

Collapse 113

Chapter 113: Novel [Thanks to the Leader Maciwell]_1

"Nine, zero, two..."

Although the keyboard on the phone was blurry, Gu Mian was quite adept at using a nine-keypad. He quickly pressed the buttons corresponding to "9," "0," and "2."

But the phone showed no reaction.

Gu Mian sank into deep thought. Perhaps I'm not using it correctly.

Just then, Fatty's slightly louder voice came from behind. "Hey, Doctor, look at this."

Gu Mian turned to see Fatty holding a CD, the light reflecting from it stinging Gu Mian's eyes.

Fatty seemed pleased. "I found this next to the pen holder. I remember the computer in my room can play CDs."

The room Fatty spoke of corresponded to Zhao Lei's middle school days and contained a very old desktop computer.

That computer didn't even have a keyboard, just a small display screen and a bulky CPU tower that could play CDs.

Gu Mian had circled the old computer several times but couldn't find a power cord. However, given this was a paranormal setting, it wouldn't be unusual for the computer to start without electricity.

Fatty gripped the CD. "This should go into the computer in my room. Doctor, shall we go upstairs and try it?"

Gu Mian paused for a moment. "Wasn't Brother Mobile's eraser pen also found in this room?"

Fatty looked taken aback for a moment, then, as if he understood something, he nodded. "It seems all the clues from our rooms are encrypted, and all the passwords for these clues can be found in Zhao Lei's room?"

The stained paper from Brother Mobile's room could be cleaned with the eraser pen found in Zhao Lei's room.

The computer in Fatty's room wouldn't start, but perhaps it could play the CD from Zhao Lei's room.

Upon this realization, Gu Mian sank into deep thought. By this logic, the black cell phone I found in my room should also be usable if I can find the clue for it in this room.

The stopped clock on the nightstand seemed to hint at something.

Gu Mian glanced at the stopped clock again. It had stopped at 9:02.

Gu Mian had tried the number 902. It hadn't worked.

So, the password to unlock the phone must be related to those three digits: 9, 0, and 2.

"Doctor," Fatty called again. "Shall we go up first?"

Standing around in the pitch-black room wasn't achieving anything. Gu Mian nodded and walked towards the door.

Fatty followed closely, flashlight in hand. "Doctor, there's definitely a ghost in this house. Otherwise, Mingliang wouldn't have been so terrified."

Although they hadn't witnessed Mingliang's reaction before he disappeared, they had heard his screams loud and clear.

Fatty wasn't much else, but he had worked many odd jobs over the years, taking on various roles: delivery man, repairman, salesman, and in his younger days, even at a slaughterhouse.

Mingliang's scream before he disappeared was just like the squeals of pigs being butchered in a slaughterhouse. If there was any difference, it was that Mingliang's screams were slightly more grating.

It was unmistakably the sound of someone dying.

Thinking of this, Fatty fell silent for a few seconds. "But Doctor, who do you think the ghost in this house could be?"

Initially, it seemed highly probable that Zhao Lei was the ghost.

But Zhao Lei had been with them when Mingliang died, so he couldn't have been the killer.

Furthermore, there was the father who had vanished from this house.

Until now, Gu Mian had no idea what Zhao Lei's father looked like, other than that he was a grumpy old man. He was reportedly a drunkard and a miser who detested his own son and was usually unreachable, as nobody knew what he was up to.

At this point, Xiao Zhang, who was trailing behind them, suddenly spoke up. "If there is a ghost in this house, I think it's probably Zhao Lei's father."

Fatty nodded in agreement, indicating he thought the same.

The three of them were now on the staircase. As they came out, they saw Zhao Lei still squatting by the bathroom door, seemingly oblivious to what they had been discussing.

Xiao Zhang glanced nervously behind him before whispering, "Zhao Lei came back this time to tell his father about his girlfriend. But his father clearly dislikes his girlfriend. I guess they must have argued."

Zhao Lei had been suffocated by his father for so many years. If someone like him were to erupt, it would be particularly terrifying..."

Zhao Lei's father had often abused him, showing no concern for his well-being. He frequently got drunk and would collapse in the street.

He never paid attention to Zhao Lei's school life and was extremely miserly, unwilling to give anyone an extra penny, not even for Zhao Lei's school fees. Consequently, Zhao Lei had endured scornful looks from a young age.

Even when his son was bullied at school, he turned a blind eye, sometimes even hitting and scolding Zhao Lei in response.

Eventually, Zhao Lei managed to escape his father's clutches and found a girlfriend. However, his father objected, claiming it was a waste of money, and frantically forced them to break up.

This was all according to Zhao Lei's own account.

Any normal person with such a father would likely have gone mad, yet Zhao Lei still appeared somewhat normal.

Fatty evidently thought along the same lines as Xiao Zhang. He murmured, "Zhao Lei seems so normal... maybe it's because he's already erupted once... He probably had a fight with his father, snapped, and killed him. But then he regretted it, couldn't face it, and forced himself to forget."

This kind of forced amnesia is genuinely possible; it's technically called selective amnesia. You can find information on Baidu stating that if a person encounters a powerful stimulus they cannot accept, their subconscious will choose to erase the event, resulting in 'selective amnesia.' However, even if the event seems forgotten on the surface, its shadow remains. It unconsciously affects one's actions and can gradually become a mental block, perhaps without the person even understanding why.

And Zhao Lei's various behaviors fit these conditions perfectly. His memories are somewhat distorted; he occasionally remembers things and is affected by these memories, yet he denies those parts of his

memory. Fatty had previously asked him if anyone had died in this house, and Zhao Lei's very uncertain answer implied that he subconsciously remembered someone had died here.

Thinking of this, Fatty looked at Gu Mian. "Doctor," he asked, "do you think it's possible that Zhao Lei's father is already dead, killed by Zhao Lei himself? But Zhao Lei refuses to admit it, so he selectively forgot about it? But Zhao Lei's father's resentment would still linger. Considering what a terrible person he was when alive, wouldn't he become a ghost seeking revenge after death? So, I think the ghost in this house must be Zhao Lei's father."

Gu Mian rubbed his chin. "It's highly probable Zhao Lei's father is dead. But what puzzles me is, if our speculation is correct, where is his body?"

It couldn't have just vanished.

Of course, this mountain is so large; it could have been buried in a makeshift grave anywhere.

But Brother Mobile and Chu Changge also vanished. Where did they go?

Surely they weren't swallowed by this house?

Fatty was clearly puzzled by this too. "You're right, his father's body isn't here. Brother Chu and the others also vanished into thin air. We can't find any trace of the bodies or the missing people..."

As he spoke, his eyes suddenly widened as if an idea had struck him. "I say, Doctor, could Brother Chu and the others now be with Zhao Lei's father's corpse? In a place we can't find?"

Gu Mian nodded slightly. "It's possible. And that 'place we can't find' might very well be the key to escaping from here."

Simply entering and leaving this place doesn't count as escaping Terror Manor.

Even fleeing when chased might not count as escaping Terror Manor, because they all heard Mingliang's scream as he ran out—definitely not a cry of joy from completing a mission.

"Considering the current situation, I think there are two possibilities," Gu Mian said, raising two fingers.

"First, the mission requires us to escape from Terror Manor. However, the place we are in now isn't the manor specified by the mission. Therefore, regardless of how we enter or leave, it won't count as mission completion. The place where Zhao Lei's father's body might be located is likely the real Terror Manor.

"Second, the world we're currently in is contained within 'Terror Manor.' So, whether you escape through the main gate or flee over the mountain, you haven't truly escaped because this entire world is inside Terror Manor... You might not fully grasp this, so let me give you an example.

"If we are currently inside a novel, and this novel is sitting on a bookshelf in 'Terror Manor,' then no matter how we try to escape within the novel, we can never escape the real Terror Manor.

"Because we will always be inside this novel, and this novel will always be on the bookshelf in 'Terror Manor.'"

Fatty's eyes widened in realization. "So, if we want to escape, we must first get out of this novel?"