

Collapse 19

Chapter 19: Sudden Disturbance_1

The efficiency of splitting up was indeed remarkable. By around seven-thirty, all the memorial halls on the first floor with these surnames had been found.

There were only two memorial halls for the Ma surname.

There were seven for the Yang surname.

The Zhao surname had the most, with a total of ten.

In total, there were nineteen suspicious memorial halls.

Although the scope was still considerable, a significant portion had at least been eliminated.

Fatty was currently peering through the doorway of a memorial hall. "Doctor, does this mean we have to push open the coffin lids in these nineteen memorial halls and look for clues about the first-floor ghost from inside them?"

Theoretically speaking, that would indeed be the case.

However, Gu Mian's thought process was often different from others; he didn't like to act according to theory.

He glanced at the nineteen open memorial hall doors. To make them easy to identify, the suspicious ones were left open, while the others were closed.

"I'll take a walk around and see first," Gu Mian said, slipping his hands into his white coat pockets.

Pushing nineteen coffin lids was a major undertaking. If their luck was bad, it could take an hour, and they still had the second and third floors to explore. They didn't have much time to waste.

At this moment, Chu Changge was standing before an open memorial hall, seemingly deep in thought.

Gu Mian didn't wander far and went directly to his side. "What are you looking at?"

Chu Changge looked up at Gu Mian. "Take a look at this memorial hall."

As he spoke, he pointed towards the interior.

Gu Mian followed his gaze.

This memorial hall didn't seem any different from the others, at least not on the surface.

All had bright incandescent chandeliers, flower wreaths clustered around colossal caskets, and black-and-white funerary portraits.

The deceased here was a middle-aged woman.

She had short hair, but it wasn't a conventional short style; it somewhat resembled the hairstyle of a landlady in movies. Her head was uneven, like a flattened potato, and even her facial features seemed to have been squashed.

Her eyes were not large but somewhat elongated, resembling a fox's squinting, smiling eyes. Due to her smile, there were deep crow's feet at the corners of her eyes.

Her nose was not high, its tip slightly upturned, revealing most of her nostrils. Her lips were thin, pulled into a smile.

The overall impression was like a flat-nosed fox's face imprinted on a flattened potato.

There was also an elegiac couplet on a wreath:

"In Condolence for the Passing of Madam Yang, Respectfully Presented by the Xuzhou Public Security Bureau"

Chu Changge pointed at the couplet on the wreath. "Usually, elegiac couplets are sent by juniors, colleagues, or work units, but this one is different."

Hearing this, Gu Mian carefully inspected the characters for "Xuzhou Public Security Bureau."

This Xuzhou Public Security Bureau was clearly not Madam Yang's employer.

Although Gu Mian hadn't seen many female colleagues in public security, he knew that a hairstyle looking like she'd been struck by lightning wouldn't meet regulations.

In other words, it was unsightly.

So, the deceased Madam Yang in this memorial hall was not a public security professional, yet there was an elegiac couplet from the Public Security Bureau.

Furthermore, her age at death couldn't have been very high, as the portrait photo showed she was only in her early forties.

"Dying unexpectedly in her forties and receiving an elegiac couplet from the Public Security Bureau—don't you think her story might be quite bizarre?" Chu Changge adjusted his glasses.

"It is quite strange," Gu Mian agreed. "Moreover, according to your test question, the three ghosts each correspond to a vehicle. Among them, the prison van is also related to the Public Security Bureau."

At this point, the others had gathered around, and some even boldly offered speculations.

An uncle named Hao Laoshi spoke up, "Could it be that a prisoner escaped from the prison van, and this Madam Yang, acting heroically, tried to stop them but sacrificed herself in the process?"

It was possible.

"Any speculation without evidence is just being reckless," Gu Mian said, his gaze shifting to the coffin in the center. "First, we need to gather evidence."

Fatty shivered. "Doctor, you seem unexpectedly enthusiastic about this ghost hunting."

Gu Mian rolled up his sleeves. "Of course. I'm prioritizing the bigger picture. Come on, let's push open the coffin lid."

The three players, who had been idly watching from the start, still showed no intention of doing anything. They all huddled by the doorway, waiting for the others to push open the coffin lid.

But, as they say, man proposes, God disposes.

Gu Mian knew this memorial hall wasn't normal, and he also knew a ghost might emerge when the coffin lid was opened.

But he hadn't expected an accident to occur when the lid was only halfway pushed open.

CREAK— The black-lacquered coffin lid was pushed open a fraction, revealing a pitch-black interior.

Gu Mian was leaning in to see what was inside when his vision suddenly went black, as if he'd gone blind.

However, the screams erupting around him immediately indicated that his eyes were fine.

The problem was with the lights overhead.

The lights on the entire first floor had suddenly gone out simultaneously. In the darkness, there wasn't the slightest glimmer of light. Gu Mian reached out to his side and touched something soft and bulging.

Fatty's scream suddenly erupted beside him, "It's out! It's grabbing my stomach! Let's run!"

Then Gu Mian heard Fatty scramble away, and the soft, fleshy thing his hand had been on was gone.

The doorway was where the screams were most concentrated.

The skinny man, the middle-aged uncle, and the freckled girl were not to be outdone, their screams rising in waves, one after another, like mobile loudspeakers.

They shrieked in panic, their voices cracking, yet even amidst their terror, they didn't forget to flee.

In the darkness, their voices grew more distant, punctuated by the occasional sound of someone falling.

Only when all the screams had faded completely did Gu Mian's eyes begin to adjust to the darkness.

He was still standing in the memorial hall, motionless.

It wasn't to highlight his bravery and fearlessness in contrast to others. He had experienced strange occurrences so frequently they were as mundane as eating and drinking, so he lacked the passionate, intense emotions most people would have.

Life's repeated harsh lessons had long taught him to remain calm in the face of danger and think clearly amidst peril.

For instance, just now, he had been seriously pondering a question—

Why did they all run?

Finding the ghost seemed to be their objective, so why did they all flee so quickly?

As he pondered this, he glanced around, trying to make out his surroundings.

The door to the memorial hall was still open, letting in a faint sliver of light from outside.

Since there were no windows in the hall, the only light came from the doorway. If the door were closed, Gu Mian wouldn't be able to see a thing.

The flower wreaths near the door were knocked over, likely by the others during their panicked escape.

The massive black-and-white portrait faced the doorway. The darkness made her face seem even paler. Now, her eyes were a blur, yet they seemed to be staring intently at him.

The heavy coffin lid had only been pushed open a crack. Gu Mian looked inside, but it was pitch black, and he couldn't see anything.

He had no flashlight or any other light source on him, and he couldn't just stick his head inside.

Having no other choice, Gu Mian decided to look for a light source first.

However, just as he turned, he bumped into something.

Without a doubt, it was a person.

Because when he bumped the person, they lost their balance and fell, his head hitting the nearby coffin with a loud THUD. It sounded like a nasty blow.

But this person didn't make a sound. He just reflexively clutched his head, stubbornly got up, and moved back beside Gu Mian.

"Xiao Qiao?" Gu Mian asked, his voice carefully modulated.

The figure finally responded, "What is it?"