right stairwell alone.

2

“There’s no one?” Chen Ge waved at the group, and all the visitors ran over to him. When all of them entered the guest room, a door opening suddenly sounded in the quiet corridor.

“The murderer has appeared!” All six visitors held their breath, and only Chen Ge walked to the door. With his Ghost Ear, he could tell which door was open, and from that, he could confirm the room where the murderer was hiding. As if trying to scare the visitors, a string of heavy footsteps and the sound of an electric saw slowly approached from the end of the corridor. The murderer did not seem to know where the visitors were hiding. He wandered aimlessly around the dormitory before the sound disappeared into one of the guest rooms.

He did not return to his own room?

When the door slammed shut, the visitors all sighed in relief, but Chen Ge thought that this was weird.

Could the police officer be right? This scenario is just a trial of luck? Whenever the murderer opens the door, the thing to check is whether the visitors have found the unlocked hidden path? No, that’s impossible. A hellish scenario should not be that simple.

Chen Ge studied the room they were in. There were many things lying inside the room. There was a mannequin of a dead body that was missing a limb. The floor underneath the body could be moved, but it was sealed by a large lock. The table next to the path was splayed with poker cards, and each of the cards had English words written on them. This looked like a puzzle. Inside the table’s wooden drawer, there was a document, a will.

Upon opening it, they found that the will only had one sentence—'If I die, it is definitely not from suicide.'

The room was not that big, but it had been turned into an actual puzzle.

"Do we need to stay here to find out the truth?" The police officer looked at things inside the room and had a feeling that everything had to do with solving the puzzle.

"Looking for the truth is the job of the police officer; I am just a volunteer worker." Chen Ge looked at the time. This scenario needed to do a lot of puzzle-solving, and that would exhaust plenty of time. However, he did not plan to waste any more time. This visitation indeed made him learn many things, and it gave him a glimpse into the true power of the futuristic theme park. They were valid competition because they did such a good job in a territory that they were not supposed to be that familiar with. Only by admitting that and facing the competition head on would he have the chance to overcome the competition. That was one good thing about Chen Ge—he would never underestimate his opponent.

"The time for relaxation is over. It's time to get working."

The few visitors did not notice the change in Chen Ge. They still followed naturally behind him.

"This room has already been confirmed as safe, so we can go and open another door. We will repeat what we did earlier." Chen Ge had all the visitors run to the corridor on the left while he stayed on the right side of the corridor. After everyone assumed their position, he reached into his backpack to flip through the comic.

"Finally, there is no more need to hide." The reason Chen Ge had directed all the visitors to the left right was because the stairwell on the right side was closest to the dormitory door, and the visitors who were cornered at the left side staircase would not be able to see what was happening there. This meant that Chen Ge was able to gesture freely with the Stench Red Specter in the other visitors' blind spot. "The way out of here has been sealed. It is time for him to feel the real sting of despair."

The door of the dormitory was pulled open, and Chen Ge nodded at the boy with the Stench with a smile. A stinging stench permeated the air, and everyone could hear the sound of 'water' dripping on the ground. It was the sound of blood dropping against the door, leaving behind a horrifying and shocking trail. The stench did not hold back and unleashed the horrible air that surrounded him. Soon, the rest of the visitors noticed that something was out of place. They all turned to look at the bar counter.

Several seconds later, a fat monster wearing a bloody clothes crawled out from behind the counter!

"What... what is that?" With the scream from Xiao Ling, every visitor's heart jumped to their throat.

"Chen Ge! Behind you! Look behind you!"

Chen Ge, who just walked out from the visitors' blind spot, lifted his head and saw the monster. His face paled, and he gritted his teeth and started to run.

"Run!" His legs carried him away very quickly, but he was still caught by the monster behind him. Without anywhere else to run, he made the decision to push open one of the rooms and run into it before the eyes of the other visitors. Something even more startling happened then. The scary monster

followed Chen Ge and entered the room. Two harrowing screams then came out from the room! One was made by Chen Ge, and the other belonged to a stranger.

Before the visitors understood what had happened, the scary monster charged out from the room. He looked around, spotted the visitors, and went after them!

“What is this? What is going on!” The visitors split up in panic, and no one noticed that the door that Chen Ge had run into earlier had slowly been closed from the inside.

“Things went far more successful than I thought.” Chen Ge looked at the actor that played the ‘murderer’ who had fainted on the ground, and a childish smile appeared on his face. He had memorized the room that the murderer had retreated into and led the boy with the stench into the it. The actor who wanted to scare Chen Ge had been so excited when he heard the doorknob being jiggled. He had rushed over to stand behind the door with excitement. But before he could assume his position, he had seen the Red Specter following behind Chen Ge.

The heart chilling scream was made by this poor actor. To trick the other visitors, Chen Ge also screamed once to show solidarity with the poor actor. The two collapsed after the scream, but the ‘murderer’ really was knocked unconscious. While he was supposed to be ‘unconscious’, Chen Ge was studying the room. After ensuring that there were no surveillance cameras, he stood up and went to close the door.

“The security cameras at the futuristic theme park are so numerous like they are free. I don’t have the freedom to do anything, but now, things will change.” Chen Ge removed his jacket and took out the comic from the backpack. He then removed the actor’s jacket, hoodie, and so on and put them on himself.

“Let me show you how to play a real murderer.”

1

Putting away the comic and recorder, Chen Ge covered the fainted actor with his own jacket and then placed his empty backpack next to the actor. He then removed his wrist band and strapped it around the actor’s wrist. After all the preparation was done, Chen Ge picked up the electric saw and kicked the door open.

His eyes scanned the surveillance cameras in the corner. Chen Ge stood under the camera holding the electric saw. “After the visitors realize that their exit has been cut off, they might select to give up, so I need to move fast.”

The saw sliced against the wall. This saw had been specifically modified. It was twice as large as a normal saw, and thus, it was very heavy. The sound that it made when it was running was very loud, but the chains had been dulled, probably for the visitors’ safety. The jacket covered with blood hid Chen Ge’s body, and the hoodie made from metal and bones shrouded his head. From the outside, others could only see a pair of dull, icy eyes.

“The visitors have been split up after being chased by the stench. I hinted at them earlier that the first room that I opened is safe. I wonder if some lucky visitor has chosen to hide in there?” The metal bounced against the wall. The emotionless eyes scanned the small room. The dead body that was

missing an arm was hanging above the hidden path. Poker cards littered the room. The will had been trampled on, but there was no one in the room. Chen Ge switched on the recording function on his phone and started to walk out.

When he walked to the door, he closed the door loudly before sneaking back to the side of the closet. Holding his breath, he raised the saw above his head. Several seconds later, a woman's voice came from inside the closet.

"Has he left?"

"I think so. Let me go take a look. This space is too small to fit two people."

Creak...

The doors of the closet slowly opened, and the shadow loomed over them. The screeching sound of saw boomed above their heads, and a pair of cold eyes stared at his prey.

"Ah!" Xiao Ling shrank back out of instinct, and her body knocked into the table and chair.

"What's wrong with you!" the other woman inside the closet screamed out loud. Then she heard the closet being rammed into by a heavy object. Unable to grab a purchase, she fell to the ground. She did not expect the murderer to be waiting for them outside the closet. Her eyes were filled with terror.