

Revival 486

Chapter 486 Shopping

Yang Jian initially refused to go shopping with Miao Xiaoshan, but could not resist her enthusiastic dragging, so he absentmindedly agreed.

After all, she was his classmate.

From junior high to high school, although they were not quite childhood sweethearts, their relationship had always been quite good. As a student with less-than-ideal grades, Yang Jian had often copied Miao Xiaoshan's homework,

but ever since the supernatural event occurred at No. 7 Middle School, that kind of school life was completely shattered.

During that period, Yang Jian had experienced a lot, and he was no longer the student who studied at school.

As for Miao Xiaoshan, she continued on her life trajectory, studying, taking exams, attending university, and if everything went smoothly, she would graduate, work in a well-known company in a respectable position, and, if unexpected things did not happen, she would meet some elite individual, marry, have children, and live a happy and fulfilling life.

Yang Jian, following behind, gazed at the youthful, beautiful, and vibrant Miao Xiaoshan without saying a word. In contrast, he was deathly still, his breath cold, and his emotions indifferent, becoming more and

more like a dead person. If nothing unexpected happened, he would likely meet his end in some supernatural event or succumb to the revival of his own malevolent specter.

And the living should not interact with the dead.

"Miao Xiaoshan, maybe I should leave... I have a meeting to attend tomorrow," Yang Jian said after about half an hour of silence.

He looked for an excuse to leave.

In the mall.

Miao Xiaoshan seemed not to have heard and turned around, holding a new dress in her hands, "Yang Jian, do you think this dress looks nice?"

"It's alright," Yang Jian said.

Miao Xiaoshan didn't wait for him to say more and chirped, "Then you wait here, I'll try it on in the changing room. You better not sneak away, okay?"

With that, she took the dress and headed to the changing room.

"Miao Xiaoshan, I want to try on clothes too, let's go together." A friend of Miao Xiaoshan's also laughed, taking a piece of clothing to try on together.

Yang Jian's gaze shifted, uncertain whether he should leave or not.

"Hey, you're Yang Jian, right? My name is Liu Zi, and I'm her college roommate."

Another rather tall girl glanced over with a smile, "From what I overheard between you and Miao Xiaoshan, you were high school classmates?"

"Yes, that's right," Yang Jian said.

Liu Zi asked, "Did you not get into university and come to Dachang City to work?"

"Something like that," Yang Jian replied, without even looking up.

"Must be tough, working like that," she said with a laugh.

Liu Zi continued, "Why not retake the entrance exam for a year and try to get into university? After graduation, work would be easier. At least you wouldn't be jobless and have to sleep on the streets."

"Huh?"

Yang Jian paused, slightly lifting his head, "When did I become jobless and sleep on the streets?"

"Stop fooling around. I've lived here since I was a child. I've seen plenty of people who come to Dachang City to work. I can tell at a glance that you must be jobless and have no money, planning to sleep on the streets."

Liu Zi said earnestly, "I truly suggest you go back to school and study more. Working like this has no future."

"Look at Miao Xiaoshan, such good college entrance exam results, got into the best university in Dachang City through her own efforts, and her family isn't worse off than mine. When someone like that is striving, what's your excuse for not trying?"

Her tone was full of a sense of superiority.

In front of Yang Jian, Liu Zi indeed had the credentials to feel this way.

She was young, beautiful, a student of a prestigious university, with a well-off family. Compared to the average laborer, she was from a completely different class. Although she was praising Miao Xiaoshan, she was also indirectly boasting about herself.

"Oh," Yang Jian merely responded casually.

Oh?

What did that mean?

Liu Zi was taken aback for a moment, her expression strange as she stared at Yang Jian, "Didn't you understand what I just said?"

"Understand what?" Yang Jian asked, puzzled.

"Of course, it's that I don't want you to affect Miao Xiaoshan's studies," Liu Zi said.

Yang Jian said, "I don't think I'll affect her studies, today was just a coincidence."

"How can you not? If you were to call Miao Xiaoshan out occasionally, wouldn't that be a distraction? Although I'm not the type to meddle, you should at least meet some basic requirements for dating, right? I certainly don't want Miao Xiaoshan to be deceived," Liu Zi said softly with an intentional hum.

Yang Jian looked at her, thought for a moment, and then smiled, "I get it, you think your roommate is so exceptional that if she goes out with a poor loser like me, it would be embarrassing for you too, right?"

Liu Zi's face turned a shade darker.

This guy had actually hit the nail on the head as to what she was thinking.

She believed that outstanding individuals should be with other outstanding individuals; they could support each other in work and life. Associating with people who were not useful would only lower her own standards and impact her future career.

"Actually, you needn't worry, you and I are different types of people. If nothing unexpected happens, we will never cross paths, so I do my job and you study your books, which is quite good. However, what happens between Miao Xiaoshan and me is our business; you're a complete stranger, so why come up to me and preach? Is that really okay?"

Yang Jian continued, "After all, you're a university student; you should have at least some basic decencies, right? Don't you know that those who indiscriminately advise others are the most annoying?"

"I was just trying to be nice advising you, if you don't appreciate it that's fine, but to insult me?" Liu Zi rolled her eyes, looking away in disgust.

"You're not coming from a place of kindness, am I wrong? I feel like your words just now were particularly grating," he said.

Yang Jian added, "It's not great to compare your strongest points to someone else's weakest and feel proud over a small advantage, even believing you've completely won, is it?"

"Then tell me, what does a laborer like you have that could possibly compare to me?" Liu Zi immediately retorted.

"For instance, I can stay at Ping'an Hotel, and you can't," said Yang Jian offhandedly.

"Are you crazy? Acting all superior just because you can stay in a hotel? I suppose you've never stayed in one," Liu Zi cursed in anger.

At that moment, Miao Xiaoshan came over having changed clothes, all smiles, "Yang Jian, look, how do I look? Is it pretty?"

The light green dress made her look refreshingly elegant, a sight to behold.

"Very pretty."

Yang Jian did not pay attention to the girl named Liu Zi but instead nodded and said, "But it's getting late, shouldn't you be heading back? It's not very safe for a girl to be out shopping alone at night. If something were to happen, it wouldn't be good, as we can't be lucky every time."

"Aren't you with me? What's there to be afraid of?" Miao Xiaoshan picked up on the subtext in his words.

He was referring to encountering supernatural events.

Yang Jian said somewhat helplessly, "There are some things I can't handle. I'm not omnipotent, and I have some things to take care of in the coming days. You know, those of us who work for a living are often not our own masters."

"Well... okay then."

Miao Xiaoshan sounded a bit downhearted, but then added, "You have to leave me your phone number. You must have changed phones, because every time I try to call you, I can't get through."

"How about this, I'll leave you my work cellphone number. Just contact me if you need anything," Yang Jian thought for a moment and gave Miao Xiaoshan his satellite tracking phone number.

These numbers weren't standard dialing but included characters and identification numbers.

Miao Xiaoshan found this number odd, tried dialing it to make sure it worked before she felt relieved.

"Miao Xiaoshan, wait a second, I called a friend to pick us up, we can go together," Liu Zi suddenly said.

"No need, I'll just have Yang Jian take me back, it's not far from the school anyway," Miao Xiaoshan replied.

"In that case, I'll leave first. Take care on your way," said Liu Zi, giving Yang Jian a look of disdain before turning to leave.

Yang Jian paid no mind to the somewhat arrogant Liu Zi and curiously asked, "Why do you insist on me taking you? Isn't it better to go back with your classmate?"

"Didn't you just say it's dangerous at night? Isn't it safer to be with you?"

Miao Xiaoshan giggled, grabbed his arm, and said, "Come on, first help me pay the bill. You've never given me a gift before, so I'm giving you this chance today. As Dachang City's landlord, you won't mind this little expense, right?"

"I'm always low-profile; everyone knows that. You actually know I have money," Yang Jian touched his head.

"You have to ask your good buddy Zhang Wei how he talks about you online." Miao Xiaoshan said, "I often watch his livestreams. He went to your place last time and livestreamed. He even said there's a ghost on the fifth floor of your house, is that true?"

Yang Jian's face darkened.

Zhang Wei had actually dared to go to the fifth floor.

There indeed was a ghost there; his Ghost Mirror was stored in one of the rooms, along with several detained spirits.

It seems he needed to find a safer place for those things, not to leave them so carelessly.

Chapter 487 Change

Miao Xiaoshan and two other classmates parted ways, choosing to walk back to school slowly with Yang Jian.

Along the way, she had a lot of conversations with Yang Jian.

"You know? After I got into university, I chose a relatively unpopular history department," Miao Xiaoshan said with a smile while walking: "My cousin said this major has no future. It would be difficult to find a job after graduation, which definitely wouldn't be good for my future development. He suggested I should choose another major."

"Your cousin? Shangguan Yun?" Yang Jian remembered her cousin.

The unlucky guy who was once trapped inside the Ghost Mirror, but fortunately, he was saved by him.

"Mhm, he often talks about you, saying that if there's a chance, he must treat you to a meal," Miao Xiaoshan said.

"It's good that your cousin is fine. There's no need for a meal," Yang Jian said.

Miao Xiaoshan continued, "How are they doing lately? I only know that Zhang Wei has been live streaming in Dachang City recently. I've lost contact with everyone else. Do you know how they are?"

They referred to the few classmates who survived the supernatural events when they were at No. 7 Middle School.

Although a few of them were not very close, as survivors who had experienced supernatural events together, there was a certain resonance between them.

It was like comrades who had been through the battlefield together, always keeping an eye on each other after surviving.

"Wang Shanshan is still the same. She has some health issues," Yang Jian said calmly: "Sun Ren and Liu Qi left Dachang City a long time ago. I'm not close to them and don't have their contact information. As for Zhang Lei... he's dead."

Dead?

Miao Xiaoshan's body trembled slightly, she lifted her head a bit in shock and said, "How could this happen? He was fine when I last saw him, how could he suddenly..."

She knew that Yang Jian used to hang out with Zhang Wei and Zhang Lei. She didn't expect that in just a few months, she would hear the news of Zhang Lei's death.

"He accidentally got involved in a supernatural event. I tried to save him but failed. My abilities were not sufficient at that time."

Yang Jian said, "Actually, strictly speaking, Wang Shanshan is also dead. Her current state is like a living dead person, her emotions growing ever fainter, her body ever colder, and it's because of my reasons."

"You should have noticed some changes in her at the last class reunion."

At this point, Yang Jian paused, then turned to look at her: "Those two we don't know well, Sun Ren and Liu Qi, I have no idea how they are now, but all seven of us who survived the supernatural event seem to be cursed in a way, and none of us ended up well. Don't look at Zhang Wei live streaming and playing happily on the internet every day. In reality, he has also experienced several supernatural events and, strictly speaking, he's died once as well."

The Ghost Mirror resurrected Zhang Wei. If not for that time, grass would already be growing on Zhang Wei's grave by now.

"Miao Xiaoshan, you're lucky. At least since then, your life has returned to normal, and I hope you can continue living normally, which is why you should stay away from people like me," Yang Jian said.

Miao Xiaoshan looked back with a somewhat delicate gaze: "Do you think you brought misfortune to others? Do you feel guilty, which is why you've become solitary? You're wrong. This has nothing to do with you. Do you remember? You saved Wang Shanshan, you saved Zhang Lei, you saved all of us. If not for you, we would all have died in No. 7 Middle School."

"Supernatural events bring death, and getting too close inevitably affects you. You've experienced a supernatural event and should understand how desperate ordinary people feel when they're caught up in it. Nobody wants to go through it a second time, not even me," Yang Jian said.

"You've changed a lot these past few months." Miao Xiaoshan didn't know how to reply, simply saying softly, "I feel like you're constantly losing something."

"That's what growing up is," Yang Jian said.

"So, you won't contact me anymore?" Miao Xiaoshan asked.

Yang Jian turned his head to look at the dim sky in the distance: "If it's not necessary, we should contact each other less. It would be better for you."

"Then why did you still leave me your contact information?" Miao Xiaoshan's tone became a bit resentful.

"Maybe one day you will need my help, and besides, contacting over the phone won't affect you much," Yang Jian said.

At that moment, Miao Xiaoshan fell silent.

She was beginning to understand the meaning of a phrase: The world has changed; the people are no longer the same.

Seeing Yang Jian again, he was no longer the Yang Jian she remembered. He had changed a lot, become much more of a stranger.

She had known Yang Jian for at least six years, from middle school to high school, accompanying her through her entire adolescence. The Yang Jian in her memory had taken a definite shape in her mind, yet it only took six months to completely change a person.

"I don't want it to be this way," Miao Xiaoshan said after a long pause.

"Neither do I," Yang Jian replied.

The two people walked in silence, with fewer and fewer words they could exchange.

At this moment.

Liu Zi, who had left the mall earlier, was sitting in a luxury car.

The driver was a young and handsome man named Li Yang, Liu Zi's boyfriend.

"Weren't you out shopping with your classmate? Why are you back so early, did something happen?" Li Yang asked with concern.

Liu Zi snorted lightly; "Nothing much, just ran into someone quite annoying. Are there more crazies these days or what? Why would my classmate even know such a person?"

"Is there a need to be so angry about it?" Liu Yang replied with a smile.

"By the way, I don't want to go back to school tonight, I want to go to Ping'an Hotel," Liu Zi suddenly said.

Ping'an Hotel?

The smile disappeared from Li Yang's face as he drove, seemingly becoming a bit horrified, and he abruptly stopped the car: "How do you know about Ping'an Hotel?"

"What's the matter? Is there a problem? There's a hotel called that in J City, right? I just searched it up on my phone." Liu Zi said.

"That place isn't open to outsiders, better switch to another hotel," Li Yang's smile was somewhat strained as he pressed the gas pedal and continued driving.

Liu Zi expressed surprise: "How can it not be open to outsiders? My classmate's friend is staying at Ping'an Hotel. If someone like him can stay there, why can't we? Is it really expensive? Does it cost tens of thousands for one night?"

"What? You met someone today who stays at Ping'an Hotel?" Li Yang's eyes widened in shock.

"That's what he said, but you haven't told me why we can't stay at that hotel?" Liu Zi asked, seemingly unconcerned.

Li Yang hurriedly turned the steering wheel to pull over, then turned to her and said, "Listen, Liu Zi, there are some things you don't understand, and I don't dare to disclose them to you. Just remember there are two types of people in J City we cannot afford to mess with, let alone even have the privilege of associating with. One type you know about, and the other type, are those who have the qualification to stay at Ping'an Hotel."

"Especially the latter, you should be more cautious. If you can avoid them, then do so as much as possible."

"Making it so mysterious, is it really that serious?" Liu Zi pursed her lips.

Li Yang proceeded in a hushed tone, "It's more serious than you can imagine. Let me put it this way, those who are qualified to stay at Ping'an Hotel could kill a few people in the street and not worry about even the slightest consequence. The ones killed would just have to accept their bad luck. This is not something that money or power can achieve."

Liu Zi was momentarily stunned when she heard this.

She never expected the unremarkable-looking Yang Jian to be so special and mysterious.

"For your classmate's friend, try your best to avoid him from now on. If you happen to bump into him by accident, be sure to be respectful. His kind of people are absolutely not to be offended. As for the matter with Ping'an Hotel, let's drop it here. Knowing too much is not good for you. I used to be just as curious as you, but ever since I learned a bit more, I've been genuinely scared," explained Li Yang, becoming somewhat uneasy himself.

"I got it, I'll just stay away from that nutjob Yang Jian from now on." Liu Zi, realizing the severity of the situation, wasn't persistent with her questions and obediently closed her mouth.

"Yang Jian?"

However, when she mentioned this name, Li Yang clearly froze for a moment: "Wait, where did your classmate study before coming to J City?"

"She took the college entrance exam in Dahan City, but I asked Miao Xiaoshan, and she said she used to study in Dachang City before transferring schools on short notice," Liu Zi responded.

After hearing this, Li Yang broke into a cold sweat.

Having previously attributed the name to coincidence, he was now almost certain.

The person Liu Zi encountered today was without a doubt Yang Jian from Dachang City.

The one known as Ghost Mirror in the rumors.

He didn't know much about these special people and the special events surrounding them, but considering the huge stir in Dachang City a few months ago, his family had some connections, his father knew some insider information, and he too was aware of certain details.

"Oh my goodness, how could Liu Zi run into someone like him?" Li Yang was inwardly anxious.

Yet, seeing her nonchalant attitude, it seemed she hadn't realized just how dangerous and special the Yang Jian she'd encountered really was.

Chapter 488 The First Ghost Dominator?

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"Go back and rest early, study hard. You're the only one from No. 7 Middle School who got into university. You are now the pride of the entire school. Don't end up like us. We're going nowhere. After Zhang Wei dropped out, he could only work on construction sites, and I can barely scrape by with odd jobs. Wang Shanshan is at home taking care of her child now."

Yang Jian said this to Miao Xiaoshan as he walked her to the school gate, his voice filled with deep concern.

"Are you praising me or making fun of me?" Miao Xiaoshan laughed.

"Of course I'm praising you. You even got into J City University. How could I make fun of you? If it were me taking the college entrance exam, I'd surely have no chance, maybe if I repeated a year I'd have a shot," Yang Jian said.

Miao Xiaoshan rolled her eyes and then said, "You're managing an entire Dachang City. Does studying even matter to you anymore?"

Yang Jian replied, "It's different. The joy of swimming in the sea of knowledge is something we wretched petty capitalists can never understand."

"Alright, alright, got it. I will study hard. Instead of worrying about me, you should worry about yourself." Miao Xiaoshan said with some concern, "You should avoid getting involved in dangerous things. It's better to be alive than anything else. We've been given a second chance; we should cherish it."

"Of course, I've always been one to cling to life," Yang Jian said.

Soon after he saw Miao Xiaoshan back, he left as well.

He didn't want someone as normal as Miao Xiaoshan getting involved with an oddity like himself. Maintaining a distance was necessary; otherwise, if he became too close, she might inadvertently get dragged into his affairs one day.

Night.

Yang Jian returned to Ping'an Hotel to rest.

However, Zhang Lei wasn't asleep. He was sitting on a sofa in the hotel lobby, seemingly waiting for him to return.

"Yang Jian, you're finally back? I've been waiting for you for hours," Zhang Lei hurriedly stood up and said.

"What's the matter? Has something happened?" Yang Jian asked, sensing something was off.

Zhang Lei approached and spoke in a hushed voice, "It's not anything particularly urgent, but I noticed something amiss and thought I should let you know."

"What is it?" Yang Jian inquired.

"Last night, Zhang Hui, who was staying at the hotel, suddenly left and hasn't returned since," Zhang Lei said.

He continued, "This is what the hotel staff told me. I asked about the specifics and paid attention to his behavior."

"Zhang Hui? Who is he?" Yang Jian asked.

"You probably haven't checked his files yet. Zhang Hui is that stranger, a ghost hunter, who survived the training base with us," Zhang Lei explained.

Yang Jian seemed to remember, "Him? But his leaving the hotel shouldn't be an issue. Don't I often leave the hotel too?"

"But the hotel staff mentioned that Zhang Hui seemed rather distressed when he left. And he didn't just leave briefly, he packed his things in a hurry and left without reporting his situation to headquarters," Zhang Lei said.

"That shouldn't be our concern. Ghost hunters are usually managed by headquarters," Yang Jian pondered before responding.

"I know. It's indeed not good to meddle in others' affairs too much, but the incident with Zhang Hui occurred after we left the training base. He had been normal before. Is it possible that something special is happening?" Zhang Lei asked.

Yang Jian's expression sharpened slightly, "Are you suggesting a supernatural event?"

"I suspect it's possible. Did Zhang Hui discover something, or did he sense something that made him feel Ping'an Hotel was unsafe..." Zhang Lei speculated.

Yang Jian shook his head with a smile. "You might be too sensitive. The guy just left the hotel temporarily. I think it's more likely that his mental state is a bit off. He's probably scared to stay in J City. After all, the incident with the Ghost Envoy has hit newcomers like him hard. Being exposed to an S-grade supernatural event right off the bat is too much for anyone to handle."

"He's probably spooked and thinking about quitting, so he just packed up and left."

Hearing this, Zhang Lei pondered for a moment, then nodded. "There is that possibility. I also hope Zhang Hui didn't leave for some special reason. If he did, it could be related to us, so I thought it best to remind everyone."

"Alright, I'll keep an eye on it," Yang Jian patted his shoulder. "But don't be too paranoid. Otherwise, the stress will be overwhelming. Get some good rest. The matter with the Ghost Envoy isn't over, and it

looks like we'll be busy in the coming days. Also, pay more attention to your own condition. It wasn't easy to survive, so don't get careless and lose your life."

"I understand," Zhang Lei said stiffly, nodding.

"Well then, that's it for now. I'm off to rest. If anything comes up, you can come directly to me," Yang Jian said.

Zhang Lei was a decent guy, waiting for him for several hours just to share this bit of information. If it were someone else, they probably wouldn't bother at all.

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The next day.

As expected, Yang Jian received a temporary notice from Liu Xiaoyu, instructing him to arrive at headquarters before ten o'clock in the morning for a meeting.

The content of the meeting was not specified, but it could be guessed that it must be related to the Ghost Envoy incident.

After another night of aftermath and preparation, the headquarters was almost ready to respond. Although the Ghost Envoy incident was over for Yang Jian, it was not yet over for headquarters.

As long as that ghost remained, the matter needed to be addressed.

"Alright, I know, I'll head to headquarters soon." Yang Jian said into the phone.

Over the phone, Liu Xiaoyu said, "By the way, there will be quite a few people attending the meeting this time, including some high-level participants. I hope you can be careful not to cause any trouble; it would be very problematic otherwise."

"You talk as if I'm a child. I'm very low-key, you know," said Yang Jian. "But you mentioned that very high-level people will be attending the meeting? How high? Higher than my level?"

"Most of them are candidates for this time's team leader plan, but not all, just a part of them. After all, the branches still need people in charge; it's impossible to transfer everyone to J City. And there are a few others you might find very interesting," Liu Xiaoyu said.

"For example," said Yang Jian.

Liu Xiaoyu thought for a moment and said, "For instance, some of the outlier ghost controllers might show up, and the number one ghost controller of J City should also be attending the meeting."

Yang Jian's gaze flickered slightly, "Asia's number one? An outlier among ghost controllers?"

Indeed, there was still an elite circle of ghost controllers at headquarters, a circle which he, even having controlled two ghosts, had not been qualified to join previously. Now, because of the Ghost Envoy incident, he was beginning to officially enter that top circle.

Because now he was somewhat of an outlier himself.

However, the title of J City's number one ghost controller sounded quite intimidating.

If Liu Xiaoyu referred to someone as number one, then that person was definitely acknowledged within the circle.

"Is there such a person at headquarters? I remember coming across an administrator of a paranormal forum, seems he was called Ye Zhen, could it be him?" Yang Jian thought for a moment but then immediately shook his head, dismissing the idea.

That Ye Zhen probably couldn't suppress this group of people at headquarters.

Now, he was indeed curious about the individuals attending this meeting. What exactly were they up to?

If he wasn't mistaken, they should be among the first in the country to encounter paranormal events and survive.

"Alright, let's end the communication here, if anything comes up we can talk when we see each other."
Liu Xiaoyu said.

"Okay, I'm on my way to headquarters now."

After putting down the phone, Yang Jian got ready to depart.

This meeting didn't seem to have invited Zhang Lei, Wang Jiang, or Huang Ziya, who knew nothing about it.

Possibly it was because their levels weren't high enough and they were not qualified to attend this meeting, or maybe headquarters believed that Yang Jian's participation alone was sufficient.

"Remember to claim reimbursement from Minister Cao for the previous expenses, and there's also some overtime pay waiting there." Yang Jian reminded himself silently, absolutely not forgetting such important matters.

Soon.

Yang Jian got into a chauffeured car that had already been waiting at the entrance of Ping'an Hotel.

The car would take him directly to headquarters without his needing to worry about how to get there.

Truth be told, Yang Jian had never been to headquarters before and was quite curious at heart.

After all, who knew how many secrets and how many unresolved files were being managed by those responsible for the special events across Asia?

Even though Yang Jian also had some secrets, they were surely trivial compared to those of headquarters.

Especially, he was very interested in the rumored number one ghost controller of J City.

What methods had that person used to control ghosts, and how terrifying were they? Had they far surpassed him already?

He needed to use this opportunity to thoroughly understand his own level.

Chapter 489 The First Headquarter Meeting

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A special vehicle left the urban area of J City.

Yang Jian, sitting inside the car, saw that it was heading toward a desolate mountain area with no display on the map and no clear roads on the GPS for the vehicle to continue forward.

But in reality, a wide and straight road extended deep into the mountain area.

"Is the headquarters located in the suburban mountains?" Yang Jian wondered silently as he looked out of the car window.

The vehicle passed several security checkpoints along the way, manned by armed special forces personnel. Even special vehicles had to undergo several inspections, verifying the vehicle's information and occupants' identities before being allowed to pass.

Although there weren't many people at the checkpoints, the level of security was very high, exemplifying a relaxed exterior but strict interior security approach.

Seeing only a few personnel performing the inspections, one couldn't help but wonder how many would swiftly arrive in support if anything were to happen.

Once the vehicle entered the mountain area and drove a bit further, Yang Jian started to see various buildings gradually within the mountains, with many satellite communication devices set up on the mountaintop, flashing lights indicating an operational status, and nearby checkpoints manned by guards.

"The signal has disappeared." Yang Jian noticed that his phone signal had completely vanished after entering the area, leaving him unable to contact the outside world.

But soon, he saw his satellite-enabled phone switching signals: Changing to internal network mode... verifying information... codename: Ghost Eye, name: Yang Jian... verification complete, welcome to headquarters.

"Even our own people's signals have to be blocked before being opened again..." Yang Jian's expression changed subtly, "Is this to prevent internal leaks?"

Eventually, the vehicle stopped in front of a large building.

Yang Jian saw that there were also around a dozen similar vehicles parked in front of the building, which must be the transport of other ghost handlers who had arrived earlier, and judging by the looks of it, there were quite a few of them.

As he got out of the car,

besides a few unfamiliar staff members, he also saw a person he recognized.

Designated operator: Liu Xiaoyu.

Liu Xiaoyu was wearing a work uniform this time, looking slender and short, a stark contrast to her cute attire from the last time, which didn't match at all.

"Yang Jian, this way." She called out with a smile, waving her hand.

Yang Jian walked over and asked, "Are you responsible for reception?"

"Yes, that's right, each person entering the headquarters is received by their own designated operator." Liu Xiaoyu nodded cheerfully, "You came early today, I thought you would be late. But today's meeting is very important and of a high level, it's good that you're taking it seriously."

"Has everyone else arrived?" Yang Jian inquired.

Liu Xiaoyu replied, "I'm not very clear on that, but most of the people attending the meeting should have arrived by now. Of course, some are still on their way. Apart from a few who couldn't come due to certain circumstances, anyone who should arrive soon will be here soon. Are you looking for someone you know?"

"How many days have I been in J City? How many people could I know? It's just that I'm more interested in some experienced ghost handlers whom I've never met before," Yang Jian said.

He had become an international ghost handler relatively recently, and had it not been for several significant contributions, including solving an S-level supernatural incident, he would not have had the qualifications to attend this meeting. His peers like Zhang Lei, Wang Jiang, Huang Ziya, and others did not receive the notification.

But accomplishments sometimes don't represent everything.

Sometimes seniority is important too.

Those who became ghost handlers earlier and are still alive today are unlikely to be simple characters.

The ones who didn't qualify are probably already dead, the survivors are surely special exceptions.

Keep in mind that back then, Wang Xiaoming's research had not made much progress, and the scheme to handle two ghosts was still being explored. Ghost handlers at that time faced a much tougher survival environment than today's ghost handlers.

"You'll probably lose interest in those old ghost handlers after meeting them," Liu Xiaoyu suddenly whispered, "I've heard from Zhao that some are so influenced by ghosts that he can no longer tell whether they are human or ghost."

"What do you mean?" Yang Jian's expression shifted slightly.

Liu Xiaoyu explained, "It means they are especially dangerous. They became ghost handlers earlier, so they were exposed to stronger influences from ghosts. You must be careful when you meet them."

"You mean like their minds have been contaminated?" Yang Jian understood what Liu Xiaoyu was implying.

He himself was experiencing this issue, gradually losing emotions and feelings, and that was just after half a year of being a ghost handler. For those who had been doing it for one or two years, the impact would definitely be much greater than what he had experienced.

This was irreversible.

And there was no one who could solve this problem.

"Let's go rest in the lounge for a while; there will be a meeting notification soon," Liu Xiaoyu added.

Yang Jian nodded his head.

The rest area was private, free of other people, and furnished comfortably with both a bedroom and a living room.

...

The living room was filled with various brightly colored fruits, some snacks, a computer for playing online games, and even some children's toys had been prepared. It could be said that this small lounge could meet a person's various needs; staying here, one could easily find something to do to pass the time and avoid just sitting here looking particularly bored.

Yang Jian had read some books on psychology, which suggested that bright colors and neat arrangements could bring people a pleasant mood.

In other words, even just a simple lounge could contain, behind the scenes, the painstaking efforts of psychologists, interior design experts, and so on; it was not as simple as it seemed at first glance.

Considering that some ghost hunters might suffer from claustrophobia, Liu Xiaoyu, who was in charge of reception, did not leave, but chose to sit on the sofa and accompany Yang Jian as he waited for the meeting to begin.

The operator was a person with whom a ghost hunter at the headquarters would be most familiar. Such an arrangement could instill a sense of trust and relaxation, preventing excessive tension.

It could be said the headquarters' reception considered all aspects, especially the mental state of a ghost hunter.

"Is this meeting being led by Cao Yanhua or Wang Xiaoming?" Yang Jian asked, picking up a pack of nuts from the table and eating as he spoke.

"Of course, it's a meeting personally convened by the deputy director," Liu Xiaoyu said.

Yang Jian then asked, "Is the plan for the team leader included in the content of this meeting?"

"Not sure, the plan for the team leader is classified, and I don't have the authority to know," Liu Xiaoyu said. "The main content of the discussion is probably the follow-up to the Ghost Envoy incident."

"What is this?" Yang Jian suddenly found a book on the seat that looked like an album, very thick.

"It's a notebook for major supernatural events; you can look through it, familiarize yourself a bit more," Liu Xiaoyu said. "You might find something of interest."

Yang Jian turned to a page, and it was written on it: The Ghost Train Incident.

Below was a picture, depicting an old train making its way through a city, causing panic among nearby people.

Location: Europe.

Event Level: Unknown.

After flipping through a few more pages, Yang Jian saw an S-level event.

Japan's Ghost Well Incident, also known as the Ghost Temple Incident.

Level: S-rank, unresolved.

In the picture was a temple enveloped in a layer of murky mist, vaguely visible, eerie and terrifying.

Continuing to flip through, Yang Jian also saw the Hungry Ghost Incident in Dachang City was recorded.

The accompanying picture showed a city engulfed in a green-black Ghost Domain.

The difference was that the record of the event above was marked as resolved.

"Are these events all classified, just laid out here for anyone to browse?" Yang Jian asked while looking through.

Liu Xiaoyu replied, "Major events cannot be hidden; all countries keep records, sharing information and bulletins to aid in resolving the events. Plus, there was once a ghost hunter who made a very special statement, proposing that supernatural events are interconnected, not just random, isolated incidents."

"What do you mean?" Yang Jian said.

"It means that two supernatural events occurring in different places might be caused by the same ghost," Liu Xiaoyu explained.

Hearing her say this, Yang Jian's gaze shifted slightly, and he was reminded of the hypothesis of the ghost puzzle.

"The Ghost Lake incident."

Flipping through the supernatural event notebook unconsciously, he came across an event listed at an unknown level.

The accompanying picture was taken by a drone from high altitude.

It was a lake.

The lake was not large, but it was as black as ink and eerily still, exuding an inexplicable malevolence.

"Is this event in our country?" Yang Jian noticed the location.

However, seeing the lake reminded Yang Jian of Lin Shan who had died due to the resurgence of a fierce ghost at Ping'an Hotel.

The ghost in his body was also related to water.

If there was a code name, it would definitely be Water Ghost.

Yang Jian flipped through many events, which were horrifying to see; not to mention the events abroad, even the domestic ones were numerous, and they were all classified as unknown on the ratings.

They were the terrors that people dared not delve into.

Chapter 490 Liu Xiaoyu's Crisis

In the rest room.

Yang Jian sat in a chair, munching on exquisite snacks while seriously flipping through the special incidents record book in his hand.

The supernatural events listed were all special cases collated by headquarters; if not impactful, they were mysterious and unknown, and most remained unsolved.

These events were given high priority, and Yang Jian felt it necessary to study them carefully, lest he encounter them one day unaware.

In handling supernatural events, information intelligence was extremely important. For the same supernatural event, a knowledgeable ghost handler could deal with it with ease, while one without information had to proceed with extreme caution and meticulous care, fearing that one wrong decision could lead to death.

Although the special event records didn't reveal much information, they at least provided a warning to prevent basic misjudgments.

At this moment, Liu Xiaoyu, usually far from quiet and serious, was an exception.

She waited very patiently on the sofa for the meeting to begin, not showing the slightest impatience.

Now was a working hour, and Liu Xiaoyu needed to be alert and perform her duties.

However, at this moment, she suddenly produced a cellphone, a work device limited to internal use at headquarters, generally for contacting superiors and colleagues.

A message made Liu Xiaoyu blink in surprise, her expression turning somewhat strange. It was a text from a colleague that read, "Come quick, help me."

"Asking for my help without considering the timing, the meeting is about to start," Liu Xiaoyu thought, unsure whether to go.

Eventually, after checking the time and seeing there was over half an hour until the meeting, she decided it should be enough.

Impromptu, she stood up and said, "Yang Jian, may I step out for a moment?"

Yang Jian, who had been reading, slightly raised his head and replied, "Do you need to report to me before leaving? You're not under my supervision."

"Then you better not tattle on me," Liu Xiaoyu flashed a playful smile. "It would be terrible if someone found me slacking when it's almost meeting time."

"Do you think I'm that bored to tattle on you? Big sister, I've been very busy, you've seen it yourself these past few days," Yang Jian said, regarding her.

"What are you saying? How did I suddenly become 'big sister'?" Liu Xiaoyu's round eyes stared at him.

Indeed, women's points of focus could be quite different.

Yang Jian replied, "Some people may look like little girls on the outside, but inside, they are 'big sisters,' and they won't admit it. Are you younger than me or something?"

"I'm only twenty..."

Liu Xiaoyu instinctively wanted to retort, but then she recalled Yang Jian's personnel file.

The guy was a bona fide high school senior, only eighteen years old that year. She didn't stand a chance when it came to age.

"No wonder you don't have a girlfriend."

Liu Xiaoyu internally criticized, but said out loud, "I'm ignoring you. I'm off. Don't you wander off and make trouble for me. The meeting starts in half an hour, and I'll be right back."

Yang Jian didn't speak; he simply lowered his head and continued reading the record book of supernatural events.

Liu Xiaoyu figured it should be fine and left the rest room.

As she walked, she texted, "Where are you?"

"Rest room number 12," the response came after a while.

Liu Xiaoyu didn't reply because rest room number 12 was very close; just down a corridor. However, she found it odd. At this time, work shouldn't be too busy, and there shouldn't be anything that needed help.

But since they had asked, she felt it would be rude to refuse.

Soon, Liu Xiaoyu arrived at the door of rest room number 12 and knocked.

The person who opened the door wasn't her colleague but a man.

The man, in his early thirties, was tall and sturdy, with short hair and stubble on his chin. Seeing Liu Xiaoyu, he couldn't help but break into a smile that exuded a bizarre danger, as if a ferocious ghost wore human skin—startling and making one wish to escape as quickly as possible.

Extreme danger!

This was the first impression most people had upon seeing the man.

"Come in," the man said, turning back into the rest room after opening the door.

Liu Xiaoyu, her face tense and slightly nervous, walked in. She seldom interacted with other ghost handlers, as her daily tasks focused on Yang Jian.

"Sorry, I'm the operator Liu Xiaoyu. I'm looking for my colleague; she should be here, right?"

"Yes, of course, she's inside. Whatever it is, you can go find her," the man said as he pointed to the bedroom inside, stroking his stubble and speaking with a smile.

Liu Xiaoyu suspiciously approached the bedroom.

But when she got to the bedroom door, she immediately widened her eyes in shock.

Inside the bedroom, a colleague she recognized sat on the bed with a vacant look, showing no sign of resistance.

What's going on? Could it be that her colleague was romantically involved with this man? She hadn't heard anything about it before and was surprised they were in such a mood with a meeting about to start—it certainly hadn't been apparent daily.

Yet as she noticed her colleague's blank stare and numb expression, a sense of unease rose in her heart.

"Something's not right; she's been influenced by Ghost Shadow..."

A critical piece of information flashed in Liu Xiaoyu's mind, causing her to exclaim and immediately pick up her phone to send a distress signal.

If her guess was correct, her own situation was also very grave.

However, the next moment, the man suddenly appeared behind Liu Xiaoyu, forcefully grabbing her wrist.

"Let me go."

Liu Xiaoyu struggled frantically, looking slightly panicked.

The man behind her didn't let go but instead snatched away her phone, preventing her from sending any more distress messages.

"I just wanted to vent on a woman, but I didn't expect my operator to be displeased. Without saying much, she wants to send a distress signal like you. But she was unlucky; she didn't send it to the right person, instead, it went to you. Since you're here, stay and join me. There's half an hour till the meeting; let's not waste time," the man's smile slowly faded as he spoke.

Grabbing Liu Xiaoyu's wrist firmly, he pushed her.

With her delicate frame, Liu Xiaoyu couldn't resist at all and was pushed into the bedroom, falling to the floor.

Her eyes wide with anger, she said, "Gao Zhiqiang, do you dare to do such things at headquarters? Aren't you afraid of dying?"

Liu Xiaoyu recalled this man's file; his name was Gao Zhiqiang, codenamed Ghost Conman, recruited to J City for his control over a highly unique ghost.

"Little girl, what a joke, death? Do you think people like us are still afraid of death?"

Gao Zhiqiang laughed, "And I haven't done anything excessive, just slept with you two, right? Besides, you were willing, it's all personal life matters, headquarters shouldn't have the right to intervene."

"Bah, willing my foot, I advise you to stop now, or you will definitely regret it."

Liu Xiaoyu was shocked and angry; she couldn't believe Gao Zhiqiang would be so bold as to extend his hand into headquarters.

Although she had heard from colleagues about Gao Zhiqiang's messy private life before, she had never imagined he would be so utterly shameless.

"If I say you are willing, then you will be willing. I can even deceive ghosts, do you think you can resist?"

Gao Zhiqiang said with a teasing laugh, "No matter how much you resist now, in a moment, I guarantee you will obediently listen to me, and you will clearly remember everything that happened. Only, by the time you realize something is wrong, it will probably be ten days later."

"By then, the meeting will be over; I might have even left J City. You surely won't trouble me over regretting having slept with me, right? The impact of that getting out wouldn't be good, and headquarters is even less likely to punish me for this matter. Don't worry, we're just making friends, I won't harm you in the slightest."

Having said that, his gaze heatedly swept over Liu Xiaoyu's sweet face.

"You're a sick pervert."

Liu Xiaoyu felt a chill and fear at that moment.

This Gao Zhiqiang had indeed used his ghost's abilities to influence her colleagues; otherwise, they wouldn't have allowed him to manipulate them.

And now, he planned to influence her too.

If she were truly affected by the Ghost Shadow, then Liu Xiaoyu had no doubt that what Gao Zhiqiang had just said would come true—she would be under his control... and by the time she realized something was amiss, many days would have already passed.

This had nothing to do with personal will; the abilities of ghosts were simply inexplicable to ordinary people.

"The more you curse now, the less you will later."

Gao Zhiqiang's smile emerged, its falseness sending shivers down one's spine.

Liu Xiaoyu could not tolerate such things happening; she was extremely terrified and seized the moment Gao Zhiqiang spoke to suddenly stand up, rushing out of the bedroom while calling out loudly for help, "Help..."

But before the words could emerge, she had only managed to stand and take one step forward when she froze in place.

The light in her eyes gradually faded, and her gaze grew dull. The fright on her face quickly dissipated, becoming numb just like her colleague's expression next to her.

"Now close the door nicely for me," Gao Zhiqiang ordered, a playful smile on his lips.

Liu Xiaoyu lost any will to resist and did as he said, closing the door to the room as he had directed.

"You sit over there," Gao Zhiqiang pointed to another female colleague.

She too blankly did as told.

Gao Zhiqiang checked the time, his eyes flickering as he said, "Now, there should be no one to disturb me, after all, the signals are blocked. It's a shame I don't have much time after the delay, only twenty minutes left before I need to attend a meeting. Heh, that operator always had such a cold tone, it really got on my nerves. Today, she finally fell into my hands; I've waited a long time for this day."

He didn't just enjoy toying with women for simplicity's sake, there was more of a vengeful mindset behind it.

He had had enough of the attitude that he, a telephone operator, had to put up with every day.

A woman who understood nothing, commanding him, a ghost master, for what reason?

Therefore, Gao Zhiqiang felt it necessary to take back what was his today.

As for this young girl who came later, she was like a bonus item.

"By the way, what was the name of this beauty just now? I've forgotten it all of a sudden, though I remembered a moment ago." Gao Zhiqiang sat on the edge of the bed, hesitating as he was about to make his move, as though trying to recall her name.

Without a name, it seemed too impersonal, like she was a stranger.

"Liu Xiaoyu, her name is Liu Xiaoyu," a voice reminded.

"Oh, right, right, right, her name is Liu Xiaoyu..." Gao Zhiqiang suddenly realized.

The next moment.

He came to his senses, his body stiffened, then he sprung up like a spring, looking warily in the direction from whence the voice had come.

"Who's there? Come out!"

"I am your long-lost father. You may not recognize me, but that doesn't stop you from calling me 'Dad' in a moment," the voice said from a corner of the room.

The corner was rather dim, but in the next instant, it was lit up with a red glow.

A person walked out from that corner slowly, and the spot in the corner was evidently too small for a person to stand, thus the man appeared as if he walked right out of the wall, in an unreasonably eerie manner.

Ghost Domain?

Gao Zhiqiang's pupils contracted at the sight, realizing the situation was not good. There were too many formidable people at the headquarters, especially during the meetings, and heaven knew which one might have inadvertently discovered his doings.

Yang Jian appeared in the room, looking calmly at Liu Xiaoyu who lay on the bed. However, at the moment, Liu Xiaoyu looked dull and apathetic, like a doll, docile and devoid of any will of her own.

As for the woman beside her, he ignored her completely.

A stranger Yang Jian was not inclined to pay attention to.

"Who are you? Why are you here?" Gao Zhiqiang frowned and asked warily.

He did not recognize Yang Jian. Perhaps he had seen Yang Jian's file before but had not identified him immediately.

"Who I am? Didn't I already tell you? As for why I'm here? I have a bad habit, which is that when I have one eye too many, I like to look around. I sensed someone using the power of ghosts, so out of curiosity I took a look; I didn't expect to see such a terrible scene. But don't you think what you are doing is a bit excessive?"

Yang Jian withdrew his gaze and asked, looking at him.

Gao Zhiqiang cast a glance and then said, "Just making a friend, that's all. This matter shouldn't concern you. You'd better mind your own business, or you'd just be troubling yourself."

Yang Jian didn't speak, but a scarlet ghost eye on his forehead kept staring intently at the man.

Killing him here at headquarters, that wouldn't have any repercussions, would it?

His mind was calculating this matter, not considering joining Gao Zhiqiang in his corruption.