

Collapse 50

Chapter 50: The Cursed Land_1

The landlord welcomed the group in.

Sitting on the sofa, Gu Mian inquired about the textile factory, "I've come this time to ask about the Shenghong Textile Factory. You know this factory, right?"

The landlord looked stunned at first, then nodded. "Yes, yes, I know it. I used to be an old employee of that factory... This apartment building was previously the factory's family dormitory. You see, the names are quite similar."

It was only then that Yuwen Hao realized.

Shenghong Textile Factory and Hongsheng Apartment—the names were just reversed with one character changed.

"Then do you know about the fire at the Shenghong Textile Factory?" Gu Mian continued. "I heard a woman burned to death in that fire."

Upon hearing this, the landlord froze. She looked at Gu Mian and the others with a strange expression. "Why are you asking about this?"

"Some of us have encountered some strange things that might be related to the person who died."

Hearing this, the landlord's wrinkled face showed an 'as I expected' expression. She looked at Gu Mian, then at the others, looking like she wanted to say something but hesitated.

After hesitating for a good while, the landlord finally spoke again. This time, however, she lowered her voice, as if afraid of being overheard by something. "To be honest," she said, "things have indeed been strange since that woman died."

Yuwen Hao's eyes widened slightly as he looked at the landlord expectantly.

The landlord continued in a low voice, "I know that anyone connected to that fire didn't end well..."

She sighed and shook her head as she spoke.

Gu Mian asked, "Could you be more specific?"

"This matter shouldn't be spoken of casually," the landlord replied. "After that person was burned to death, anyone connected to her encountered strange things. It was like a curse, as if everyone was being haunted by her.

"After her death, the factory's business declined. It went bankrupt not long after. I don't know if it was because she was haunting it.

"Those who had a relatively good relationship with her also suffered continuous disasters at home. The ones I know are basically all dead.

"Everyone initially said she died with resentment, which is why she kept haunting the living. But offerings were made, and appeasement rites were performed. Someone even hired a spirit medium to conduct a ritual, but none of it could send her away.

"Later, everyone who knew her ran into trouble. At that time, everyone was terrified. No one dared to mention that person again, afraid that even a secret mention would cause her to haunt them..."

Such strong resentment, could it be murder? Gu Mian frowned slightly.

Yuwen Hao also asked this question, "Who started that fire?"

The landlord paused for a moment, then said hesitantly, "She started it herself."

Yuwen Hao and the others found this strange. If it was suicide, the resentment shouldn't be this strong. Could there be some other hidden reason?

Gu Mian then asked, "Do you know why she set the fire at that time?"

Did she commit suicide because she suffered a great injustice? For example, being cheated out of money or tricked into a relationship. If so, it would be understandable for her to become an Evil Ghost after suicide.

At this point, the landlord suddenly glanced around and lowered her voice to a whisper. "Originally, I shouldn't talk about this, for fear of being haunted too. But on second thought, I'm old now, just a bag of old bones. I won't live much longer anyway, so I'll secretly tell you...

"That person, she committed suicide. No one forced her, and no one wronged her. It was truly a suicide, completely unrelated to anyone else."

Strange. If no one wronged her, why would she commit suicide?

The landlord continued, "Actually, if anyone was to blame for this, it could only be herself. Everyone understood this in their hearts, but no one dared to say it back then.

"I remember she died around '87. That year, electric lights had just become common here, but there were daily power outages, and electricity was especially expensive. We couldn't bear to keep them on at night, only lighting a single kerosene lamp, the kind with a glass shade. You know those, right?"

Gu Mian nodded.

"That night, she was on duty in the warehouse, with a kerosene lamp lit. But she dozed off during her shift, put the lamp aside, and fell asleep. When she woke up in the morning, she found that the lamp had ignited the goods in the warehouse. Several boxes were burned.

"No one was hurt, so it seems the fire wasn't too big. It went out after burning about a dozen boxes of goods. But those boxes all contained merchandise.

"All told, it added up to over sixty yuan. Don't think sixty-odd yuan was a small amount. That was 1987. I remember our daily wage back then was just a few jiao. Sixty yuan was a sky-high price back then!

"The factory certainly couldn't absorb these losses itself. But they also felt she couldn't afford to pay it all back, so they discussed it with her: she would pay half first, and the other half would be deducted from her wages.

"She was an eighteen or nineteen-year-old girl back then, hadn't seen much of the world. Where would she get the money? Besides, she had several sisters at home. Her parents had pulled strings and used connections to finally get her into the factory. She absolutely didn't dare go home and tell them about this.

"This matter dragged on for over half a year. The factory really couldn't wait any longer and said they were going to find her parents.

"She panicked and started borrowing money everywhere, but who would lend money to her? In the end, she couldn't borrow more than a few yuan.

"Unable to borrow the money, she cursed people for being insincere and hypocritical, and cursed the factory for lacking compassion, for wanting to drive someone to their death.

"That day, after she finished cursing, she disappeared. The factory thought she had run off and planned to go to her parents' home the next day to find them. But who would have thought that the warehouse would catch fire again that very night, and this time it was a massive blaze.

"A girl who shared a dormitory with her saw the suicide note she left. It said she was being forced to her death by the factory and wanted to perish together with that warehouse full of goods.

"But after the fire started, she seemed to regret it. I happened to be on duty that night, and I heard her shouting for help from inside, shouting for someone to come in and save her.

"The fire was too big, and it was nighttime, so there weren't many people around. When she saw no one was coming in to save her, she started cursing loudly... saying that those heartless bastards would meet a terrible end...

"She didn't curse for long before she went silent inside... That night, a girl was also on duty in the burning warehouse. Because she was relatively far from the source of the fire, although she got burned a bit, she was thankfully rescued... It's just that half her face was burned, and her life was ruined.

"This girl whose face was ruined—her parents couldn't afford to raise her. She was given to relatives right after she was born. She was never well-liked to begin with, and then her face was ruined, so her family directly abandoned her.

"I felt sorry for her, so I took her in and let her live here... Just across from here. If you want to know the specific details of what happened back then, you can go ask her."