

Horrors 581

Chapter 581: Blood Red City

“Here!” His eyes focused on the pipe. Chen Ge raised the hammer and aimed it at a certain spot.

Bang!

The pipe cracked, and the water splashed onto his shirt. His eyes narrowed, and Chen Ge saw the strand of black hair that slipped through. “No matter what, you’re not running away tonight!”

He recalled Xu Yin and Bai Qiulin before running out of the school.

“Where is the main control panel for water and electricity?” Chen Ge jumped through the window. He grabbed the hammer and pressed on the woman’s shoulder with his other hand. The woman whom he had saved earlier was standing in the middle of the field while hugging the girl, preparing to leave. She did not expect Chen Ge to come out so soon. She was flustered, and she did not know what to say.

“I said, where is the main control panel for water and electricity?”

“There is none. We share the same circuit with the surrounding neighborhood, so the main control panel should be with them...” the woman answered incrementally, but Chen Ge grasped the gist of it. The school shared the same circuit with the neighboring residential area, so only by shutting off the power source at the residential area would he be able to trap the water ghost inside the pipe between the residential area and the school.

Of course, Chen Ge was not one hundred percent confident that it would work. The water ghost could have escaped into any of the resident’s house, and that was the thing that worried Chen Ge the most.

“Help me contact the manager of the residential area now and get him to temporarily turn off the control panel. Just say that the person who tried to kidnap the girl and injure your students and teachers is hiding inside the pipes.”

After giving that order, Chen Ge tossed the hammer inside his backpack. He tried to focus and removed all external noise, following the strange echoes inside the pipes.

The sound travelled further away from him. The water system in Jiujiang was complicated. If he was unable to limit the monster soon, then she was definitely going to escape.

“The culprit has gone inside the pipe? But how did he manage to do that?” The woman was stumped. Would anyone believe something like that? She was going to request further explanation from Chen Ge, but he had already charged out of the school.

The pipe was buried underground, so Chen Ge could only rely on his Ghost Ear to listen to the sound that the water ghost made as she travelled through the pipe. He tailed her closely, and at one point, he even thought about closing his eyes to stop all other external stimuli.

After two minutes, Chen Ge followed the sound to enter one of the residential areas that was behind the rehabilitative school. Once Chen Ge stepped into this area, he shivered. The temperature was much lower compared to outside. They were in the same area, but the difference in temperature was drastic.

Strange, why is there a feeling that is similar to the one I got when I stepped into the underground morgue?

Chen Ge's body temperature was already lower than normal, and even he could feel the chill, which meant that this place was really suspicious.

The area was built somewhere that was not that vibrant in Eastern Jiujiang. Unlike other residential areas, this area did not have a fence to close in the buildings, but instead like a prison, it had a tall wall. The wall did not look pretty, and if anything, it gave off an oppressive feeling.

There were seven buildings inside the area. They were all around ten floors. They looked like they had been refurbished plenty of times, but probably due to the lack of everyday care, they looked like they were old and uncared for. This was something common in Eastern Jiujiang, and nothing really jumped out. However, once he stepped into the place, Chen Ge had a strange feeling in his heart.

It felt like someone was watching him from behind one of the windows. That feeling made cold sweat appear on his forehead.

"Wen Wen's sister would not have chosen this place for no reason..." Chen Ge did not retreat. Unless this place was hiding a Red Specter, the other ghosts were not going to stop him.

The buildings close to the residential area had some lights on, but this place was completely dark. The more he walked into the area, the more oppressive the darkness became. Chen Ge focused on the sound in the pipe under his feet, and he followed the monster to reach the building that was at the deepest part of the residential area.

Even after completing so many Trial Missions, Chen Ge still hesitated before he entered this building. The building before him had signs of fire. Even though the walls had been repainted, once he got closer, he could smell that stench of burnt objects. Not only that, when Chen Ge looked closer, he realized that a huge fire had once ravaged this building. However, the building had not been abandoned. After some fixing and painting, it had been reopened to welcome new tenants.

"A building that was burned before?" Chen Ge was reminded of the other Trial Mission on the black phone—the three-star mission, Ghost Fire. "It shouldn't be that coincidental. There are many buildings that have suffered from fires before."

He took out the hammer from the backpack. The sound made by the water ghost weakened. She followed the pipe and entered the building before him.

"Why would she come into this building?" Chen Ge muttered. "The control panel shouldn't have been closed already. She has the chance to escape to other pipes, so why did she decide to trap herself in this place?"

If this water ghost was really Wen Wen's big sister, her life had been ended by her biological parent, so her resentment after death must have been incredibly deep. This kind of ghost would be highly vengeful.

“I’ve ruined her plan, so she must hate me a lot. The reason she lured me here could be that there is a stronger presence here, and she wants to borrow that thing’s hand to kill me.”

Chen Ge quickly understood the water ghost’s intention, but he was not afraid. “You want to borrow another person’s hand to kill me. Tonight, I shall capture that pair of hands that you want to borrow as well.”

Entering the corridor, the walls of the corridor were decorated with painful scrawls. There were many messages, like return the life of my child.

Walking down the corridor, the pipe kept making noise like there was something crawling inside it. Chen Ge summoned Xu Yin and Bai Qiulin to chase after it, and the sound eventually stopped on the thirteenth floor.

“She wants to lure me here?” Chen Ge was sensitive to everything including the number three. He looked at the three rooms on the thirteenth floor, but he could not confirm which room Wen Wen’s sister had escaped into.

“Try the rooms one by one? But it’ll be so bad to disturb people.” Holding the hammer in one hand, Chen Ge’s eyes darted between the doors of the three rooms.

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The darkened sky was filled with blood vessels, and a pair of vengeful eyes was staring at the corner of the street. In this blood red city, there was a man in a blood red doctor’s coat. He held the head of his lover in one hand, and whenever he took one step, blood would ooze out of his coat. That was the reddest red that had ever been!

“Good versus evil and sin versus punishment, there is a dichotomy to everything in this world.” The man held up the head in his palm. “Then what is the opposite of human?”

Shadows slipped up and down the red street, and the man seemed to have gotten used to everything there. He looked at the burnt building at the end of the street, and his face was maddened.

“Should I hide there? After consuming more things, I should have the answer.” Blood pooled silently underneath his feet, and the man’s expression became more and more twisted. “I’m so hungry...”

Chapter 582: That Familiar Smell, I Want to Eat Him!

“So hungry, I want to eat him, eat everyone. To make them become the thing in my stomach, to make them into my nutrients.” The man looked up at the sky, looking at the blood red eyes that were hiding behind the shadow. “You’re also looking at me, aren’t you? Stop hiding, I’ve already seen you. You are just around him, observing my body. You want to eat me. You all want to eat me, so why aren’t you doing that? What are you afraid of? Come, come and eat me! Come!”

His voice grew, and the man’s scream filled the street. He was not afraid of anything, like he did not possess the emotion ‘fear’. On the red street, the red blood dripped on the red ground.

In the alley that was growing with decaying flesh and moss, hiding in the underwater pipes that were glowing with red eyes, inside the shadow that could not be touched by the light, many strange objects with scary faces walked out. They could no longer be described by the simple terms 'scary' or 'horrifying'. They were not gory either. They had gone beyond murder or massacre—they were more than that. They were not humans and could not have been humans. They should be the creature native to the world behind the door.

They were the residents of this nightmare. They consumed negative energy, and they survived on the negative emotions from living humans. They did not have a fixed shaped and different from man, their limbs could be twisted to impossible angles. If one really had to describe it, they were like bodies that were caught in a car accident and were dragged for miles by the tires. They could not be called humans, or rather, they had obtained the human shape because they had consumed too many negative emotions from living humans. They had gained a human consciousness and an appetite for the delicious object that was called human.

"You have been waiting me. You have prepared this for a long time. You're going to serve me on the dining table tonight and make me your main dish. I saw the utensils that you have prepared, and I saw the greed in your eyes. I saw how you swallowed your saliva, and I saw how excited your Adam Apple was quivering," the man screamed loudly and madly. He did not evade or run and stood there to allow these things to surround him.

"Do you think I will be afraid?" The man hugged the head of his lover, and for a moment, his expression softened.

"I like this feeling; I love death, and I admire madness. A life gone wretched from screaming, yelling, and crying. When a person is alive, they are never brave enough to voice their true opinion, but here I can do anything that I want. There is no need to hide anymore. There is no need to hide anymore. I can play with the limbs of living humans. I can peel open my skull to look into my soul. I can gift my former self to myself.

"Many people think I have gone mad, but what is the difference between their madness and my madness exactly? I was once a doctor, but a doctor that can't even save himself, so what was the point of being a doctor?"

The head in his palm slowly lowered. The man's eyes were filled with blood. He looked at the monsters that approached him, and the smile on his face could not be hidden anymore. His lips peeled open, and the flesh on the edges of his lips parted to reveal an extremely scary smile.

"I am now a connoisseur of food. My greatest hobby is eating, eating everything within my sight and sending every delicious meal into my stomach." The laugh that would make one's hair stand on end escaped from the man's throat. He was surrounded by all the monsters, but he did not panic, like he was not the one being surrounded.

"It is my favorite time again; it is time for feeding. Yes, with my current situation, is it more appropriate to call it eating time or feeding time? Never mind, it is all the same. In the end, they will become a part of my body." The man's words were dripping with madness, but he had the right to say these things because his power had reached an incredibly scary level. When he rambled to himself, the blood kept leaking out of his blood red coat.

Many giant, thick chains that were made from many blood vessels slithered out from his back, like he was a monster with multiple tails. The blood froze, and he looked suspiciously similar to the monster that was carved on the toilet of Chen Ge's Haunted House.

"There is an opposite to everything in the world, but humans are the only exception. I have been trying to figure out what the opposite of man is. Once, I thought the answer was ghosts, but after becoming a ghost myself, I realize, the opposite of man is not ghost but God! God that rules everything!"

The large chains swept the length of the street. Once the monsters were touched by the chains, they exploded on the spot. The chains were like snakes that had their own thoughts, drilling into the bodies of their victims and slipping into their hearts to suck out the nutrients. Screams echoed up and down the street. The monsters' bodies were deflating at an incredible speed.

The man laughed upon hearing the screams. He laughed and laughed, and his lips were torn open until they reached his ears. He laughed and laughed until he cried.

But the man did not seem to notice it. He continued to laugh like all the pain, all the regret, could be released from the echoes of his maddened laughter.

"Not enough, it'll never be enough! I'm still not satisfied! I'm so hungry, I need to consume everything. I need to eat everyone that wants to eat me!" The laugh continued to echo out from his throat as blood trailed down his lips.

No one knew what had happened to the man. No one knew what had led him to this state. However, there was one thing that was certain—he was still alive, and he was keeping himself alive with this highly maddening and highly disruptive method.

Blood dyed his teeth red, and he dragged the innumerable monsters behind him. The chains pierced through the monsters' bodies. He dragged the monsters and ran down the street. At the corner of the street, there was a burnt building.

The building was about ten stories high. Looking through the broken window, there was a door in one of the rooms that was not blood red. Half of it was red, and the other half was a normal brown. In this blood red city, other than black that represented decay, red that represented violence, and gray that represented despair, there were no other colors.

"Just behind that door, I can smell a very familiar smell. It's so tasty! I need to eat him! I shall bite on his skull little by little, suck on his bone marrow, and chew on his bones. Yes, it shall be my best meal!"

The man dragged the monsters behind him and stopped at the burnt building. He looked up, and on the top floor of the building stood a man who was wrapped in red clothes. The man literally looked down at him and was also studying the man in the doctor's coat.

Chapter 583: Two Sides of the Door

"A red outfit, is he the owner of this building?"

Inside this blood red city, the buildings were the most dangerous because no one knew what was hiding inside them. Each building was an unknown. The man in the doctor's coat was very strong, but even as

strong as he was, he did not dare to step into these buildings willy-nilly. The most extreme red was still a Red Specter, but the man knew that hiding in a corner of this city was a presence greater than a Red Specter.

He did not know how to describe it because he had not seen it before, but he could sense its presence. It was an overwhelming presence; every vein in his body felt like exploding, and his hair stood on end. At that moment, he even forgot that he had become a ghost. Before such a presence, human, ghost, Red Specter... there was no difference.

“Go back from whence you came, this is not a place for you.” The man who stood at the top floor of the building had his lips move. His voice echoed in the doctor’s ears.

The chains behind him dragged out the monsters from the shadow. The doctor did not heed the man’s warning. He watched the building quietly. He was not afraid of the Red Specter at the top of the building but the other unknown presence that might be inside the building. In the city, each building represented an enclosed world, a singular nightmare. Entering them was easy, but exiting them would be hard.

“I shouldn’t enter the buildings, but I am so hungry, and I smelled that familiar taste. I can feel my soul shivering. I think I know the owner of this smell. Perhaps after consuming him, I can remember why I ended up in this state.” The maddened speech slowed down. The doctor opened his red eyes to look at the man.

Without any warning, more chains slithered out from his back. The chains that seemed to be made from innumerable blood vessels charged at the building. The doctor climbed up the stairs, and his target was clear. He wanted to enter the thirteenth floor and then consume the man that was on the other side of the door.

This burnt building was the man with the red shirt’s territory. The strange door on the thirteenth floor should be related to him, so the chance was high that he was the door-pusher. The door-pusher could release twice the amount of power in the world that he had constructed, so when he saw the doctor charge into the building, he did not retreat.

The world behind the door was constructed via the door-pusher’s memory. Surrendering the nightmare meant betraying one’s past, handing over the memory to a stranger. Unless it was absolutely necessary, no door-pusher would abandon their own world and escape.

The doctor rushed toward the door on the thirteenth floor, and naturally, the man intended to stand in his way. He stood at the edge of the building and opened his arms. He leaped forward, and his body fell toward the doctor like a bullet.

As he fell, the edge of his shirt turned extremely sharp and frayed, which looked somewhat like knives but more like feathers. Underneath the red shirt, one could see scary scars. The man’s body had been seriously burned. Just from those scars, one could imagine how painful his death had been. The resentment on the man was strong. His eyes were sharp, filled with destruction.

He was similar to the doctor at the bottom of the building. They seemed to have slowly acclimatized to this blood red city after being there for so long. They had lost themselves and become out of control and maddened.

The man careened from above and aimed at the doctor. The edges of his lips tore open, but the doctor seemed to have expected this already. He saw the approaching man, and he not only did not panic, he even revealed a scary smile to the man.

“Are you so desperate to be my food? Are you so keen to be a part of my body? Okay, I shall fulfil your wish.” The doctor pulled open his coat to reveal the clot of red chains underneath. The scary man had been hiding his real ability.

Around half of his energy had been used to resist himself—this was a completely insane person. Blood oozed out of his body, and it formed snakes that seemed like they could never be satisfied. The snakes wrapped around the doctor’s body like they wanted to consume him as well.

As the man fell from above, the doctor released a maddened laugh. He removed the limitation that had been holding him back. Endless red chains swamped out of his back. There were so many of them that they could not be counted. Looking from afar, it seemed like a giant red man-eating tree had grown up by the side of the building.

Its roots were moving rapidly like they were trying to consume the entire building. The fight that was anticipated did not happen. The man was soon entangled by the many chains, and then he was dragged to the doctor’s back.

The two men stood with their backs to each other, and the doctor could clearly hear the man’s cries of desperation and despair. Torn apart by the red chains, the man’s body was slowly digested. Like nutrients, he was absorbed into the doctor’s body. Throughout the process, the man kept resisting, but he was no match for the thick curls of red chains.

When the man’s voice slowly disappeared, the doctor bit on his finger. With the blood, he drew a slash across his arm.

“That’s the fourth one. Soon... I can already feel something coming out from my body! That should be the new me, but before welcoming this new life, I still wish to find and understand my past.” The doctor touched the head in his embrace.

“Why do tears come whenever I look at her? What is this emotion? How did she die? Who killed me? And who took her body away and left me with just her head? What should I do? Should I seek revenge or help her welcome a new life with me?”

The doctor stopped at the thirteenth floor, and his gaze fell on that special door. His lips slowly returned to normal. He pulled back all the chains and stood by the door.

“This familiar smell, the person I’m looking for is just on the other side.” The man waved his arm, and the chains struck the door. He wanted to open the door, but he seemed to have angered the building. A horrible stench leaked out from every corner, and at the same time, the blood on the door was spreading. In a few seconds, this door would turn completely red.

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Standing on the thirteenth floor of the building, Chen Ge held the hammer and looked at the three doors.

“The noise disappeared on this floor, so the water ghost should be hiding in one of these rooms. Should I break down all the doors to take a look?”

Before he decided what to do, the door on the leftmost side suddenly became colored with red veins. The normal-looking door slowly turned red.

Chapter 584: I'll Be Waiting for You!

“A door?” Chen Ge, who had merely trailed the water ghost, did not expect to run into a door inside the building. Before the red door and the blood vessels that were expanding, everything felt so familiar to Chen Ge.

“It’s not yet midnight. Even if this is a door that has been pushed open before, it shouldn’t have appeared now. Is this a trap? Is it something set up by the culprit at Eastern Jiujiang?”

Chen Ge was no longer the innocent toy designer. Ever since he obtained the black phone, he had become more sensitive to these problems.

With a lack of insurance, Chen Ge did not dare get too close to the door. Wen Wen’s sister was just a monster from a two-star scenario—she was incomparable to the culprit at Eastern Jiujiang. Chen Ge summoned Xu Yin and Bai Qiulin, which gave him a sense of security.

Just as he hesitated over what to do, the door started to shake. The blood vessels on the door bulged forward like something was trying to crawl out from it. “There’s something behind the door? It wants to force its way out?”

This was the first time that Chen Ge had come across something like this; he also did not know what to do. The bulge on the door grew bigger, and the blood vessels started to move. It curled on the wooden board to form lines of thin chains. If one looked closer, one could see human faces with pained expressions on the chains. Each of the blood vessels represented someone’s extremely despairing memory.

“How come these look so familiar?” Chen Ge was reminded of his final battle with Doctor Gao at the underground morgue. The blood vessels wielded by the chairperson of the society had been similar to the ones before him at that moment. They were not merely red blood—they were carved with human faces. If he leaned closer, he could even hear the faces screaming for mercy.

It was not yet midnight. There was a force in reality that suppressed the blood vessels on the door. It was not easy to break through the door at the time like that. The blood vessels kept snapping, but the monster behind the door appeared like it had gone mad. It would stop at nothing to get out. As the blood vessels disappeared, more came out to take their place. They entwined together to form a chain that slithered down the other side of the corridor like they were trying to force the door open from the outside.

“The monster inside the door could have waited until midnight to come out. Did it sense something that made it so desperate?” A burnt smell lingered in the air, but there was nothing special about it. “This is different from my previous experience. After I entered the building, I stopped at the door. Is this because the monster can sense my presence, or is it due to my title of Specter’s Favored?”

Chen Ge narrowed his eyes. He felt like this was not the culprit's doing. The water ghost could not have known that he would appear that night. This was completely random.

"A burnt building, blood door, this building fits the introduction of the mission on the black phone, Ghost Fire, perfectly. Also, from what Doctor Chen said, my parents came here before they disappeared. Could it be that they have left too deep a scar on the monsters behind the door, and now that they sensed the similarity in my blood and legacy, they have gone berserk? But that can't explain the similarity of the blood vessels on the door and the ones used by the ghost stories society..."

Many questions appeared in Chen Ge's mind. His grip on the hammer tightened. He was courageous enough to slowly approach the door. When he got close, the monster behind the door completely lost it. Multiple chains pierced through the blood door, and they forced an opening in the closed blood door.

" **Argh!** "

Chen Ge heard a desperate roar, and the thick stench of blood almost caused his sense of smell to go haywire. He forced his eyes open and looked through the opening. His eyes narrowed, and his heart skipped a beat. "Is that him?"

A face was squeezed against the door. Chen Ge could see the face clearly, but that pair of eyes that were different from normal gave Chen Ge a very familiar feeling. Fingers poked through the opening—the man could also see Chen Ge. The person before him gave him a deep sense of excitement and craving. He released a beast-like growl, like he wanted to tear Chen Ge into pieces and swallow him.

Ten fingers reached through the door. The opening in the door grew bigger, and the resistance from reality also grew stronger. Once the blood vessels appeared on the door, they would snap and disappear, but the monster inside the door did not care. All he could see now was Chen Ge.

Forcing his way through, the monster inside the door was under great pressure, but he did not care. All he wanted was to consume Chen Ge.

His hands pushed through the door. His fingers were tapered and beautiful. If just focusing on this pair of hands, one might think that he was a pianist, but in reality, every single finger was covered in blood. Who knew how much flesh and blood that pair of hands had already torn apart?

He's at least a Top Red Specter, like Zhang Ya! Chen Ge quickly determined the opponent's power level, and he made the best decision to retreat while he still could. However, as he prepared to turn, he felt a piercing chill around his waist. Then his legs turned numb like his body was locked inside a fridge. He slowly lost control of his limbs.

What is happening? Xu Yin is just next to me, who can attack me from this distance?

He turned his head around and saw a strand of black hair landing on his shoulder. Someone was standing behind him, leaning on his back.

Different from the fiery red inside the door, the corridor felt like it was frozen. It was so cold that Chen Ge's heart felt like it was encased in ice. The black hair silently reached out from Chen Ge's shadow. It evaded Chen Ge and pulled out all the chains that surrounded the blood door.

Losing the chains, the monster inside the door was unable to fight against the invisible power in real life anymore. The blood vessels on the door disappeared at a drastic speed, but he did not give up. What he desired was just inches away, so he used all of his power to push his fingers outward.

The black hair seemed to be waiting for this chance. After clearing away the chains, it started to gather power. When the monster behind the door was unable to keep the sliver of the door open, all the black hair rushed at the door.

The door slammed shut instantly, cutting off four fingers from the monster's hand. When they fell to the ground, they morphed into globules of blood that were so red, they were practically glowing.

Endless growls issued from behind the door. Black hair spread out from Chen Ge and swept all the blood globules away.

The door slowly lost its color, and the sound behind the door became unclear. At this time, Chen Ge did something that no one expected. He rushed to the door and punched heavily on it. Then, he yelled loudly, "I will be waiting for you in Eastern Jiujiang, Li Wan City!"

When the monster heard his voice, he seemed to be reminded of something and replied by saying someone's name. Alas, the connection between the worlds was so weak that Chen Ge was unable to hear him clearly.

That gaze is too similar to Doctor Gao's, but the monster behind the door is so different from my impression of Doctor Gao.

The temperature in the corridor returned to normal like everything earlier had just been his imagination.

Chapter 585: Stop! Do Not Move!

The world behind the door is weaved based on the memory of the door-pusher. In a way, it could be understood as a nightmare that the door-pusher cannot escape from. In the underground morgue, Doctor Gao suffered all the despair and negative emotions in the world alone, causing the underground morgue to implode upon itself in the end.

After the morgue collapsed, I caught a glimpse of the outside world, a blood red city. If this singular building was the nightmare of a single despairing soul, then that blood red city could be the amalgamation of many nightmares.

Accumulation caused transformation. After the sedimentation and festering of endless nightmares, what kind of monsters would be birthed from that sea of negative emotions?

Chen Ge stood in the corridor, and he had never been so conscious before.

The main opponents in one-star missions are living humans; two-star missions have half Red Specters like the middle-aged woman who kidnapped children on the hearse or Wen Wen's big sister; three-star missions are like a threshold because each three-star mission will contain one or more Red Specters, but more than that, every venue for a three-star mission will come with a door! Whether it is the Third Sick Hall, Coffin Village or the underground morgue, the 'existence' of the door is the hallmark of a three-star mission.

If that is how things are arranged, then what will a four-star mission be like? More than one door at a single mission location? Or will the world behind the door no longer be closed in but a connection of multiple buildings and thus multiple nightmares?

Chen Ge personally thought that the chance of the second possibility was larger.

The Trial Mission at Li Wan City was marked as 3.5 stars. If the world behind the door is similar to the game world inside Xiao Bu's game, then in a way, it could be a validation of my speculation. After the door goes out of control, the world behind it will no longer be limited within a singular building but will continue to spread. If one is not careful about it, perhaps it will eventually turn into a four-star scenario.

The mastermind in Eastern Jiujiang used to the hearse to continually feed negative emotions into Li Wan City and used the despairing passengers to spread the despair like seeds. Chen Ge still remembered the conversations that he had with the passengers on the bus. There was a ghost building in Li Wan City. To fulfil a wish, one had to sacrifice or bear something of equal value.

The mastermind seemed to be using these people's determination to turn them into the carriers of fear and misfortune to use them to create more despair to lure in more passengers. The core purpose behind his action was probably to turn Li Wan City into a four-star scenario.

"To use these poor souls as chess pieces, this monster in Eastern Jiujiang is worse than the ghost stories society," Chen Ge muttered calmly.

Eastern Jiujiang already has a four-star scenario—Ghost Fetus—could the culprit have originated from this scenario?

The more Chen Ge thought about it, the more convinced he became. After all, the mastermind had only appeared in the form of a shadow so far, but the scariest thing was that it was able to exchange blows with Zhang Ya in just a shadow form.

A three-star scenario wouldn't contain this kind of monster. Zhang Ya was already the most threatening presence a three-star scenario could breed. In that case, that monster had to be related to a four-star scenario. Its physical form should be trapped somewhere, or its physical form is immobile, and this is the only way it can move.

Standing in the corridor, Chen Ge was lost in thought until the door of the family on the rightmost side suddenly opened, and a fat middle-aged man stood at the door holding his phone.

"Why are you screaming so late at night?"

"Hmm?"

After the brief exchange, their eyes met. Through the open door, Chen Ge saw that the pipe in the house was not screwed shut, and strands of black hair were climbing up the water into the pipe. The man's gaze instead fell on Chen Ge's hand, attracted by the scary hammer that Chen Ge was holding. It was hard to imagine that one could come across such bloody and primal thing in modern society.

The blood grooves, the skeleton-like handle, every detail of this hammer seemed to announce its difference from the tool hammer that was used by construction workers.

"You..."

“Move!” Chen Ge ordered the man—not harming the innocent was part of his creed. He dragged the hammer as he charged into the room and swung it at the pipe!

Bang!

A loud crash echoed from inside the room. The pipe burst, and the water spurted several meters, falling on the man’s face. He was stunned speechless. His lips were wide open, and he was unable to close them for a long time.

“Xu Yin!” After dealing with the water ghost once, this time, Chen Ge had learned his lesson. He predicted the water ghost’s movement and bent the pipe that she was going to escape from. He kicked the door of the bathroom open, and Chen Ge summoned both Bai Qiulin and Xu Yin, having them block both ends of the pipe.

“Let’s see where you’re going to run this time?”

Wet, raven-black hair oozed out of the pipe and covered the entire bathroom. This was the water ghost’s final struggle. The mirror cracked, and pipes burst—the sound of intense fighting came out from inside the bathroom.

“What... what is he doing inside?” The man saw the water seep out from underneath the door, and after a long time, he finally recovered and called the police on his phone. “Hello, is this the police? A madman just rushed into my home. You have to come help me!

“Is he dangerous? Of course, he is! He’s extremely dangerous! He carries a long ass hammer with him!

“I don’t know him! He just appeared at my door, rushed in, and started ruining my water pipes! I swear, I didn’t say anything. I just shared a look with him!

“Okay, I understand! I will stop provoking him and will stay as far as I can, but you have to hurry!”

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Half an hour later, Chen Ge finally gained control over the water ghost. The limited space made it difficult for him to fight. Both Bai Qiulin and Chen Ge blocked the water pipe and underground sewer—the main fighting force was still Xu Yin.

“She’s so hard to deal with even on the surface. If the fight really happened at the dam, it might have been me who lost.”

After fighting with the water ghost, Chen Ge noticed something. The girl’s attack style would become extremely strange when she was near water, and her fighting power would almost triple.

“Thankfully, we cornered her on the ground, or else this mission would have been as difficult as a normal three-star mission.” Chen Ge placed the twisting black hair in Xu Yin’s grasp into a shampoo bottle. Behind the curtain of black hair hid a girl’s faded shadow. She was wearing a blood-stained dress, and she looked just like Wen Wen, probably slightly older than Wen Wen.

“She is just a child and needs adult supervision.” Chen Ge placed both the bottle and the recorder together inside the bag.

“Before the two-star mission has even started, I’ve already captured the boss. After the water ghost assimilates into the family at the Haunted House, I should go back to visit the dam—perhaps I can recruit her underlings then.”

Satisfied, Chen Ge shoved the hammer into his backpack and opened the door.

“Stop right there! Do not move!” A scream came from outside the door, and it startled Chen Ge. However, his expression soon turned curious because the voice was very familiar. With his hands in the air, Chen Ge slowly walked out from the bathroom.

When they saw his face, both of the officers were equally shocked.

“Officer Xiao Qing, I told you at the fishing aficionado’s home that we would meet again soon.” Chen Ge smiled embarrassedly. “I didn’t lie, did I?”

Chapter 586: Salvage

“That was two days ago, wasn’t it, or was it yesterday?” Xiao Qing looked at the innocent-looking Chen Ge, who had his hands over his head, and he felt a headache coming. He did not know how to report this to the captain.

“Was that yesterday? It doesn’t matter, as you saw, I was investigating the culprit of the children kidnapping case.”

“That’s why you trespassed into a civilian’s home and broke all of the water pipes with your hammer? Mind telling me what the relationship between the two is?” Xiao Qing and the other officer relaxed after they saw Chen Ge. They knew that Chen Ge was not crazy. His way of thinking was certainly different from a normal person, but he was definitely on the side of justice.

“That will be very hard to explain. If Captain Yan is here, he should be able to understand it.” Chen Ge namedropped Captain Yan to use as a shield, and he quickly changed his tone to become weak and apologetic. “But destroying someone’s property is definitely bad. I will compensate everything at its original price.”

He flashed an apologetic smile at the middle-aged man, and that caused the latter to shiver. The man before him now and the man earlier were like two completely different people. The people present had no idea what Chen Ge was thinking.

Trading several hundred RMB for a water ghost? This is such a good deal!

After negotiating with the man, Chen Ge was led out of the building by the two officers.

“You said earlier that you were investigating the child kidnapping case. What’s that about?” Xiao Qing had made a big break in the previous case, but unfortunately, his captain had refused to allow him to follow the crime team and always set him up with the normal cases. The situation had really been grinding his gears.

“That’s right. There is a special ed. school near this area that had a missing child. After my investigation, I realized that there were other people at the school other than the students and teachers. I followed

the trail, but it went cold at this building.” Chen Ge naturally would not tell the police about the water ghost. He came up with a believable story and pushed it onto the officers.

“Was the child found?”

“Yes, but the child suffers from a hereditary illness that causes her to be mentally different. Combined with the shock, you won’t get any answers even if you question her.” Chen Ge carried his backpack and walked between the two officers. “You seem to be very interested in this case.”

“Compared to the case, I’m more interested in you.” Xiao Qing asked for Chen Ge’s number. For some reason, he felt like, if he followed Chen Ge, there would be big cases to uncover.

After returning to the school, Chen Ge arrived to see the two teachers being carried away by the ambulance. They had been found inside the toilet cubicle. Their clothes were dripping wet, and their faces were frozen in fear like they had just lived their worst nightmare. The strangest thing was that the doctor discovered a large amount of water in their throats and lungs. No one knew what had happened to them after they fainted.

Wen Wen’s aunt was there as well, and the headmistress and the teacher were apologizing to her. A bad guy had sneaked into the school—the administration had to bear some responsibility.

“The female teacher and the girl’s aunt can prove that I’m a good person.” Chen Ge very naturally stood next to them and placed himself in the ranks of the victim. After asking around, the bespectacled teacher vouched for Chen Ge. She said that there were indeed other people at the school, and it was Chen Ge who broke the window to save her and Wen Wen. However, to everyone’s surprise, when the police wanted to take Wen Wen’s aunt’s statement, the woman was extremely uncooperative. She kept scratching her arm and the back of her hand like the minute pain was necessary to help her cope with fear, to help her calm down.

“What are you afraid of? The revenge from the culprit? We’re the police, and I can guarantee that we will eventually catch the culprit.” Xiao Qing had no idea what was happening. After he consoled the aunt, he walked toward Wen Wen.

The girl was not crying or making any trouble. She was silent, standing alone in the shadow of the wall. No matter who went to hug her, she would attack that person like an animal.

“Officers, thank you, but we don’t want to pursue this case anymore.” After a long time, Wen Wen’s aunt voluntarily gave up on the investigation. Her face was pale as she kept turning around to look into the school like there was a man-eating demon hiding in the shadows of the corridor.

“You are going to let the culprit that harmed the child escape just like that?” Xiao Qing could not understand the aunt’s logic. “If we don’t capture the criminal, he might harm other children in the future. This is not only about you anymore—please help us by cooperating with the investigation.”

“There’s no need. There’s really no need! Wen Wen, let’s go.” The aunt reached to grab the girl’s hand, but to everyone’s surprise, the girl reacted like a spooked feral cat and waved her hands wildly, scratching her aunt’s hands until they bled.

She refused to let anyone near her as she curled up in the shadows. Her cute face turned savage as her eyes darted about, and her chest rose unevenly. She was desperately in need of security.

“Wen Wen? I’m your auntie!” The woman wanted to try again but was stopped by the police.

“Is the child acting up? Do you have her medicine?” Xiao Qing felt that the case was not as simple as it seemed.

“The medicine is at home. I’ll take her home now!” Wen Wen’s aunt wanted to grab the girl by force, but naturally, the police would not allow that before getting to the bottom of the truth. Seeing as everyone was about to snap, Chen Ge removed his backpack. He walked around Xiao Qing and Wen Wen’s aunt as he took out a shampoo bottle.

“What are you doing?” This strange action attracted the attention of the teacher and the other officer.

Chen Ge ignored them and squatted down one meter away from the girl. He told the girl, “Your big sister is here. No one hurt her, and I know that she has her reasons for doing those things. She is as kind-hearted as you, and the two of you are the real victims here.”

Holding the bottle, Chen Ge slowly approached the girl. “You share the same body, so you should have some kind of special bond with her. Try to summon her, you should be able to get her to respond.”

The girl raised her hand in semi-disbelief and touched one end of the bottle. Chen Ge did not know whether the girl could sense her sister’s presence or not, but at least she had somewhat calmed down.

“No matter what happens, I will help you and stand by your side.” Chen Ge slowly picked the girl up from the ground. “Everything is okay now...”

Wen Wen slowly returned to normal. Her small hands grabbed the end of the bottle, and she buried her face into Chen Ge’s chest like she was afraid of seeing other people. When Chen Ge picked up Wen Wen, the black phone in his pocket vibrated.

Chen Ge took it out and clicked open the message.

“Different choices lead to different result. The special visitor has left, and you have made your choice. Congratulations for lowering the hostility of the Twin Water Ghost.

“Two-star trial mission Twin Water Ghost activated!

“Please arrive at Eastern Jiujiang Dam before midnight tonight!

“Mission requirement: Alone, you have to salvage the elder sister’s body!”

Chapter 587: Home

Salvage her dead body?

When Chen Ge saw the mission details on the black phone, his eyelids jumped slightly. This Trial Mission was different from what he thought.

Isn’t it a bit difficult for the mission to request me to go to the dam alone to salvage the sister’s body?

To salvage a dead body from a body of water would require a professional team, but Chen Ge only had one night to do it. Without the help of other people, without salvaging tools or a boat, he did not even know what the 'person' that he was supposed to salvage look like.

Bury seed happened before Wen Wen was born, so how old could Wen Wen's big sister have been at the time? Why was her body later abandoned in the Eastern Jiujiang Dam?

Many questions floated up in his mind, and only Wen Wen's aunt would be able to provide the answers.

Wen Wen's father suffered from the same hereditary illness, but it was clear that he loved his daughter a lot. Unfortunately, due to his mental impediment, he might not have been able to remember things that happened so long ago. Thus, Wen Wen's aunt was the only person who had lived through the experience and could be communicated with normally.

The woman appears to constantly avoid the event that transpired several years ago. Direct questioning will get me nowhere. I have to come up with another solution.

The Twin Water Ghost mission had been activated, and based on Chen Ge's understanding of the black phone, if he failed the mission, the scenario would be locked away forever, and Chen Ge did not want to miss out on this unique underwater scary scenario.

Silently putting the phone away, Chen Ge turned around while holding the girl, and he suddenly realized that everyone's eyes were on him. "Why are you all looking at me?"

Xiao Qing coughed and reminded him out of kindness, "The bone in your backpack is poking out."

Chen Ge quickly turned around and realized that the handle of Doctor Skull-cracker's hammer was indeed poking through the opening. This hammer that had been given by the black phone had not been so big at the beginning. As it followed Chen Ge and as the number of ghost and Specter that it came into contact with grew, it had probably absorbed 'nutrients' from them and grown scarier, longer, and heavier.

"Don't worry, this is just a prop from my Haunted House. I often go out alone at night, and I carry this to ward off the bad guys." Chen Ge provided a clumsy excuse.

"I really don't understand how a person like you is so liked by children." Xiao Qing did not go and inspect Chen Ge's backpack. He looked at Chen Ge's bright and kind expression; the innocence in his eyes, the angel-like Wen Wen in his arms, and rest of the setting formed a great contrast to the hammer peeking out of the man's bag.

"Actually, I am quite good with children. Many of them like to be around me." Chen Ge was reminded of Fan Yu, Xiao Bu, and Men Nan—all these children shared a good relationship with him.

"If you say so..." Xiao Qing and the other officer opened the police car's door. "The culprit sneaked into the school to kidnap the student, which is quite serious. I will need a few of you to come with us."

...

At 10:10 pm, Chen Ge hugged the girl as they walked out from the police station. Wen Wen grabbed the shampoo bottle. She still only let Chen Ge hug her and stuck close to him. Even Wen Wen's aunt did not

expect this. She followed Chen Ge closely, watching the two with complicated emotions. The three walked in a row, and those not in the know would think that they were a family.

“When the police were doing the interrogation earlier, I tried my best to help cover for you.” After they wandered to a more deserted corner, Chen Ge suddenly stopped. “Actually, it was Wen Wen’s elder sister who injured the teachers at her school. There was no child kidnapper, right?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“I’ve met Wen Wen’s sister. Her body is still submerged at the bottom of Eastern Jiujiang Dam. She died a horrible death and is coming back to seek...”

“Stop talking!” Wen Wen’s aunt suddenly lost control and screamed shrilly, causing the passersby around them to jump.

“Avoiding is not going to solve the problem. Perhaps she hasn’t harmed you now, but that doesn’t mean that you’re safe.” He turned to look at the aunt. “What actually happened to the child? Perhaps I can help you.”

Standing by the bridge, the woman looked at the gently flowing river. After a long time, she said, “Do you know about Bury Seed? It was a cruel method to use a child’s life in exchange for the healthy growth of another. I don’t know about the exact details; I only know that when Wen Wen was about to come into this world, my parents led Wen Wen’s sister away. They left at midnight and only returned at dawn.”

“Wen Wen’s sister didn’t come back with them?”

The woman shook her head. “My parents only came back with a small bowl of dirty water. They woke Wen Wen’s mother up and forced her to drink it.”

“A bowl of dirty water?”

“Yes, very murky. There was even blood on the edge of the bowl.”

“Wen Wen’s mother didn’t resist? She allowed them to do that to her?” Chen Ge suddenly realized that there were few things about Wen Wen’s mother at her home.

“Her mother was from the same village as I was. She was unfortunate enough to get into a car accident and lost a leg. My parents took her in with the condition that she helped give birth to a healthy child for my big brother.” The woman paused. “It was my parent’s decision to use Wen Wen’s sister as the seed; they didn’t tell anyone. Wen Wen’s mother didn’t even realize the bowl that she drank from was stained with her own daughter’s blood.”

“So, what happened later?” Chen Ge felt like halting the story already. He did not know how to evaluate this family.

“Since Wen Wen’s sister didn’t come home, my parents made up an excuse and said that the child had been sent to their old home to be taken care of. Several days later, Wen Wen came into this world. During the previous hospital visits, the doctor had told us that the child was a boy, so until the minute of birth, everyone was so happy.”

A sad smile appeared on the woman's face. "But soon, karma came. The child came out a girl and had a slight deformation on her head like there was another face growing on the back of her head. After the doctor's examination, it was confirmed that the child suffered from the same hereditary disease. My parents couldn't suffer the trauma and left home one rainy night."

"They didn't tell Wen Wen's mother about her first daughter?"

"My father's mind was not normal, and he had a temper despite his physical abnormality. My mother suffered from the same fate. They had been taking the ridicule and mockery from the society their whole lives, and they couldn't resist it anymore. Their life was difficult, and they did not want their next generation to go through the same thing.

"However, the result showed that they had been lied to. The so-called bury seed failed. I don't where they went after that night. In any case, I never saw them again."

Initially, the woman looked pained, but as she talked, the lines on her face smoothed out like she had become desensitized to it. "My parents and Wen Wen's big sister disappeared, her husband is an idiot, and now so is her second daughter. Wen Wen's mother couldn't withstand the pressure, so she stole all of the money that the family had and left. It was my twentieth birthday that day."

Chen Ge wanted to console her, but he did not know what to say.

"Now, I'm almost thirty already. I don't need pity or help from others. I just wish for Wen Wen to grow up healthily and safely—that's all I wish for." The woman walked to Chen Ge and extended her hands toward Wen Wen. "Give her to me. It's time for us to go home."

Chapter 588: Using the City as a Womb

"I can give you the child, but you have to be clear about this—if this issue is not fully resolved, this thing will happen again in the future, and it might not be me who is holding the child next time." Chen Ge put Wen Wen down. The child was still holding the shampoo bottle. She liked to stick close to her sister; without her sister, she felt so unsafe.

"There is no need for you to worry. I will look after Wen Wen." The woman looked at Wen Wen—the girl had already calmed down. She did not resist her aunt, but she did not leave with her either.

"Follow your aunt home. I will help fulfill her wish." Chen Ge pointed at the bottle. "Trust me."

After a long time, Wen Wen finally let go of the bottle and silently went to grab her aunt's hand. Seeing Wen Wen return to normal, the woman sighed in relief.

"You should go home now. Leave the rest to me." Chen Ge placed the water bottle inside his backpack as he stared at the dark surface of the lake.

Sensing the incongruity in his tone, the woman pulled Wen Wen behind her. "What do you plan to do? We didn't ask for your help, and don't you be dumb enough to start any investigation."

Based on that sentence, Chen Ge felt like Wen Wen's aunt still had something that she was hiding from him due to certain reasons.

“You are both victims. The culprits are those who turned a sad event into a tragedy. If we do not stop them, more families will encounter the same pain as you did. Despair is contagious, and we must stop them before it is too late.” Chen Ge held the railing of the bridge with both of his hands. He had no idea whether he had said those things to pull some useful information from the woman to help her complete the Trial Mission or really intended to use his negligible amount of energy to help change this imperfect world.

“Then, be careful. I still need to work tomorrow. I’m not going to stay to act crazy with you.” The woman nudged Wen Wen along, and after taking a few steps, she suddenly stopped and stood where she was for a few seconds. Then she turned to tell Chen Ge, “The Bury Seed needs three things—the seed, the fetus, and the womb. To transfer a child’s life into another child’s body, that is Bury seed. But if you transfer many lives into one singular body and use the whole city as the womb, then what kind of monster will be birthed once the seed germinates and grows?”

Chen Ge was thinking about something else, and the sudden exposition from the woman made Chen Ge think that he had misheard her. “The night that my parents left, I followed them sneakily to Li Wan City and saw something.”

The woman seemed to be talking to herself, and when she was done, she led Wen Wen away. Chen Ge stood by the bridge and watched the woman and the girl disappear into the distance.

“To use the whole city as the womb?” Chen Ge gripped the railing tightly. He realized that things were far more serious than he had thought. “Innumerable children’s lives and despairing living humans as seeds, the city as the womb, then the fetus can only be the ghost fetus.

Li Wan City’s difficulty is 3.5 stars, and ghost fetus is four stars. Could there be a relationship between the two?

Chen Ge’s mind was flooded with many questions.

Wen Wen’s family might just be the first stage of the trial to confirm the effect of Bury Seed and the real test will begin at Li Wan City. Xiao Bu is most likely the ‘fetus’ that was handpicked by the culprit, but why did it insist on creating the ghost fetus? Could it be that it also wants to gain a new life like the well ghost in Coffin Village?

Li Wan City’s door had gone out of control, and Chen Ge had no idea how powerful Xiao Bu was. However, she had to be a very special Red Specter to have been chosen by the culprit hiding at Eastern Jiujiang.

The upper limit of a three-star scenario is a Top Red Specter, but it is hard to say for a 3.5-star scenario.

Thinking back to the woman’s parting sentence, Chen Ge dissected it closely, and he noticed some details that he had missed earlier.

If the culprit plans to turn the whole city into the womb and use living humans as seeds, then they must need some kind of medium to connect with everyone. The first time that I ran into the shadow was at Eastern Jiujiang Fresh Water Plant, and that place happens to be relatively close to Eastern Jiujiang Dam. The Water Plant is used to cleanse the water from the dam, and both of these locations are stops for the bus on Route 104. Could the culprit have been using the drinking water as its medium? The man from the

fishing society told me that he saw many water ghosts at the dam. That shouldn't happen under normal circumstances. Could the dam be a part of the culprit's plan?

Realizing the severity of the situation, Chen Ge hailed a cab and rushed to Eastern Jiujiang Dam. The dark surface of the dam occasionally rippled. When Chen Ge arrived, it was almost 11 pm.

"Is someone there?" He knocked lightly on the manager's door. Ten seconds later, the light inside came on.

"Who is it?" With an alarmed voice, the man inside got out of bed but did not open the door.

"Brother Zhang, we met each other earlier. There was someone fishing for the King Fish, yes? It was me who returned the man's fishing rod."

"I think I remember you, why did you come back so late at night?" Probably thinking that Chen Ge sounded familiar, his alertness went down.

"I want to borrow a boat." Just as Chen Ge finished, the door opened.

The manager was wearing a large coat, and he looked shocked. "Borrow a boat?"

"Yes, I have something to confirm and need to salvage something from the water." Chen Ge's eyes were firm and his tone unshakeable.

"I can't help it if you're on your personal mission, but I can't allow you to risk your life like that. There is a King Fish in the dam, and you want to conduct a salvage around midnight. What if there's an accident?" Zhang Dabo shook his head.

"Zhang Brother, when I went to return the rod, I found a dead body buried at the fisher's home. The police will probably come to find you soon."

"They already came this morning." Zhang Dabo looked at Chen Ge with a bitter smile. "It gave me quite the shock. After all, I'd spent so long in the company of a murderer."

"Actually, I've been working with the police. You can go online and search for Western Jiujiang's Haunted House boss. I've helped the police solve many big cases. I'm borrowing your boat this time to investigate some things." Chen Ge took out his phone and opened his phone record. In his small contact list, the names with inspector, officer, and captain took up half of it.

After some more persuading, Zhang Dabo finally agreed. "I can borrow you the boat, but I don't think I'll be coming with you."

"That's fine."

"By the way, what is it that you're trying to salvage?" Zhang Dabo was curious.

"A dead body, a little girl's body to be precise."

Zhang Dabo definitely did not anticipate that answer. He rubbed his hands and didn't know what to say.

Opening the warehouse's door, Zhang Dabo pulled out the paddles, fish spear, and rope. "Wait here for a moment."

He turned into the manager's room to take out a flashlight. "This might look old, but its light can penetrate far into the darkness. If there's any danger, wave it several times at the bank, and I... I will call the police for you."

"Thank you." Chen Ge threw everything into the boat, then activated the recorder and jumped into the boat as well.

"Several teams normally work together to salvage a body, are you sure that you can do this alone?" Zhang Dabo thought that Chen Ge was messing with him.

"Don't worry, I'm not working alone either." Finding his balance on the boat, Chen Ge opened the comic and released the vat ghost into the water.

Chapter 589: Thick Fog

"Just remember this piece of nautical advice. No matter what happens on the water, as long as the boat doesn't capsize, there is still hope." Zhang Dabo was a nice person. He saw that Chen Ge was ready to set out, and he went back into the room to retrieve a life jacket. "This is the only one we have at the dam; it was given to me by my boss. It has not been used before, but you should take it with you."

"Thank you, you should go back inside. It's not safe staying by the bank." Chen Ge thanked the man, put on the vest, waved goodbye at Zhang Dabo, and rowed the boat away. Rowing a boat on the dam alone at midnight, that was certainly a unique experience.

The sky and the water were both dark, and there was no light around. It was as if the world was made of darkness, and his body was slowly decomposing into it as well. Chen Ge did not head directly to the center of the dam. After moving away from the bank, he started to communicate with the Vat Ghost.

The creature that came from Coffin Village did not retain his living memory, so most of the time, it acted on instinct, and that made communication difficult. Looked from outside, Chen Ge was acting strangely. He kept waving his hands at the water like he was trying to talk to the water.

"The girl's body is about this big. If you spot it, tell me the location, and I'll hand you the rope. You only need to tie the rope around her body." Chen Ge repeated that several times, but the Vat Ghost could not grasp such complicated order. He was curled up underwater, blowing bubbles out of his lips, looking at Chen Ge blankly.

"Never mind, it's me who's demanding too much." Chen Ge did not blame the Vat Ghost. He opened his phone and searched for the picture of a child. "Go underwater to see if there's a child like this. Don't make too much noise, and if there's any danger that you can't handle, retreat immediately. Safety first."

Chen Ge would often tell his workers to do various things, but he had a line inside his heart and would never sacrifice his workers to achieve his goal. Perhaps because of that, the ghosts that stayed at the Haunted House due to various reasons would grow to become accomplished and efficient 'workers'. After simplifying the order, the Vat Ghost appeared to have understood it. His body slowly submerged, disappearing out of Chen Ge's sight.

“It’s still not yet midnight. Hopefully, everything will be done before then.” Chen Ge looked at the shampoo bottle in his backpack. Actually, he had a more efficient method, which was to release Wen Wen’s sister and have her go look for her own body. “I’ll should consider that if the Vat Ghost fails.”

He waited for ten minutes on the boat before the Vat Ghost returned. He was frozen in fear like he had experienced something horrifying. With his body submerged underwater, the Vat Ghost waved his hands that were disproportionate to his head, and his lips opened and closed. However, Chen Ge could not understand what he said. All he could see were the bubbles.

“Slow down, or you’re going to attract other people’s attention.” Chen Ge flipped through the comic to summon Ol’ Zhou. “Can you understand what he’s saying?”

He thought that communication might be easier between ghosts. Ol’ Zhou stared at the Vat Ghost’s lips for a long time before saying, “There are many people underwater, and he’s very afraid.”

“Ask him if he found a little girl’s dead body.” Chen Ge sighed in relief. He suddenly realized that Ol’ Zhou had the talent of being a translator; this was indeed a valuable talent. Ol’ Zhou’s communication with the Vat House was voiceless. Chen Ge used the power of Ghost Ear given by the black phone, and he only barely captured some murmuring.

“He didn’t spot a girl’s body, but there was a spot at the bottom where dead bodies were piled high, and the girl’s body might be hidden there.” After communicating with the Vat Ghost, Ol’ Zhou came to this conclusion. “There are many dead bodies under the water, and the one that you’re looking for should be there as well, but he’ll need time to find it.”

“We have the whole night—that should be enough. It’s fine to take it slow.” Chen Ge had the Vat Ghost lead the way. He was about to move the boat when a ray of light hit his body. Turning around, Chen Ge saw Zhang Dabo waving the flashlight by the bank.

“What’s wrong?”

“I thought that I saw a second person on the boat with you!” Zhang Dabo’s palm that held the flashlight was slick with sweat. “There’s still time to turn back now!”

“You’re probably mistaken.” Chen Ge signaled for Ol’ Zhou to return to the comic, but he got no reply. When he turned around, he realized that Ol’ Zhou had reacted faster than he did because when the light shot over, he had already disappeared. “Turn your flashlight off, or you might attract the King Fish.”

Chen Ge felt like he was the main character from a horror movie who refused to listen to advice and eventually ran into the ghost. Shaking his head, Chen Ge tossed this curious thought out of his mind and continued to row to the middle of the dam.

Eastern Jiujiang Dam was neither big nor small. When he was at the center, Chen Ge felt like he had become part of the dam, dissolving into the darkness.

Without light and with the bank far away, Chen Ge was not worried that Ol’ Zhou would be seen, so he released him again. “Tell the Vat Ghost to hold one end of the rope. Tie it around the girl’s body if he spots it, and I will personally pull her out.”

Ol' Zhou communicated Chen Ge's order. He dropped the rope into the water, and the Vat Ghost dived again, holding the end of the rope. The water surface returned to its undisturbed peace. Ol' Zhou and Chen Ge grabbed the other end of the rope, and they held the same position, waiting patiently like they were fishing. Time trickled by, and the Vat Ghost did not return even when midnight arrived.

"Did something happen?" Even though Chen Ge had great expectations of the Vat Ghost, he was his worker, and Chen Ge treated him as family. The night seemed to thicken, and once midnight passed, a light fog rose from the water, sequestering the water from its surrounding.

"Why is it suddenly so foggy?" The shampoo bottle in his backpack was shaking, and strands of black hair peeked out from the cap like they were giving Chen Ge warning. Even the recorder started to play static. Chen Ge smelled a faint scent of blood in the air. He did not summon Xu Yin, but the latter materialized at the stern.

"This is not right. Something seems to have changed this two-star scenario." Normally, it was already too much if there was a half Red Specter at a two-star scenario. They posed no threat to Xu Yin, but somehow, Xu Yin had shown up. The fog thickened. Chen Ge could see the flickering light by the bank, but a few minutes later, even that disappeared.

Chen Ge was now at the middle of the dam, the boat being twirled around by the current. Slowly, he lost his sense of direction like he was cut off from the world.

"Focus on the water." Chen Ge summoned Bai Qiulin as well and had him and Ol' Zhou watch the bow and Xu Yin guard the stern while he stayed in the middle.

The fog was still thickening, and to Chen Ge surprise, there was a voice coming from the fog. It was unclear whether it was from the surface of the water or from underwater, but the person was calling his name, and the voice was very familiar.

Chapter 590: Second Way of Death [2 in 1]

The thick fog isolated Chen Ge from the bank. The small boat turned lazily while being fixed to one spot, causing the passenger to slowly lose his sense of direction.

"Chen Ge..." That familiar voice called next to his ears again. Chen Ge frowned, and he tried his best to think. However, there was no memory related to this voice in his mind. It was very familiar and friendly, like this voice had once accompanied him for a very long time.

Could this be my parent's voice? But that shouldn't be! How could I not recognize my parent's voice?

In the fog, Chen Ge felt his mind fading, and to stop that, he bit on his tongue harshly.

This doesn't feel like something that should exist inside a two-star Trial Mission. I'm probably being ambushed by something more dangerous.

Chen Ge quickly calmed down. He knew clearly within his heart that since he had ruined the Eastern Jiujiang's culprit's plan so many times, the latter must have hated his guts.

The shampoo bottle in his backpack shook even harder, and the strands of black hair crawled out through the small crack to wrap themselves around the bottle, making it look strange and scary.

“Are you trying to tell me something?” From how Chen Ge saw it, Wen Wen’s big sister was also a victim, so she would not help the culprit come and harm him. The hairs bound and entwined together to become something in the shape of an arrow, pointing a clear direction for Chen Ge to follow.

“She’s giving you a sign. The body is right there,” Ol’ Zhou explained.

“The situation has changed. We’re no longer in a hurry to solve this mission.” Without getting to the bottom of the truth regarding the voice in the fog, Chen Ge was not going to move around aimlessly.

“Ol’ Zhou, can you hear someone calling my name from inside the fog?” Chen Ge sat in the middle of the boat. Listening to the voice from the fog, an indescribable sense of isolation was burgeoning in his heart, like someone was whispering him an ultimate truth. He was alone and was always alone and would continue to be alone.

“No.” Ol’ Zhou shook his head. His tone and expression were no different from usual, and Chen Ge could not see any visible change to Ol’ Zhou’s demeanor either, but in Chen Ge’s eyes, everything was wrong. He stared at Ol’ Zhou’s face and took from it a sense of chilliness and ghastliness, like Ol’ Zhou was plotting something nasty, a wicked plot to take his life.

“Chen Ge...” The murmuring of the voices was like his closest family, reminding him to stay away from these ghosts and monsters.

“It is good advice for normal people to stay away from ghosts, but the situation is unique for my family. Regardless of whether it was my parents or myself, our opinion and treatment of ghosts are different from normal people, especially considering the situation that I’m in. Without the aid of my spectral friends, I would not have been able to survive this long.” Chen Ge knew the truth clearly. “I treat these ghosts as my friends, so naturally, I do not believe that they would do anything dangerous to me. Furthermore, compared to human beings, ghosts are often more authentic and trustworthy.”

Looking at the surface of the water, Chen Ge kept his gaze sharp and determined. “I do not know who you are, but you’ve gotten too far ahead of yourself. You want to turn me against my ghost friends, but you’ve failed.”

Even though his mental faculty was not completely all there, it did not alter Chen Ge’s attitude toward ghosts. This was a viewpoint that had been cultivated in him since he was a wee babe. With the influence from his parents and the black phone, his understanding of ghosts was different from a normal person.

“Your voice sounds very familiar and even friendly, but the thing that you want me to do can only bring me harm. The real entity that wants to kill me is you. Stop relying on these tricks, come out and face me. Let me see who you really are.” The fog consumed the dam. The small boat twirled, carried by the water current, and the memory in Chen Ge’s brain slowly became as fuzzy as the fog around him.

“Chen Ge...” The voice that called his name was incredibly familiar, but this was the scariest thing. Because he did not know such a person, in his memory, such a voice definitely did not exist. That sense of familiarity had nothing to do with memory; rather, it felt like it was branded into his body.

He had encountered a similar experience in the past. When he was doing the Nightmare Mission at the tunnel, after taking the forty-fourth step, there was also a similar voice calling him from deep inside the tunnel. It was the same cadence, same tone. Chen Ge gripped his fists tightly, seemingly having remembered something.

After the voice appeared inside the tunnel, he had seen something extraordinary—he had been killed when he was very small. He would never forget that strange experience of watching himself die. His thoughts were pulled toward that particular incident, and he started to uncontrollably reminisce about it.

“I once entered the tunnel when I was very young, and the person who killed me was standing behind me. From the looks of it, I was very familiar with this person.” The boat shook, and so did Chen Ge’s body. When Chen Ge extricated himself from the heaviness of that memory, he realized with a start that other than himself, there was no one and nothing else on the boat.

The backpack, Ol’ Zhou, Xu Yin, and Wen Wen’s sister had all disappeared, and he was the only one left behind on the boat. Fog swallowed up everything, and Chen Ge felt like he had been abandoned by the world. An indescribable feeling of loneliness gushed out from his heart. The temperature continued to drop. A thin sheen of water was coating his exposed skin, and it felt cold to the touch, a big difference from what a normal living human being should feel like.

“What is happening? Is this the special power of a unique ghost that I’ve not faced before?” He sat down on the boat and grabbed the paddle. Even at a time like this, he had not given up, and he was getting ready to fight.

“Chen Ge...” The voice began anew, and this time, Chen Ge could hear clearly that the voice was getting close to him.

“This is a strange feeling. I once heard this voice inside the tunnel before. When I first got the black phone and did my first Nightmare Mission, this voice also came from inside the mirror. When Doctor Gao destroyed the underground morgue and connected it to the blood world outside, I also felt this sense of familiarity. In fact, the door at the Haunted House’s toilet also occasionally makes me feel like it’s very familiar, like there is something behind the door that has been calling after me.”

His mind was filled with tons of different information. Chen Ge’s head was heavy with the information overload. “Have I forgotten something very important? Is it related to my parent’s disappearance?”

“Chen Ge...” The voice started again, and it was just several meters away from Chen Ge. Taking a deep breath, he placed the paddle into the water and moved the boat. He decided to go take a look for himself. He rowed for three meters before Chen Ge saw a blurry shadow in the fog. The shadow was small, probably a child.

“The dead body of Wen Wen’s elder sister?” He was still thinking about the black phone’s mission, which had become sort of an instinct for him. The small boat continued to move forward. As the distance between them closed, the fog started to part to the sides, and the shape of the shadow became clearer and clearer. It was not Wen Wen’s sister’s body but a little boy.

When he saw the boy’s face, Chen Ge’s hands that gripped the paddle tightened subconsciously as a chill ran up his spine. This child was the younger version of himself. The familiar face and the friendly

voice... but the different thing was, the boy's neck was snapped, and his head was basically dangling off his shoulders. His facial features, twisted beyond belief, radiated a sharp pierce of venom and resentment that Chen Ge had not experienced before.

"Yes, it was my own voice." Chen Ge had thought that the voice was very familiar, but he only realized then that the voice that had been calling him was his very own voice.

"Why would I be calling after myself? Who exactly is this child? How come he looks exactly like me when I was young?"

His brain was about to explode, and Chen Ge massaged his temples with more force than one would feel comfortable with.

"Have I forgotten about something?"

Actually, since the door at the Haunted House's toilet had shown up, Chen Ge had been suspicious about this. Only those in the depths of despair would be able to push open the door, and there was such a door at the Haunted House. Then, the question was, who pushed open that door?

Was it his parent or himself?

When Chen Ge was trying to figure out an answer, the child in the fog lifted his head to look at Chen Ge on the boat. It was hard to describe the gaze of the boy. There was envy, resentment, and an undercurrent of a complicated emotion. This was a very lonely child; he was unable to communicate with anyone else. His body was cold, his face was ugly, and his mind was twisted—the desire to destroy made up every cell in his body.

"Chen Ge, save me..." The familiar voice came out from the boy's lips. He stared at Chen Ge with both eyes. Then, his feet slowly floated above the water, and a different person's shadow appeared behind him. From the size of his physique, it seemed to be an adult. He placed his arms on the young Chen Ge's shoulders and lifted the child up high before slamming him deep into the water.

When the adult's shadow left, Chen Ge could hear a whisper of his voice. "This time, he should be completely dead. There is no way he will return again."

The water rippled, and the adult's shadow disappeared. Chen Ge looked at this scene with shock. When he was doing the Nightmare Mission at the tunnel, Chen Ge had similarly seen the young version of himself being murdered by an adult, and now, when he was conducting the water ghost mission, he realized that he was bearing witness to another murder of his young self.

"What is really going on?" He rowed the boat to the spot where the child had been pushed into the water, and he looked down. His eyes narrowed, and what he saw was quite cruel. The child with the twisted limbs and a bobble-like head was slowly sinking into the water.

The face that reflected the features of Chen Ge's own looked at him through the water. His expression became more agitated as all the pain turned into resentment like he was unwilling to just sink like that into the deep, dark water. His lips slowly opened, and his twisted arms waved upward. The frail body started to float upward, and that scary yet familiar face was approaching in Chen Ge's eyes.

“Chen Ge...” His mind was a mess, and a strange thought suddenly appeared in Chen Ge’s heart. *It has returned.*

Unable to control its body—or rather, that unique voice—caused Chen Ge’s thoughts to be influenced. The boy underwater extended his arms. No one knew what had happened to him when he was still alive. His arms were slightly longer than normal, like someone had forcibly disconnected his arms from their sockets.

The pale and noodle-like arms floated up the water, and the face came closer and closer to Chen Ge. The purplish lips opened lightly, and he was calling Chen Ge’s name underwater.

The water surface was like the surface of a mirror, with the adult Chen Ge on one side and the Chen Ge warped by resentment on the other side.

Through the water surface, these two completely different lives seemed like they were about to be woven back together.

“Chen Ge, I am you...”

He could not read any special emotion from the body, and his body dipped uncontrollably deeper toward the water surface like he was trying to take a closer look of his reflection in the mirror. The limbs reached out through the surface. The pale fingers touched Chen Ge’s face. The touch was very light. Chen Ge could not tell whether the child wanted to pull him into the water or merely wanted to touch his face.

“Who are you? And why have you been calling my name?” Chen Ge could sense a familiarity from the boy, a connection that went beyond blood ties. It was as if they were originally the same person. “Who killed you? Who turned you into something like this?”

Chen Ge kept asking the questions that were in his heart, but the child in the water did not answer. His fingertips were about wrap around Chen Ge’s head, but before it could close completely, another hand fell on Chen Ge’s shoulder.

The fingers were long, and the blood trails and cracks were like the exquisite work of a tattoo artist. The first impression that was given by the hand was... it was very beautiful. The fog around the boat suddenly dispersed, and an extremely cold and scary presence appeared behind Chen Ge.

The blood-soaked black hair slid down Chen Ge’s body, and it fell into the dark water like a rain of metallic needles. It was an attack without target, sinking into the water like it was trying to turn the entire dam upside down.

Chen Ge could feel the hand on his shoulder gripping tighter and his body that was tipping into the water being slowly pulled back.

A shrill scream came from underwater, and the child who looked like the young Chen Ge morphed into a shadow and slipped away. After it disappeared, the spell on Chen Ge was broken. Like someone just pulled up from the water, his whole body was drenched in cold sweat, and he sucked greedily for the fresh air.

When he opened his eyes next, the fog above the water had already completely dispersed. Chen Ge saw Bai Qiulin and Ol' Zhou squeezing behind Xu Yin, shivering. The usually reticent Xu Yin also had an unnatural expression on his face.

"Did Zhang Ya show up just now?" He touched his shoulder. The hand that had landed there earlier was fresh in his memory. The pale skin was crisscrossed with cracks and blood. "Has she still not recovered from her injury?"

The three ghosts on the boat did not dare answer, like the woman inside Chen Ge's shadow was a taboo that they could not mention. Standing up, Chen Ge looked in the direction that the child had escaped.

Using Yin Yang Vision, he saw someone standing at the bank, and he was pushing an e-bike. The person was on high alert. When he felt Chen Ge's eyes on him, he quickly jumped on the bike and rode away.

"An e-bike?" Chen Ge stared at the man's back, and another person's image appeared in his mind. "He looks suspiciously like Huang Ling's husband."

Xiao Gu had accidentally taken the last bus on Route 104 and saved Huang Ling, but later, Chen Ge had realized that the woman's husband actually died years ago and the man sharing her bed now was someone else.

"Why would Huang Ling's husband be here? Is he the culprit in Eastern Jiujiang? That doesn't seem likely." Chen Ge looked at the taillight of the e-bike and was reminded of something else. When he accompanied Captain Yan to go to Ming Yang Residence to look for the broken body parts, parts of the body had been stolen away, and he remembered spotting someone drive into the residence on an e-bike.

"Was he the one who stole the body parts that night?" Chen Ge had thought that Huang Ling's husband was just a small lackey, but from the looks of it, he was mistaken. He put the issue of the salvage aside for now and sent a message to Captain Yan and Lee Zheng, asking for an update regarding Huang Ling and her husband.

While he waited for the reply, Chen Ge turned to look at the water. He could not help but go through the things that had happened earlier. "When I crossed paths with the shadow at the Fresh Water Plant, it also changed into a young version of myself. Is this its special power, or is he really related to my childhood?"