

Collapse 112

Chapter 112: Heaven has a great mission for this person_1

Mingliang looked up.

A person was hanging upside down from the tree branches overhead.

The pale face was looking directly at him, stretching into an eerie smile.

Mingliang opened his trembling mouth. "You... are..."

Then a scream echoed through the mountaintop, shaking a few snowflakes from the branches.

He didn't manage to escape in the end.

BANG.

In the darkness, Gu Mian kicked open the door.

The overhead light, out due to the blackout, showed no signs of coming back on.

Fatty shone his flashlight outside, revealing the door already wide open. A cold wind blew in, chilling them to the bone.

Gu Mian turned to look at the nearby bathroom; its door was also wide open. Straight ahead, a cracked mirror was visible.

Aside from the two open doors, Chu Changge and Mingliang had both vanished.

Zhao Lei was the first to notice the cracked mirror.

Then, as if recalling something, he wore a strange expression. "What happened to that mirror... how did it break..."

Gu Mian wasn't concerned about the mirror.

Two living people had now gone missing. One had at least let out a few screams and seemed to have run off.

But Chu Changge had truly disappeared without a trace, without a single sound.

Who knows where he went.

They quickly swept the first-floor rooms but found no sign of Chu Changge or Mingliang.

Just as they reached the open bathroom door, Zhao Lei suddenly cried out, then squatted down to look under the washbasin.

Gu Mian also leaned over. "What is it?"

Zhao Lei pulled out a limp, black object from under the washbasin. Fatty, unable to see clearly in the dark, blurted out, "Stockings?"

Zhao Lei stared blankly. "It's a belt..."

"A belt?" Fatty looked surprised. "This thing is a belt?"

The black strip in Zhao Lei's hand was limp. Upon closer inspection, it was clearly a wide black elastic band, definitely not a belt.

"This is my dad's... His belt broke, and he didn't want to spend money on a new one. I remember a scrap collector came by around that time. He saw the rope used to tie up scrap was sturdy, so he asked for a piece to use as a belt..."

At this point, Zhao Lei looked strange. "My dad only had two pairs of pants, and both needed a belt. How could he have left the belt here?"

Fatty wore an eerie expression. Could he already be dead? And had turned into a ghost that made several people mysteriously disappear?

Of course, Fatty didn't say these thoughts aloud. He merely looked at Gu Mian suspiciously, as if waiting for his decision.

Gu Mian spoke softly, "At this rate of disappearances, I'm afraid none of you will survive the night."

Fatty's face twitched. "Why did you specifically count yourself separately from us?"

Ignoring Fatty's question, Gu Mian continued, "Looks like we'll have to continue searching for clues tonight."

Even in the dead of night, even in the pitch darkness after the power outage, they had to move through the rooms searching for clues.

Otherwise, everyone might be dead before dawn.

The mission is to escape from here. Going in and out doesn't count as escaping. Mingliang seemed to have encountered danger and rushed out, but it's unknown if he completed the mission. The safest bet is still to find clues about escaping this place. It would be even better if we could find a 'Villa Escape Guide.' Of course, something like that is unlikely to exist.

There must be a ghost in this house, but they don't know its origin. Right now, the most likely candidate is Zhao Lei's missing father, Zhao Guanhai. Zhao Lei is also very suspicious, but he was with them when

Mingliang encountered danger, so he's temporarily ruled out as the ghost. Of course, there might be more than one ghost in this house.

Setting those possibilities aside for now, Gu Mian looked at Zhao Lei. "Six of us are staying here, and three have already gone missing tonight. Is there something wrong with this house?"

Zhao Lei, holding the belt, his face somewhat pale, stammered, "No..."

His expression was unreadable, as if he was pondering something but couldn't quite recall it, or perhaps had only remembered half of it.

Fatty also asked, "Has no one really died in this house?"

Fatty actually wanted to add, "Is your dad really dead or not?" but he swallowed his words.

Zhao Lei's face turned even paler. He suddenly clenched the belt and squatted in the bathroom. "No... I don't think so... It shouldn't be..."

His expression was pained.

Fatty hesitated for a few seconds, intending to pull him up, but Zhao Lei shoved him away.

He buried his head in his knees, his expression hidden. "You guys go ahead... I need to be alone, to think..."

It seemed he was truly on the verge of a breakdown.

Gu Mian didn't bother with pleasantries and tugged Fatty. "Let's go find other clues."

Fatty nodded, and holding the flashlight, left the bathroom entrance.

Mingliang's girlfriend, Xiao Zhang, followed behind them with small steps.

Gu Mian recalled Mingliang saying he was bringing a girl along this time. But in the process, he himself had vanished, leaving a girl who wasn't exactly a stunning beauty behind for them.

The entire house was pitch black. It was a cloudy day, with no bright moon hanging outside.

The second hand of the clock in the living room was still ticking. Gu Mian glanced at it; it was still moving backward.

In the dark living room, Fatty glanced at Zhao Lei, who was squatting in front of the bathroom door, then leaned closer to Gu Mian. "Doctor, should we continue looking for Brother Chu?"

"Let's look around for now," Gu Mian replied.

Chu Changge had accompanied Mingliang to the bathroom.

But for both of them to vanish while using the bathroom was truly eerie.

To this moment, Gu Mian had no idea if they were alive or dead.

Fatty, somewhat timidly, spoke again, "Actually, Doctor, you don't need to worry too much. According to typical Qidian novel tropes, Mingliang is probably really dead. But a young buddy who's on good terms with the protagonist likely isn't."

Gu Mian glanced sideways at Fatty. "Qidian novels? In any case, I've never seen a protagonist on Qidian as miserable as me."

Besides, if Chu Changge really wasn't dead, then where was he now?

In any case, there wasn't a trace of him on the first floor.

Fatty was struck speechless by the retort, then began to argue unreasonably, "As the ancients said, 'When Heaven is about to confer a great responsibility on any man, it will first fill his heart with suffering, toil his sinews and bones...'"

The fellow seemed to have misremembered the quote, but Gu Mian paid him no mind and turned to look at Zhao Lei's room.

Zhao Lei's room was right next to the bathroom. Its door was ajar, allowing a view of the inside.

In this instance, Zhao Lei was a problematic character; according to Chu Changge, his memory seemed to be flawed.

And he would break down from time to time.

Now, this instance NPC was squatting by the bathroom door, lost in who-knows-what memory. Seeing a figure squatting by the bathroom door in the dead of night would probably scare a normal person half to death.

Gu Mian ignored the still-distraught Zhao Lei and walked directly towards his room.

Fatty followed closely, holding the flashlight.

Zhao Lei's room was quite shabby and rather bare.

A crimson table stood near the door. It was quite high, reaching above a person's waist. On it sat a pen holder, and next to the pen holder, something glinted.

However, Gu Mian's attention was on something else.

A knee-high wooden bed was pushed against one wall. A crudely made wooden stool, clearly homemade, was placed by the bedside, serving as a nightstand.

On this wooden stool was an alarm clock. Gu Mian picked it up and saw that it had stopped.

Like the clock outside, its face had no numerals, but the position of its hands showed it had stopped at two minutes past nine.

Nine oh two... Nine zero two? Gu Mian thought, fishing his black cellphone out of his pocket.