

Collapse 23

Chapter 23: Can You Eat the Title_1

By this time, Chu Changge had already reached the third floor, having used some special means to shake off the ghost from the first floor.

The first floor was entirely spirit halls.

The second floor was entirely hospital rooms.

The third floor, as he expected, was filled with prison cells.

This floor also had no power and was completely dark. The layout was similar to the second floor: a wall on one side, cells on the other.

It seemed like an abandoned prison that had been derelict for a long time. The floor underfoot was somewhat damp, some bars had rusted and the paint had flaked off, and the air was filled with a damp, moldy odor.

Even though the cells were all empty, each prison door was tightly closed, secured firmly with iron chains.

Small signs hung above the cell doors. It was unclear if they were prisoner introductions or something else. Looking up, one could vaguely discern the writing.

Chu Changge shone his flashlight on the nearest sign: "No. 023, Li Guodong, charged with intentional murder..."

In his hand, he held two pieces of paper from Yang Shuang's coffin in her spirit hall: a Wanted Order for Ma Gang and a letter of appreciation for reporting a crime.

Gu Mian had looked at these two papers and put them back on the coffin. So when Chu Changge returned to that spirit hall, he saw them at once.

Ma Gang... The Evil Ghost on this third floor should be Ma Gang, he thought, continuing forward.

Ma Gang's cell was undoubtedly among these rooms; he had to find it.

I'm running out of time. Gu Mian and the others are probably already in danger. I have to quickly connect all the clues into a storyline to deduce the answer to the test question.

Chu Changge walked through the dim corridor.

Before long, a familiar name came into view.

Unlike the other cells, this cell door was open for some unknown reason, swinging slightly back and forth, looking rather eerie in the darkness.

The sign on the door was half-rotted, but the original writing could still be made out.

"No. 042, Ma Gang. Previously charged with intentional murder. Released after serving a thirteen-year sentence. Thirteen years later, he killed a woman with a long axe and was arrested while attempting to assault a police officer. To be sentenced to death."

Chu Changge looked at the sign on the door.

This woman is most likely Yang Shuang, the one who reported him from the first floor. It's highly probable Ma Gang still harbored a grudge after his release and killed again. But the Public Security Department's Wanted Order clearly stated that informant information wouldn't be disclosed. How did he find out that Yang Shuang had reported him?

Chu Changge glanced inside the open cell door again.

The cell wasn't large. It had grayish-black walls and a grayish-black floor. In the corner was a bed that seemed to be made of cement.

The bed was covered with the prison's standard-issue bedsheet and quilt, but there seemed to be a touch of a different color on it.

He looked at the slightly swinging cell door. If I go in now and something blocks the door, there'll be no escape.

But he didn't hesitate for long. He decisively strode in and picked up that touch of different color from the bed.

Without immediately examining it, Chu Changge picked up the item and turned to leave. Fortunately, the common horror movie trope didn't occur; the doorway was still empty, with no terrifying figure blocking his path.

But Chu Changge quickly understood one thing—Tropes might arrive late, but they are never absent.

Just then, a pair of feet appeared on the floor not far outside the cell door.

Without any hesitation, he quickly turned and ran towards the stairs.

The ring-shaped corridor was long, with only one staircase. Chu Changge ran for a good while before he saw the stairwell entrance. By then, the sounds from behind were almost pressing against his back.

In the nick of time, he made another dash to the stairwell entrance, slammed the stairwell door shut, didn't even bother with his flashlight, and just gripped the handrail as he rushed down.

Chu Changge ran all the way to the second-floor corridor, then randomly rushed into a hospital room to hide.

Fortunately, the ghost from the third floor didn't follow.

He pressed himself behind the door, listening intently for a while. Only when he heard no movement outside did he feel relieved enough to unfold the item he had been clutching.

This was what he had taken from the cell on the third floor: a small slip of paper, on which was written "Death Certificate," and also a group photo.

He first used the light from the window to examine the death certificate.

"This certifies that Zhao Lanhai, female, a pregnant resident of our district, had an altercation with her neighbor, one surnamed Yang, on October 2, 2003. Due to an accidental fall, she suffered a major hemorrhage and premature birth of the fetus. As help was not sought in time, she died from excessive blood loss en route to the hospital."

Below this were Zhao Lanhai's ID number, date of birth, and similar details, none of which were of use.

Chu Changge then looked at the group photo.

There were three people in it. Two of them were very familiar to him: Yang Shuang, the Evil Ghost from the first floor, and Ma Gang, the Evil Ghost from the third floor.

The remaining person, whose photo he hadn't seen before, had a large belly, looking seven or eight months pregnant.

The three of them seemed to be good friends and looked to have a very close relationship.

The heavily pregnant woman standing in the middle, smiling at the camera, should be Zhao Lanhai. A younger Yang Shuang was beside her, affectionately holding her arm.

On Zhao Lanhai's other side stood a man. Judging by his face, it was Ma Gang from the Wanted Order.

He had one hand on Zhao Lanhai's shoulder; the two of them looked like a couple.

However, Yang Shuang's face in this photo had a large 'X' marked over it in red pen. The force used was so great it almost tore through the photo. It was clear that the person who drew the 'X' detested Yang Shuang immensely, even using a photograph to vent their fury.

The photo was found in Ma Gang's cell, so it was self-evident who had drawn the 'X'.

In the bottom right corner was the date the photo was taken: August 22, 2003. Ma Gang committed murder on September 23rd. This photo was taken exactly one month before the incident.

Back then, the three of them were still friends.

Now Chu Changge understood how Yang Shuang had learned Ma Gang's hiding place and reported him.

He looked at the clues in his hand, trying to connect them into a single storyline.

On September 23, 2003, Ma Gang committed murder and fled. The Ministry of Public Security issued a Wanted Order. Ma Gang certainly wouldn't have told anyone else his hiding place. But he was afraid his pregnant wife, Zhao Lanhai, would worry, and he trusted her completely, so he told her his location.

The pregnant Zhao Lanhai and Yang Shuang were good friends. During a conversation, Zhao Lanhai might have accidentally revealed Ma Gang's hiding place to Yang Shuang. After Yang Shuang found out, she secretly reported it to the Public Security Department.

Around October 2nd, the Public Security Department captured the fugitive Ma Gang. His wife, Zhao Lanhai, realized Yang Shuang had secretly informed on him, so she went to confront her. Then, during their argument, an accident occurred. Zhao Lanhai died on the way to the hospital because help wasn't sought in time... Did she die in an ambulance?

When Zhao Lanhai died, Ma Gang was already in prison, beginning his long thirteen-year confinement. In prison, he learned of his wife's death and its cause, and thus developed a deep resentment towards Yang Shuang. This resentment festered for thirteen years.

Thirteen years later, upon his release, Ma Gang immediately found Yang Shuang and killed her. He then prepared to flee again but unfortunately failed. He was caught and returned to prison to be executed.

The story of this instance is truly convoluted.

Many details were his own deductions. Chu Changge had always possessed a good imagination, and being a law student, the story he pieced together was fairly logical.

Although there are still many questionable points, the overall storyline has emerged.

As long as I know this storyline, I should generally be able to pass the written test.

As he thought, he looked at the LED board in the corridor. It was already 9:50.

The test would begin at ten o'clock.

I need to find Gu Mian and tell him the storyline, he thought as he twisted the doorknob and stepped into the corridor.

This is a six-and-a-half-star instance; it shouldn't be this simple, Chu Changge continued to ponder. The difficulty probably lies mostly in the road test component...

It's very likely that during the road test, the Evil Ghosts corresponding to the three cars will appear and interfere with the players. One might not necessarily encounter a ghost during the written test, but during the road test, the chance of encountering one is one hundred percent.

If an Evil Ghost appears in the car, the person in the driver's seat would probably die instantly. So, the road test is the most difficult part of this instance.

Thinking of this, Chu Changge felt a headache coming on again.

The written test seems to serve little purpose, other than allowing us to understand the stories behind the three cars and the three Evil Ghosts.

But is the purpose of this written test really that simple? Is it really that simple?

As he pondered, he looked at the clues in his hand. Then, Chu Changge's gaze fixed on the group photo.

Yang Shuang's face in the group photo was nearly obliterated. If it were a solo photo of her... Ma Gang would probably have torn it to shreds.

Torn to shreds... A photo...

Instantly, Chu Changge seemed to understand something. He looked towards the stairs. He remembered a photo of Yang Shuang hanging on the door of her spirit hall on the first floor.

I initially didn't understand the purpose of hanging a photo on the spirit hall door, but now I get it.