

Ancient 52

Chapter 52 - 22: The Mysterious Grocery Store_3

Gu Jianlin was momentarily stunned.

"It's me, Cheng Youyu!"

Cheng Youyu hurriedly added, "Don't you remember? I even copied your test answers before!"

Gu Jianlin had indeed crossed paths with this pudgy fellow before.

During one of the joint exams, this guy sat right next to him and blatantly copied half of his test sheet before the proctor dragged him out.

Still, he was always polite to Gu Jianlin.

After all, apart from excelling academically, Gu Jianlin had little presence in the school. And if anyone was lucky enough to sit next to him during exams, he was generous enough to help, forging goodwill with others in the process.

"It's been a while."

Gu Jianlin said politely.

Su Youzhu, on the other hand, maintained a cold and indifferent demeanor, clearly unwilling to engage in conversation.

"Good, as long as you remember, that's good."

Cheng Youyu rubbed his hands together, grinning ear to ear. "So, uh, about this month's placement tests—please give me a hand, alright?"

Gu Jianlin raised an eyebrow, his expression odd. "Sure, if we get seated together."

Cheng Youyu immediately beamed with joy and laughed. "With you saying that, Brother Lin, I'm relieved!"

At that moment, a police car slowly drove past outside. A few detectives were carrying transparent garbage bags.

Inside the bags were the corpses of cats and dogs.

"What's going on over there?"

Gu Jianlin asked curiously.

Su Youzhu frowned, as an awful stench wafted toward them.

Cheng Youyu licked his teeth angrily and said, "You know how there are lots of stray cats and dogs around our school? Some girls would stop by after school to feed them. But today, when they went to check, all those strays had been killed. And not just killed—their stomachs were cut open, and their organs were all removed..."

As he explained, he almost threw up again. "So, they called the police to handle it. But even after checking the surveillance footage, they couldn't find who did it. The bodies were strung up on tree branches—it's just sickening."

Gu Jianlin frowned, turning his gaze to the bloodstained plastic bags.

Though it wasn't very clear from a distance, the mutilated, gutted corpses were vaguely discernible.

The blood had clotted. With their organs hollowed out, there wasn't much blood that had leaked.

Gu Jianlin took a few steps outside, wrinkled his nose at the foul stench, and stared at the corpses for a moment.

"Truly deranged,"

Su Youzhu murmured under her breath.

Cheng Youyu slapped his thigh. "Exactly! Those poor cats and dogs—what did they ever do? I used to help my girlfriend feed them sometimes. You know, I've heard that people who abuse animals often go on to kill humans! Having a psycho like this near the school is just plain terrifying. The two of you should stay on campus as much as possible, alright? Don't wander around."

As he listened, Gu Jianlin stared at the marks on the trash bag and suddenly furrowed his brows.

Because he noticed countless strands of spider silk clinging to the bag.

There were also traces of spider silk on the bodies of the cats and dogs.

Their wounds, however, were irregular—not what a conventional blade would produce.

From a hasty profile, an image flashed in his mind—a segmented, bamboo-like distorted limb, slicing open with surgical precision while dripping with fresh blood.

A spider.

The killer behind these mutilations seemed to be a spider.

Just as he wanted to take a closer look, the detectives carried the garbage bags away.

"A spider...?"

He muttered to himself, almost unconsciously.

This time, he didn't fully trust his profiling results. The dim lighting and the distance might have played tricks on him.

At that moment, the elderly man who had been quietly staring at the Copper Coins lifted his head and glanced at him.

"Young man,"

the old man said softly, "do you want a reading?"

Gu Jianlin turned around to find the old man at the counter, smiling faintly at him.

"Me?"

He pointed at himself.

"Yes, you."

The old man nodded. "Don't worry, it's free. No charge."

Gu Jianlin hesitated briefly. This old man certainly looked the part of someone who believed in such things.

However, Gu Jianlin had some trauma associated with fortune-telling. The downstairs Sun Banxian had been totally inept, spewing nothing but nonsense back then.

But considering how unusual this grocery store seemed, it might be worth a shot.

"Alright."

The old man narrowed his eyes in satisfaction and slid six Copper Coins across the counter to him. "Here, toss them one at a time."

Gu Jianlin knew this was the sixty-four hexagrams method from *The Book of Changes*. Following the old man's instructions, he tossed the coins six times.

The six Copper Coins lined up in a row, displaying a mix of heads and tails.

The old man examined them calmly and said, "Kan below, Dui above. The upper trigram is Dui, symbolizing Yin and a marsh. The lower trigram is Kan, symbolizing Yang and water. A great marsh leaking water—vegetation and aquatic creatures struggling in dire conditions. Yang below Yin, strength overshadowed by gentleness—a gentleman's wisdom hindered, trapped in adversity."

Gu Jianlin paused for a second. "What does that mean, sir?"

The old man gave him a profound look and said, "This is the *Kun Hexagram*. You can research its meaning further on your own. In my humble opinion, young man, you seem destined for trouble in the near future."

Gu Jianlin studied the hexagram without a word.

Cheng Youyu, who had been watching on the side, lowered his voice and said, "Brother Lin, doesn't this old guy seem kind of unprofessional...?"

Gu Jianlin's expression turned peculiar. He kind of agreed; this old man didn't seem very reliable—he wasn't even as articulate as the downstairs Sun Banxian.

Unexpectedly, Su Youzhu asked with curiosity, "Sir, how would one resolve this?"

The old man replied calmly, "Thunder and wind clash, mountains and marshes exchange Qi, water and fire coexist harmoniously."

He paused. "Nanli Shengmen—the Life Gate lies in fire."