

Collapse 20

Chapter 20: Coo Coo_1

Indeed, it was her.

Gu Mian felt a headache coming on. He originally thought that the performances of celebrities on screen were all personas, but meeting her in person revealed it wasn't as he'd imagined.

This person, she was genuinely ditsy.

Gu Mian lowered his voice in the darkness, "Why didn't you run?"

Xiao Qiao pondered seriously for a while before answering, "You didn't run, so I didn't either."

Gu Mian: "..."

Then she also promptly asked, "Why didn't you run?"

Gu Mian casually spun a lie, "I was scared, my legs were weak, I couldn't move."

The person in front of him was silent upon hearing this.

She probably feels insecure around such a coward, Gu Mian thought. She's likely planning to ditch me.

Unexpectedly, a few seconds later, her firm voice echoed through the darkness—

"Don't be scared, I'll protect you."

My mind just went blank, Gu Mian thought. What's the deal with this sudden bodyguard?

But the blankness didn't last long. Gu Mian quickly rebooted his brain, remembering that he had originally been looking for a source of light.

Although he had gained a bodyguard, it didn't bother him.

Making the most of the situation, he asked the person beside him, "Did you happen to see any light tools in here? Stuff like flashlights, lighters, or candles."

The feeling of complete darkness was truly unsettling; Gu Mian felt as though he were blind.

Though Xiao Qiao could be clueless at times, her actions were quick this time.

She held out her hand, in which there seemed to be a cylindrical object. "I had a flashlight stored in my inventory. Didn't you store any light tools?"

Can I tell her I don't have an inventory? Gu Mian wondered.

Gu Mian sighed as he accepted the object from her hand, then flicked the switch.

A beam of white light illuminated the entire funeral hall.

The angle of the light wasn't good; it shone directly on the large face in the memorial photo. The already pale face looked even whiter, making Gu Mian want to put some blush on it.

Outside, it was utterly silent. He had no idea where all the players who had scattered earlier had disappeared to.

Gu Mian couldn't be bothered with other matters right now; he used the flashlight to examine the coffin in front of him.

They had already pushed the coffin lid open wide enough for a head to fit, so moving closer, he could clearly see inside.

Both of them peered into the large gap at the edge of the coffin.

The flashlight illuminated the interior of the coffin. There was no haunting specter, as Gu Mian had hoped, only two A4-sized pieces of paper lying at the bottom, seemingly inscribed with some words.

Although the coffin was tall, Gu Mian retrieved the papers without much effort.

Shining the flashlight on them, the first paper's title read: "Reward Notice"

"On September 23, 2003, a violent homicide took place in Xuzhou City."

"A male individual was found dead in his own car, suspected to have been bludgeoned multiple times on the back of his skull. His wallet and other items were stolen."

"Upon investigation, Ma Gang (male, 31 years old, a Xuzhou local, approximately 172cm tall, slender build, wearing an orange top when he fled, crew cut, with a knife scar on his forehead) is a major suspect."

"The Xuzhou Public Security Bureau is calling on the public to provide clues regarding the criminal suspect. A reward of 30,000 yuan will be given to those whose clues significantly aid in apprehending the suspect. A reward of 60,000 yuan will be given to whoever directly captures the suspect. The identity of the informer will be kept strictly confidential."

"—Xuzhou Public Security Bureau, September 23, 2003"

Below this was a large headshot of Ma Gang.

His face was long and lean, making him appear older than his years, with prominent cheekbones. Much of the whites of his eyes were visible, and their outer corners were upturned, giving him the predatory gaze of a starving wolf when he looked at people.

He had a hooked nose and thin lips, overall giving the impression of a scheming old man.

"Ma Gang." Gu Mian recalled a question from his test paper. "Is this the Ma-surnamed Evil Ghost?"

The first multiple-choice question was about the gender of the Ma-surnamed Evil Ghost. It seemed that was clear now.

He then moved on to the second paper.

It looked like a thank-you letter.

"Ms. Yang Shuang, we have received the information you reported. After verification, Ma Gang is indeed hiding in the Longchang Hotel. Our department has taken action but has not yet captured him. The suspect is still at large; please ensure your personal safety."

"Thank you for providing the clue. The Xuzhou Public Security Bureau thanks you again for your report. October 1, 2003."

By now, he had found clues about two Evil Ghosts.

The Yang-surnamed Evil Ghost, named Yang Shuang, female, had reported the murder suspect Ma Gang's hideout to the Xuzhou Public Security Bureau. However, it was unknown how she had discovered the suspect's location.

The Ma-surnamed Evil Ghost, named Ma Gang, male, had fled after killing someone in Xuzhou, but Yang Shuang reported him before he could get far.

It seemed Ma Gang ultimately hadn't spared the person who reported him; this funeral hall was evidence of that.

The Public Security Bureau had sent a mourning banner, which likely meant that their failure to catch Ma Gang had led to him returning and killing Yang Shuang.

Gu Mian's final question was an essay question about the time of death of all three ghosts.

Looking at it this way, Yang Shuang's death must have occurred before Ma Gang's. He silently calculated.

There was also a multiple-choice question asking how many people the only male Evil Ghost had killed in his lifetime.

Ma Gang was this sole male Evil Ghost. It was now clear he had killed at least two people: the man who died in his car and Yang Shuang. But Gu Mian didn't know if he had killed others.

To understand the timeline, he had to piece together the complete life stories of the three ghosts. But for now, there were no leads at all on the Zhao-surnamed Evil Ghost.

Gu Mian turned toward Xiao Qiao, holding the flashlight, "We can't waste any more time. Let's go to the second floor and continue searching."

Xiao Qiao nodded in agreement.

As the two left the funeral hall, Gu Mian couldn't resist throwing a last glimpse at the coffin.

The test paper had stated there was one Evil Ghost per floor. Logically, this floor's Evil Ghost should have been in the coffin, but it was empty except for the two pieces of paper.

Did that Evil Ghost follow someone else?

Meanwhile, Fatty was panting heavily as he pulled someone into a room and promptly shut the door.

It was pitch black around him, and he had nearly tripped several times. Fortunately, Chu Changge was always there, keeping him steady.

"That really terrified me just now," Fatty gasped in the darkness, "But you two were really bold, not even uttering a word."

Chu Changge finally spoke up beside him, "Something doesn't seem right."

Fatty was startled, "What's wrong?"

"Are you pulling Gu Mian along with you?"

"Yeah, it's the Doctor..." As Fatty spoke, he turned his head toward Gu Mian's supposed direction. It was pitch black, however, and he couldn't see anything. With his utmost effort, he could only make out a silhouette.

"Doctor?" Fatty whispered, "Why are you not speaking?"

After a moment of silence, Chu Changge uttered, "Prepare yourself."

What? Fatty was taken aback.

However, he soon understood what Chu Changge meant by 'prepare yourself.'

A beam of white light abruptly lit up the funeral hall – Chu Changge had pulled out a flashlight.

And the flashlight was pointed directly where "Gu Mian" was supposed to be. Fatty had been looking in that direction, and when the flashlight beam hit the spot, he could clearly see—

A face staring right back at him.

Almost close enough to touch his own.

Clearly, this wasn't Gu Mian's face.