

Revival 516

Chapter 516

Yang Jian didn't know that in just half a day's time, several senior members of his circle at Ping'an Tower had already had a meeting about him and had made corresponding decisions.

He had just finished dinner with Wan Delu and was preparing to inquire with a man named Luo Yong about his family's ancient house.

Luo Yong was a bona fide villager who used to work in agriculture at his hometown. After working hard elsewhere to save some money, he planned to return home to build a new house. Seeing the ancestral home in disrepair, he decided to demolish the old house and rebuild it. Little did he know that as soon as he started the work, he would unearth a mysterious basement and find quite a few antiques.

The news spread and naturally caught the attention of some antique dealers, and because of this, he made a tidy sum of money.

But what Luo Yong had no idea about was that the basement, sealed for so many years, would bring about one horrifying supernatural event after another—so even now, Luo Yong was kept in the dark, oblivious to everything.

Even his trip to Dachang City was due to Wan Delu's coaxing and deception, offering fifty thousand yuan in labor fees just to bring him over.

Yang Jian wasn't concerned about these matters; what he cared about was whether the clue he was following would lead to a dead end.

Luo Yong, who was sitting in a private room next door, had long finished his meal. The food was good, and he had never eaten such upscale dishes before. But the better the meal, the more uneasy he became.

He felt that there was no such thing as free lunch, and that President Yang must have had some ulterior motive.

Thus, Luo Yong was constantly thinking about leaving as soon as possible to go back to his hometown.

However, the two security guards in the private room sat there watching him, preventing Luo Yong from suddenly slipping away.

It was around two in the afternoon when the secure door to the room was suddenly pushed open.

The first to walk in was a young man who looked slightly naïve, with a well-proportioned and muscular build, and eyes so sharp they didn't seem right, like a hawk in the forest or a dangerous lone wolf. From those fierce eyes emanated an icy, bone-chilling numbness, devoid of any emotion.

It was hard to imagine what kind of person would possess such a heart-wrenching gaze.

Just being glanced at once, Luo Yong felt a chill throughout his body, a nameless cold surging in his heart, and for some reason, he grew tense subconsciously.

"President Yang, boss," the bodyguard immediately stood up.

Wan Delu followed behind and nodded, "You two go out first, we have something to discuss."

"Okay, boss," the bodyguards quickly stepped out of the room and closed the door.

Without any delay, Yang Jian walked straight up to Luo Yong, grabbed a chair, sat down, and asked, "Are you Luo Yong?"

"I—I am Luo Yong, who are you? I don't know you," Luo Yong said, his voice revealing his nervousness.

"I'm Yang Jian, the person in charge of Dachang City. I'm responsible for investigating a particular case. I summoned you to Dachang City mainly to ask you about some details. I hope you'll cooperate with my investigation, it's better for you and for me," Yang Jian said, taking out his identification and also placing his service gun on the table alongside it.

No particular reason, just intimidation.

The identity and the service gun already meant a lot, maybe useless against a ghost handler, but for ordinary people, such status is quite effective.

Indeed.

The already nervous Luo Yong jumped when he saw Yang Jian place the special badge-stamped credential and service gun on the table. His complexion changed immediately; his previously rosy, healthy color drained to white, and he began to tremble, subconsciously wondering if he had committed some major crime.

"You answer when I ask," Yang Jian didn't give him much time to think and immediately asked, "Are you the owner of the old residence in this photo?"

He took out a photo of an ancient house from the file.

"Yes, it's me, no, big brother... officer, the owner isn't me, the owner is my grandfather, I inherited it," Luo Yong said nervously, his speech beginning to falter.

Yang Jian said, "You dug up this item from the basement of your family's old house, do you recognize it?"

Then he took out a photo of a soul vase.

"Right, that's correct, it's an antique we dug up from my family's place," Luo Yong said with cold sweat on his forehead.

"Don't be nervous, it's just a regular investigation," Yang Jian said, "Do you remember how many bottles like this one you dug up?"

"Three, no, that's not right, it was five, yes, there were five bottles, and also some plates, cups, and the like," Luo Yong replied hastily.

"Five?" Yang Jian's expression darkened.

The investigation on Wan Delu wasn't thorough enough; they had only found one soul vase, and the ghost inside had already been released. Even counting the one in his own possession, that made only two. This meant Luo Yong had kept three of them hidden away when he found them.

"Did you sell all five bottles?" What he cared about was whether the jars imprisoning malevolent spirits were still around.

Luo Yong was still sweating profusely, seeing that the officer's face had turned grim; he felt that something wrong had happened with these items, and he stuttered, "Sold, they were sold, one for ten thousand, one for thirty thousand, and for the remaining three, someone offered one hundred thousand each, I sold them all."

Hearing this, Yang Jian's gaze sharpened, "Someone bought all three at once? Do you have his contact number?"

"No, I don't."

Luo Yong replied, "He came to my place to buy them and paid in cash on the spot, I don't have his contact information, he said the less people know about this, the better, as it's not something to be revealed."

"..." Yang Jian fell silent.

He thought the situation was quite mysterious; who would bring hundreds of thousands of cash to buy these things?

This wasn't an antique with thousands of years of history, just an item from a hundred years ago; being able to sell it for tens of thousands was already impressive.

"It's very likely that the buyer was after what's inside the bottles, otherwise they wouldn't have used cash. If it were a bank transfer, there would definitely be a transaction record, making it easy to trace. The buyer was prepared for this... This wasn't done by the headquarters people, it must be some groups or individuals in the civil sector."

Yang Jian speculated that this was the work of a ghost controller.

But if that were the case, it might actually be good news. At least ghost controllers would handle these possessed jars very cautiously. If they had fallen into the hands of ordinary people, it would've turned out like Antique Street, where supernatural incidents had already started to occur.

"Let's put aside the antique matter for now; how much do you understand about your grandfather?" Since the soul vase lead had gone cold, Yang Jian went back to the main subject.

Given Luo Yong's resemblance to the old man that was the Door Knocking Ghost, and his ties to the soul vases and the old residence, it was very likely that he was a descendant of a ghost controller from a hundred years ago.

"My grandfather?" Luo Yong was visibly stunned, "Officer, I don't know much."

"You don't know much, haven't you ever seen your grandfather?" Yang Jian inquired.

He felt that Luo Yong, being in his fifties, should have met his grandfather as a child, and they shouldn't have completely lost touch.

As for Luo Yong's father, Yang Jian had also inquired with Wan Delu. Luo Yong's father had died at the age of seventy-three, otherwise, he would have been an even better candidate for the investigation.

Nervous, Luo Yong answered, "I saw him a few times when I was young. My dad separated from my grandfather quite early, and we lived in the village, while my grandfather lived in the old house outside the village. My impression of my grandfather is very vague; the most profound memory I have is of being sick as a child. We were too poor to afford medical treatment until one night when my grandfather suddenly appeared with some money, and my dad was able to take me for treatment."

"What happened after that?" Yang Jian pressed.

"After that, I never saw my grandpa again," Luo Yong said.

Yang Jian acutely noticed a loophole, "Your grandpa must have been very old at that time, didn't he die and have a funeral?"

In the countryside, the death of an elderly person is a major event, it would be impossible not to hold a funeral.

"I'm not sure, it seemed like after that time my grandpa just disappeared completely. I never saw him again, and my dad never mentioned him," Luo Yong explained.

"Mysteriously disappeared, huh?" Yang Jian murmured to himself, growing more certain in his heart.

Luo Yong's grandpa was a ghost manipulator who belonged to the same era as Old Qin at headquarters and had lived a very long time.

So long that he seemed to have overcome the problem of ghosts reviving for an extended period.

However, Yang Jian wasn't surprised. A century ago, every top ghost manipulator who made it to the end was an aberration. But why did Luo Yong's grandpa choose to disappear mysteriously in the end?

Was it because he was about to die and chose a grave site?

"I have a photograph here, take a look and see if you recognize the person in it," Yang Jian said as he took out his phone and opened the photo.

It contained a photograph of the Door Knocking Ghost.

The photo was taken through a glass window, and on the dimly lit corridor outside, an elderly man wearing a black, antique long gown with a face full of wrinkles and mottled with age spots was standing rigidly. His head was slightly turned towards the camera, revealing a pair of gray, hollow, numb eyes.

"This is my grandpa..." Luo Yong got a fright when he saw the photo.

Because it was a modern photo, and if his grandpa were still alive, he would be over a hundred years old.

"You haven't seen your grandpa before; what makes you think this man is your grandpa?" Yang Jian stared at him.

Luo Yong, a bit agitated, pointed at the photo, "The day I was sick as a child, my grandpa was wearing this very outfit when he came to give money to my dad. I remember it vividly, I can't be mistaken..."

"Brother Tui, it's obvious they're directly related just by looking at this resemblance, even a layman like me can tell," Wan Delu chimed in after a glance, unable to help saying a word.

"Very well, since you're certain, that makes things easier," Yang Jian quickly put away the photo.

He wasn't surprised by this result.

Because the moment he first saw Luo Yong, he was certain of the identity of the Door Knocking Ghost in his heart.

The ghost known as Ghost Door Knocker was a ghost manipulator from a century ago, and as for why it suddenly emerged half a year ago, Yang Jian believed that it was around that time that Luo Yong's grandpa had died. After his death, his body was discovered and sent to the hospital, where the ghost revived, resulting in an A-grade supernatural incident.

But the question was, such a top ghost manipulator who had lived to modern times and had overcome the resurrection of his ghost, was said to have died from a fall, according to the accounts of Thunderclap King, the forum's narrator doctor.

And it was a fall from the fifth floor, no less.

That was simply absurd.

But on the other hand, what could have killed Luo Yong's grandpa?

The cause of Luo Yong's grandpa's death might hide an even more terrifying existence.

Seeing Yang Jian deep in thought and silent, Luo Yong was restless but didn't dare to speak out, only waiting obediently.

When Yang Jian came back to his senses, he looked deeply at Luo Yong, "Before your grandpa mysteriously disappeared, did he leave anything behind, or give you something special?"

"No, nothing," Luo Yong said, his tone somewhat tense, but he replied very decisively.

Yang Jian heard the answer and shook his head, a self-mocking smile on his face.

Indeed, Luo Yong's grandpa had separated from his relatives early in his life and cut off contact, probably to keep his family away from ghostly troubles. Even if there were any clues, they certainly would not be left with relatives; that would be inviting disaster.

But if it were him, where would he leave clues?

After much thought,

Yang Jian could only think of two places.

One was the place where Luo Yong's grandpa died, where the body was first discovered--there might have been a chance to leave something useful if there was still breath in him.

And there was another...

Yang Jian reopened his phone, still on the Door Knocking Ghost's photo. This was the first photo he had saved; it was very clear. He zoomed in on one area.

It was the black, antique long gown the old man was wearing, which had a pocket at the waist.

"Clothing from that period wouldn't normally have a pocket in that spot..." Yang Jian's eyes flickered, "This is the only anomaly, and the pocket is slightly bulging, indicating something inside."

Clue.

This was the real clue to understanding the origin of the ghost, to understanding everything.

His instincts told him that inside the pocket of the Door Knocking Ghost lay the answers he was looking for, because the smartest thing for someone who might die at any moment was to carry important information with them.

Considering the problem of ghost resurrection, Luo Yong's grandpa must have been confident that this answer would fall only into the hands of those qualified to have it.

Because you must first solve the mystery of the Door Knocking Ghost to get that answer.

To achieve this would count as a top ghost manipulator, naturally entitled to understand everything. As for ordinary people, even regular ghost manipulators, knowing all this would be pointless; they couldn't change anything.

"I survived the Door Knocking Ghost incident, but am I back where I started after all this time?"

Yang Jian didn't know whether to feel dismay or excitement, but more than those emotions, he was uneasy.

Because the Ghost Door Knocker supernatural event wasn't so easy to deal with.

Moreover, whatever had caused the death of a top ghost manipulator from a century ago was obviously very frightening.

After a long contemplation,

the atmosphere in the private room grew heavy.

Luo Yong didn't dare bring up leaving, and Wan Delu, though yawning with fatigue, did not leave, only waiting for the interrogation to end.

Neither of them showed the slightest impatience.

Whether it's an ordinary laborer or a company's president, they had to wait obediently because Yang Jian had the right to make them wait.

Chapter 517

The thing that brought Yang Jian back to his senses wasn't Luo Yong sitting beside him, nor was it Wan Delu waiting to go to bed, but a notification sound from the phone on his body.

This was a satellite-positioning mobile phone, standard issue from headquarters, usually used by operators to contact ghost manipulators.

"Hm?" After opening the text message, Yang Jian saw a very brief message.

"Half an hour ago, people in your circle of friends decided at the meeting to take you down, please be extra cautious."

The information displayed a stranger's name, but with this satellite-positioning phone, Yang Jian could directly check this stranger's identity information, even their home address, and their current place of residence.

But Yang Jian knew that the information linked to this number was definitely that of a passerby, the one sending this message must be Li Yao.

"So they've decided to flip the table, huh? These capitalists are indeed crazy and cold-blooded enough. If they can't win you over, they decide to take you down, heh, what do they take me for? Really think I'm just a stumbling block that can be kicked away whenever they like? Aren't they afraid of breaking their foot?"

Yang Jian deleted the message, his gaze was icy, but his face still showed no expression.

Fortunately, he had taken precautions in advance, planting Li Yao into their circle of friends; otherwise, he would have been too passive if things really started to move.

"I have to say, the efficiency of the friend circle is quite high. Li Yao only left Ping'an Hotel this morning, and by this afternoon, they have already made plans against me. Looking at this, they seem to be in a hurry to deal with me... is it because of the Captain's Plan? They want to handle me before the Captain's Plan just as I suspected."

"With this in mind, the Door Knocking Ghost incident will have to be put on hold for now."

Yang Jian shifted his gaze away from the phone and then looked at Luo Yong in front of him.

Originally according to his plan, after leaving Dachang City in a few days, he would try to make contact with the Hungry Ghost by himself, to see if he could find what he wanted from the pocket of the old man's corpse, as his current abilities should be sufficient to confront a Grade A paranormal event. Even if he couldn't handle it, he would be able to run away quickly without stumbling.

But now it was not possible.

This unexpected text message told him that the matters with his circle of friends were more urgent and also related to his own safety, which was far more important than finding the truth.

"All right, that'll be all the questioning for today," said Yang Jian at this moment.

"Sir, am I, am I okay now?" Luo Yong asked nervously.

Yang Jian said, "This has nothing to do with you. It involves your missing grandfather, I was just asking you for some clues. You're fine now, but today's conversation is very special; you'd better keep it a secret. If anyone asks you about your family's antiques, just say they have all been sold. As for your grandfather's affairs, you say you don't know anything at all. If you leak information carelessly, it won't be just a questioning like today, it could be life-threatening."

"Understood, understood, I promise I won't blab." Luo Yong, scared into a sweat, eagerly agreed.

"If someone forces you to tell, just blame it on me. Tell them everything was arranged by Yang Jian, the person in charge of Dachang City. Additionally, I will leave you my phone number; contact me if there's an emergency."

Yang Jian made this extra arrangement for Luo Yong to be on the safe side.

He didn't want this lead to break; it was the only one that could lead to the truth. If his guess was wrong and there was nothing in the pocket of the old man's corpse, then he would have to make a trip to Luo Yong's hometown himself.

"Thank you, sir. Can I go now?" Luo Yong asked cautiously.

Yang Jian said, "Write down my number, and then you can leave. Be careful, don't go back to your hometown for now. Find a different place to stay. President Wan, are you sleeping?"

"How could I sleep, Brother Tui, what's up?" Wan Delu was instantly alert, his drowsiness gone.

Yang Jian pointed and said, "Arrange a place for Luo Yong to stay. Find him somewhere to live, and give him two million for a settlement fee. I'll reimburse you later."

"Don't worry, I'll take care of it right away," said Wan Delu.

"Good, you can go now," Yang Jian gestured.

Only then did Luo Yong leave the private room, feeling both scared and excited. He hadn't expected that a trip to Dachang City would net him a huge sum of money; it was like a pie falling from the sky.

But immediately afterward, Yang Jian used the satellite-positioning mobile phone to connect with Liu Xiaoyu: "Liu Xiaoyu, it's me, Yang Jian."

"Received, is there anything you need my help with?"

Inside the headquarters' operator room, Liu Xiaoyu's voice promptly rose.

Yang Jian said, "Using my name, help me block off an area, it's the old home of someone named Luo Yong in Ling Town. Most importantly, his family's old house; there's a problem with that place."

"Okay, I have already made a note of it."

Liu Xiaoyu quickly took down the information.

"By the way, tell Vice Minister Cao Yanhua that I want an Eight-Tone Music Box, and ask him to send it over as soon as possible." Yang Jian's gaze flickered as he changed his choice of supernatural object in a short time.

Instead of risking it with the Corpse Wrapping Cloth against the fierce ghost in that hotel in Z city, it seemed better to choose something that could save his life. After all, going to Z city was risky, and if he failed, he could very well end up dying there.

Now that he was about to make contact with the secret circle, he absolutely needed something to preserve his life, and it had to be powerful enough. Who knew what formidable figures might emerge from this circle? The information from Li Yao probably wouldn't come so quickly, and he couldn't afford to wait indefinitely.

Although he preferred the more stable supernatural object like the Corpse Wrapping Cloth, the current situation didn't permit it, as the secret circle was moving too fast.

"Eight-Tone Music Box?" Liu Xiaoyu was taken aback when she heard about this item: "What is that? Can you elaborate?"

"No need for details, after you report to the vice minister, he will understand," Yang Jian replied.

Yang Jian pondered whether to inform Cao Yanhua about the secret circle but decided against it after some thought.

The people in the secret circle were not aware that he had already received a message from Li Yao. If a report went out and the information leaked, the informant Li Yao would probably be caught.

When a real battle commenced, Cao Yanhua would naturally receive the news.

"Alright, I'll report to the vice minister right away," Liu Xiaoyu said.

"That'll do," Yang Jian said.

"Hey, Yang Jian, wait, don't hang up just yet," suddenly, Liu Xiaoyu urgently said.

"What is it?" Yang Jian asked.

Liu Xiaoyu hesitated and then said, "Thanks for what you did with Gao Zhiqiang last time. Do you have some time recently? I'd like to treat you to a meal to thank you, or shall I come to find you after work? Where are you now?"

"I'm busy, that's all." After saying this, Yang Jian cut off the communication.

"..."

Liu Xiaoyu's face stiffened in the communication room.

"Damn it."

Soon, a voice filled with resentment came out.

"Brother Tui, is something going to happen?"

President Wan Delu, noticing Yang Jian's rapid succession of messages and communication—and all through a special phone—felt instinctively that something was off.

Yang Jian said, "President Wan, your business is concluded as of today. Leave J city as soon as possible in the next few days. That's all I can say for now. Also, keep today's matters confidential, as any leak could be life-threatening. The best course of action is to try not to get involved."

"Is it that serious?" Wan Delu was alarmed.

"It will be more serious than you think." Yang Jian stood up and gathered his belongings: "I'm leaving now. Contact me again if there's anything, President Wan. You should have my number."

"Okay, alright," Wan Delu said, feeling an inexplicable fear.

His instinct told him that something big was about to happen in J city.

No sooner had Yang Jian stepped out of the private room than the celebrity-level beauty quickly stood up from the lounge chair and approached him with an enthusiastic and charming smile: "President Yang."

"President Yang has to leave now; get the car ready to escort him," President Wan immediately arranged for the driver.

Yang Jian glanced at the beauty and said, "You've been quite enthusiastic all the way, and it's making me feel a bit embarrassed. Here's a tip for you: don't stay in J city unless you have to. It's a pity for someone as pretty as you to die accidentally. Alright, beauty, you needn't see me out."

After finishing, he left the private club, got into President Wan's car, and quickly departed.

"Safe travels, Brother Tui; let me know if you need anything," Wan Delu bid farewell with an eager wave.

"What did President Yang mean by that?" the celebrity-level beauty asked with an awkward smile.

President Wan replied, "He meant exactly what he said. This contract is suspended for now. I'll have finance transfer the money to your account."

"Thank you for looking after me, President Wan," the beauty said.

"Alright, you can go now," Wan Delu dismissed her with a wave of his hand.

Chapter 518 515: The Mysterious Eight-Tone Music Box

"The plan is set, and the list of participants for this incident is mostly confirmed. If nothing unexpected happens, we will start the operation at nine o'clock tonight, aiming to resolve the Ghost Envoy incident before dawn tomorrow."

In the headquarters' meeting room.

Cao Yanhua, Wang Xiaoming, Shen Liang, and other key personnel held a small meeting.

The content of the meeting was simple: to refine the plan according to previous proposals and strive to solve the ghastly spirit codenamed Ghost Envoy.

The headquarters could not continue to allow the ghosts that escaped from the Ghost Coffin in Dachang City to wander near J City.

This operation was highly covert, with the entire plan being top secret. The list of participants was not disclosed to the public; even a spirit handler of Yang Jian's caliber wouldn't be notified unless chosen by headquarters as one of the participants.

However, it was clear that Yang Jian was not among those selected for the operation.

"Alright, if there are no other questions, the meeting is adjourned. Get ready for your tasks," Cao Yanhua felt the issues had been thoroughly discussed and thus disbanded the meeting.

The others had somber expressions, remaining silent as they gathered their things and immediately left the meeting room to begin their actions.

A moment later.

Liu Xiaoyu came to the meeting room, found Vice Minister Cao Yanhua, who hadn't left, and reported Yang Jian's earlier situation.

"Oh, Yang Jian made his choice so soon?" Cao Yanhua wasn't surprised after listening to Liu Xiaoyu's report, just somewhat taken aback.

The surprise was because Yang Jian had actually chosen the Eight-Tone Music Box.

This did not match his prior judgment of Yang Jian; he thought Yang Jian would reject the Music Box as his first choice and that the likelihood of choosing the Ghost Camera would be higher. After all, Yang Jian had always approached handling supernatural incidents with a strong gambling nature, and the Ghost Camera was more in line with the bold and reckless nature of this hot-headed youth.

"Did he say anything else?"

Liu Xiaoyu said, "Yang Jian asked the Vice Minister to hurry..."

"Alright, I am aware of this matter."

After thinking it over, Cao Yanhua decided to settle Yang Jian's request first, given the delicate situation. It was better to be on good terms with Yang Jian just in case something went wrong with the upcoming operation. At least they could count on Yang Jian to rescue people and minimize losses and casualties among the spirit handlers.

Checking the time, he felt there was enough time and immediately set into action.

Two red Ghost Candles, one white Ghost Candle, a securely packaged Eight-Tone Music Box, and a scapegoat doll.

For any spirit handler, these items were extremely precious resources, some even at the strategic level and would not be used unless absolutely necessary. Combined, even if they ended up in the hands of an ordinary person, they could easily survive a supernatural incident safely, let alone in the hands of a top spirit handler like Yang Jian.

Of course, this was a big expenditure for Cao Yanhua.

If it weren't for the fact that Yang Jian had resolved the S-level supernatural incident in Dachang City and saved a group of important spirit handlers, including Wang Xiaoming, from the Ghost Envoy incident, thereby contributing greatly, Cao Yanhua would never have valued him so highly.

Not to mention, it had been him who had just dealt with Gao Zhiqiang's defection at headquarters; if it were anyone else, they would have faced severe punishment long ago, not just a few verbal chastisements and a fine.

Soon.

He sent a staff member to secretly and quickly deliver these items to Yang Jian's location at the Ping'an Hotel.

Around eight o'clock.

A suitcase was brought into Yang Jian's hotel room by a staff member from headquarters.

"This is something the Minister has sent for you; please sign for it," the staff member said.

"Cao Yanhua sure moves fast; it's a bit out of character for him," Yang Jian was surprised to see the items arrive so quickly, his eyes flickered, and then he smiled and said, "There must be a problem at headquarters, that's why they settled my matter so quickly. They're afraid to delay it and have me misunderstand."

"The Ghost Envoy incident must be the matter troubling headquarters, and the operation is about to start... perhaps they're making their move tonight."

With that, he looked out the window.

That was in the direction of the laboratory; through the city skyline, Yang Jian could see several helicopters already heading that way.

Although inconspicuous,

his intuition told him that headquarters was mobilizing resources for the operation.

The staff member now had a trace of cold sweat on his forehead: "I don't know about that; all this is confidential, and I am not authorized to know."

"The situation can be kept secret, but the action can't," Yang Jian smiled, "You can go now. If there is anything, have Cao Yanhua call me."

At this moment, fulfilling his request also suggested that Cao Yanhua was extending an olive branch.

This operation was definitely very dangerous, and should there be an accident, like some getting trapped in the Ghost Domain as before, they might need to call on him to retrieve them. At this crucial juncture, Yang Jian believed that regardless of the demands he made, Cao Yanhua would agree, as long as they weren't excessive.

After all, in Cao Yanhua's view, the bigger picture was the most important; many smaller issues could be tolerated.

After sending away the staff member,

Yang Jian looked at the Ghost Candles and scapegoat doll in front of him, verified their authenticity, and then left them aside, finally turning his attention to a golden box.

The box was very well sealed, even sporting warning slogans like "Dangerous, do not touch."

"This must be the eerie and terrifying Eight-Tone Music Box that Cao Yanhua mentioned, capable of keeping the person holding it from being killed by vengeful spirits... but afterward, they would suffer from a terrible curse," Yang Jian pondered briefly before carefully opening the golden box.

Inside was a small square wooden box.

Its appearance was ordinary and somewhat worn, with patches of red paint flaking off the wooden exterior as if it had been used for a very long time, and a faint stench of decay wafting out.

Yang Jian's nose twitched, his gaze sharpening, "This is the smell of a corpse."

The scent made him suspect that the Eight-Tone Music Box might contain part of a cadaver, but what caught his attention was that the material of the music box seemed oddly familiar, as if he had seen it somewhere before.

Right, the Ghost Cabinet.

The red-painted wooden exterior, it was nearly identical to the material of the Ghost Cabinet.

"A product of the same era, or a terrifying toy created by a ghost master from the past using imprisoned vengeful spirits?" Yang Jian mused.

He dared not open the music box, as according to Cao Yanhua, once it was opened, it would continue to play a sequence of chimes. The dreadful curse of the vengeful spirit would then start to spread, and it could only be used at the most critical moment. On an ordinary day, anyone who listened would die, but if one was targeted by a vengeful spirit, the cursed music could ensure their safety.

Though it was temporary, it could at least save lives.

Thinking about the previous users who had all died due to the curse without exception, Yang Jian was very wary of it.

Yet he still chose this object.

Not for anything else, but for the sake of having a last-ditch effort in a critical moment.

"Hope this thing only serves as a last resort and never needs to be used," he thought to himself.

Not sure if it was an illusion, but just by looking at the Eight-Tone Music Box, without even opening it, a chilling presence seemed to be hovering around. At first, it wasn't very noticeable, but it became increasingly clear over time. It wasn't just around him, this cold presence seemed to be right beside him.

Lingering, as if a ghost was about to appear.

"Sss sss~!"

Yang Jian saw the lights flickering at that moment, a sign of the circuits being affected by a strange force, and it seemed like the light in the vicinity was also dimming.

The tightly closed Eight-Tone Music Box suddenly began to tremble slightly, as if it was about to open on its own without any deliberate action.

Yang Jian's expression darkened, and he immediately closed the golden box, sealing it shut.

Immediately.

The chilling presence vanished, the dimmed light returned to normal, and the disrupted circuit stopped making hissing noises.

"Wicked thing, already displaying abnormalities without being used; one can hardly imagine how terrifying it would be to actually use it. Indeed, objects that can save lives are not as good as one might think," Yang Jian felt uneasy.

Because he thought that the eeriness of this item could match that of the Ghost Mirror.

And at that very moment.

A team of special personnel was now approaching a valley near the suburban experiment base.

The quietness nearby was somewhat terrifying, with not even the sound of insects at night, only the occasional cold wind blowing over the treetops making a rustling sound. This wind carried a mysteriously cold chill and a faint, nearly imperceptible stench of decay.

Drones flitted overhead, evidence that the operation was underway.

But ordinary people had very little to contribute to the operation; the most they could offer was support with information.

"So it was Yang Jian who trapped the Ghost Envoy in this valley?" the group paused in their steps.

Lights shone overhead.

The valley ahead was pitch black, like a huge black coffin laid out on the ground, only hidden by earthen hillocks from the eyes of outsiders.

"It's not Yang Jian who trapped the Ghost Envoy here; rather, it's that the Ghost Envoy has momentarily stopped here after losing its target. This ghost doesn't seem one with a strong propensity to spread, as can be seen from the files on the Huanggang Village incident. The catch is that we must prevent this thing from being lured into the city, otherwise..."

Someone analyzed the situation and voiced the most frightening consequence.

This consequence was also the headquarters' greatest concern; if it entered the city, it would be an utterly horrifying threat capable of easily decimating an entire city.

More unsolvable than the Hungry Ghost incident.

"If that's the case, wouldn't it be sufficient to just let it stay here indefinitely, why bother with it?" someone frowned, feeling that the endeavor was unnecessary.

"Are you at ease with something like this near your doorstep?"

"Everyone quiet down, we wait for news from that Liu guy," they quickly fell silent, standing in the dim light by the side of the road, waiting for the message from the other side.

Chapter 519 516: The Grey White World

Suburbs.

Tonight, the silence here was terrifying. On the nearby asphalt road, not a single vehicle had passed for several hours. The silence engulfed everything around, only occasionally broken by sparse whispers emanating from a few figures huddled under the dim streetlight.

An area within ten kilometers had already been sealed off, with the living forbidden to set foot here—no exceptions.

At the heart of this sealed area, a fierce ghost codenamed Ghost Envoy roamed. Any ordinary person passing by could potentially trigger the Ghost Envoy's loss of control.

Only those possessed by spirits, capable of controlling fierce ghosts, were qualified to enter this seemingly ordinary but extremely dangerous forbidden land.

And tonight, the operation to detain the Ghost Envoy was underway.

The atmosphere all around was oppressive.

The number of people in charge of this operation was small, just five in total.

Li Jun was one of them.

This operation required the use of the Ghost Domain, and also needed a lead ghost manipulator who had encountered the Ghost Envoy, making him a very suitable candidate, but not the most suitable one.

The other three, both men and women, looked somewhat familiar—all top-tier ghost manipulators who had previously attended meetings at the headquarters.

Though few in number, every individual who had made it here from across the country was far from simple, especially those experienced in dealing with ghosts—they were experts in their field.

They were the elite remaining after many ghost manipulators had been eliminated, each with a story that could fill a terrifying horror novel.

"They're here," suddenly, a man squatting and smoking on the ground muttered, his hoarse and low voice echoing in the surroundings.

Almost simultaneously, the others also received corresponding information.

The ghost codenamed Ghost Painting had been successfully lured and was moving this way.

Everything was proceeding exactly as planned.

A chill went through everyone's heart; their faces, sickly pale, were filled with solemnity, for this signal meant that tonight's operation was unavoidable.

No one could be certain of the unknown changes that would result from the collision of two S-class supernatural events.

According to Professor Wang's deductions, there was a high probability of resolving one event, but he also mentioned a small chance of triggering a chain reaction, causing both events to spiral out of control, with great risks involved.

Although preparations had been made for a loss of control, those who would actually come into contact with the ghost were always in grave danger.

Li Jun stood straight under the streetlamp, repeating the same phrase to the others, regardless of whether they were listening or not, "Everyone, remember, all our ghosts combined are nothing compared to the Ghost Envoy. Once targeted by the Ghost Envoy, we are all isolated. However, according to the latest information from Yang Jian, the fundamental rules of the Ghost Envoy were forcefully altered at the original training base, creating a slight change in the 'isolation equals death' scenario."

"The Ghost Envoy will prioritize attacking ordinary people without ghosts. As for whether individuals possessed by a ghost will become targets, no one can be sure. That thing is constantly changing; from Huanggang Village to the laboratory, then to the training base, and now... So our mission is very simple."

"Avoid direct contact, wait for an opportunity. If no opportunity arises, then we do nothing during this operation."

After the failure of Wang Xiaoming's personal attempt to detain the Ghost Envoy, the headquarters had realized the severity of the situation and opted for the most conservative approach. Even if detaining fails, they cannot continue to send people to their deaths.

Otherwise, if a few more ghost manipulators died, the Ghost Envoy would truly become an unsolvable supernatural event.

"To put it simply, we're hoping that the ghost codenamed Ghost Painting can suppress the Ghost Domain of the Ghost Envoy, and then seize the chance to detain," said a man of average appearance squatting on the ground playing with his phone, lifting his head to reveal a pale, feeble smile.

It was like a corpse smiling, eerie and chilling.

"What really intrigues me is that Yang Jian isn't part of the operation this time. I'd prefer him as a partner over you. It's said that his Ghost Domain can now even counter-invade the Ghost Coffin. Li Jun, you can't do that, can you?" a woman with heavy makeup spoke.

Her blusher was so vividly red it looked strangely like blood about to drip down her face.

"Ghost Eye Yang Jian? Heh, that guy is a hothead. The headquarters don't trust him much. The more crucial the matter, the less likely he is to be involved. Eight times out of ten, if he works alone, he messes up," another man leaning against a nearby flickering streetlight sneered.

But Li Jun calmly stated, "Yang Jian... is a very special person. He's rebellious and not easily constrained. We are a bit more steady."

In the time it took to speak,

the quiet surroundings gradually began to turn to a hazy grey, and from the sky continuously fell some seemingly insubstantial things, like grey fog concreting, or as if clumps of cold, gloomy air. It took only a blink of an eye for everything around to be enveloped by the haze, and all that the naked eye could see had changed.

There was no color here anymore, even the dim, yellow streetlights were now grey, and they too were covered in this stuff.

Someone stretched out a hand to catch a cluster of the substance that floated in front of their eyes, lightly rubbed it in their hand, leaving a grey trace on their palm.

"This is... paper ash?" The person exclaimed softly, finding it somewhat inconceivable.

Originally, this hazy everything was formed by the drifting dispersion of ashes left after something had burnt.

"This is the Ghost Domain drawn by ghost painting."

Li Jun deeply furrowed his brow, "It seems Leuk San was much faster than anticipated; he's successfully lured the ghost painting here."

"Based on our previous judgment, there were no paintings nearby, nor had we seen any artwork, so it's highly likely we could avoid becoming a target of the ghost painting, and at the same time, this Ghost Domain could possibly suppress the Ghost Envoys, so everyone had better prepare in advance."

Looking at the constantly falling ashes around, the world had completely changed its appearance, and for some reason, Li Jun felt even more weighed down than before.

The ghost had not yet appeared.

But just the covering of Ghost Domain already exuded an air of despair like the day of reckoning.

In this hazy world, there was no vitality, no living creatures, only deathly silence, and the ash that seemed to fall endlessly.

"There's no need for discussion, if things go south, we bail." The man who had been playing with his phone stopped his actions and slowly stood up.

"Right, since Leuk San completed his task, where is he then? Why haven't we seen him?" the woman with heavy makeup inquired.

The others shifted their gaze, beginning to survey the surroundings for traces of Leuk San.

"Thud!"

However, in the next moment, what appeared to be a body suddenly fell from the grey sky above and smashed to the ground in front of everyone, instantly becoming mangled beyond recognition.

But it was still possible to discern that the corpse was Leuk San who had joined the operation earlier.

"It's not a body, but a paper effigy..." Someone went over to check and found it was an effigy made of paper, only crafted to look quite realistic, which had led the group to mistake it for an actual corpse.

"Paper effigy Leuk San." Li Jun immediately recalled the information dossier on this Leuk San.

This was a very mysterious ghost manipulator, and aside from knowing that his surname was Leuk, even his given name was false; no system records included him, and even on an identity level, no person by

this name could be verified—the Leuk San seemed to appear out of nowhere in the world, with not a single piece of information proving his existence.

Some speculated that Leuk San was merely a stand-in, with the real individual hidden away.

"An airplane can't fly for long within the Ghost Domain, Professor Wang's calculations were very accurate. After persisting to this point, the airplane completely lost control, but fortunately, as expected, the ghost painting was lured to J city."

Inside the broken paper effigy which was hollow, a yellowed hand reached out, then a twisted figure crawled out slowly from within the effigy.

Soon enough, a man in his twenties, with a waxen complexion and a somewhat sickly appearance, emerged in front of everyone.

"But the Ghost Domain of the ghost painting is very peculiar; one of my paper effigies died inside. In theory, my paper effigies are like ghosts, thought to withstand the assault from the ghost painting, but unexpectedly..." Leuk San looked at the hollow paper effigy on the ground.

The paper effigy's eyes were wide open, staring back at him with an eerie expression, as if it had died unwillingly.

"I think there's substantial concealment in foreign intelligence information."

"Where's the painting ghost?" Li Jun asked.

Leuk San pointed to the woods not far away, "The plane crashed there, it should be inside."

"Keep away from it, our target is the Ghost Envoy." Li Jun said and then headed towards the valley.

He needed to verify whether the Ghost Domain of the Ghost Envoy was suppressed; if it had failed, they would need to retreat immediately; but if successful, the next step of the detainment operation would commence.

Chapter 520 517: Variation

"The operation has begun. Will they succeed?"

Outside the city at night, this was the training base where the Ghost Envoy incident had occurred. It had long been sealed off, and its personnel had evacuated. Yet, tonight, Yang Jian revisited the old haunts, returning to the deserted training base. He stood atop the tallest building, shrouded in darkness with only a glimmer of scarlet light faintly twinkling.

Although this operation was not directly related to Yang Jian in principle, he was indeed curious to see if it would go as expected.

Curiosity is something everyone has, and Yang Jian was no exception.

Especially with such a significant event, any slip-up could bring unimaginable terror.

Even standing at a high vantage point, Yang Jian could only rely on his Ghost Eye to see everything clearly under the dim night sky, as his naked eye was not enough to discern the distant scenery.

It was a grey and misty area.

As if covered by a thin layer of fog, or like the haze that drifts through a metropolis, it didn't look unusual at a glance. However, within that grey expanse, Yang Jian saw many strange things. It didn't seem like an area overwhelmed by the Ghost Domain; rather, it resembled a world hidden beneath some peculiar veil.

Within that world were skyscrapers, roads, fields... but regardless of the scenery, everything was dead silent and grey, devoid of any other color.

"Is this an illusion formed within the Ghost Domain?"

Yang Jian's eyes flickered as he thought to himself, "But what sense would these false structures have for a ghost? In other words, if these buildings and landscapes have appeared, there must be a reason for their existence. The behavior of ghosts and those who control them are entirely different. Nothing meaningless would appear."

He had seen many ghosts' Ghost Domains, and as far as he could tell, everything in a Ghost Domain revolved around the ghost itself.

That is to say, within the Ghost Domain, ghosts have an absolute advantage in terrain.

Therefore, any changes and features within the Ghost Domain must have a reason for existing.

For instance, in the Hungry Ghost's Ghost Domain, the dark green fog carries a curse. Any who breathe it in could become cursed, even pregnant with a Ghost Infant, and become targets for ghostly pursuits.

The Door Knocking Ghost's Ghost Domain forms a space identical to the real world, with the intent of facilitating the ghost's lethal door knocking.

While Yang Jian was analyzing and pondering with the limited information he had.

Inside the grey, ghostly world.

Li Jun, Leuk San, and a few others were rapidly approaching the valley.

They needed to verify whether the Ghost Envoy's Ghost Domain had been suppressed.

"Wait, was this road here before?"

Suddenly, the heavily made up woman stopped and pointed at a winding asphalt road that joined the valley.

The road became darker as it trailed inward, and the trees lining it were densely packed in an eerie way, twisted or straight, as if a wall that didn't let any breeze through. Moreover, many of the trees were strikingly similar, as though they were produced from the same mold.

"No, this is an extra road."

Li Jun's expression darkened, "A certain unpredictable change has occurred within the Ghost Domain, and it's not a good sign."

"Of course it's not good. An S-level specter is roaming around here; we are in a highly dangerous state. One wrong move, and we could end up dead at any moment. The headquarters knows how dangerous this is, so they sent us, the spirit manipulators with strong survival capabilities, to handle it," said Leuk San, with his sickly, sallow face.

It was no accident that they had been chosen for the mission; this group had the capability to survive in almost any paranormal event.

Unless they foolishly confronted a fierce specter head-on.

"If we don't take this road, we'll have to cross this eerie forest."

Another man said slowly, "The additional road might appear dangerous, but it could be safe. Changes in the Ghost Domain are constantly happening; no one can be sure which path is the correct one. Why not try using your Ghost Domain, Li Jun?"

"Using my own Ghost Domain inside the Ghost Domain of the ghost is very limited and works poorly, even worse than walking," Li Jun said. "Besides, the situation is unclear now; it's not a good suggestion. If there is real danger, or if it becomes a critical moment to detain a fierce ghost, I will use my Ghost Domain."

"It's not far anyway, just a short distance. There's no need to waste our powers. Better to save it for a life-or-death moment. Su Fan, you choose a direction," Leuk San turned to another person.

At that moment, Su Fan was looking down at his phone, seemingly engrossed in a game to the point of addiction.

Anyone with a bit of sense would know this wasn't the time for games, yet no one stopped him.

Because they had all checked Su Fan's profile.

On Su Fan's phone, a very rudimentary and crude game was running.

The game had a first-person view, showing a deep and dark road through the eyes of the protagonist, who could be seen rapidly running forward. But there was also a hazardous warning on the side, indicating: Danger nearby.

Su Fan tapped the screen, controlling the direction of the character in the game, occasionally using some items collected earlier.

Danger was closing in...

When the warning signs changed, Su Fan used an item: a torch.

The character in the game stopped, took out a lighter, and started to ignite the torch.

Unexpectedly, the moment the protagonist halted, darkness engulfed everything around, plunging the entire screen into blackness as if the display had been turned off.

A red character then appeared, revealing: "You have died."

Su Fan's brows knit together, his complexion somewhat gloomy.

This sudden death without warning had not been the first, and this crude, unsystematic game could drive a person mad. Yet, Su Fan had no choice but to spend a great deal of time on this nauseating game each day, because it was somehow linked to reality and carried some mysterious and terrifying curse.

"Su Fan, do we have a result?" Leuk San, seeing him put down his phone, asked again.

Su Fan's face remained grave as he said, "Heading towards the Ghost Envoy will bring unknown dangers. I don't know where the danger will come from, but what I can be sure of is that once the danger arrives, there will certainly be deaths, and there won't even be a chance for self-rescue. After all, the information I get from the game in my hands is very limited. Perhaps Xiong Wenwen, who can foresee the future, is better suited for this kind of situation."

"Is that so?"

Liu Jun's expression shifted, "If that's the case, there's no need to conserve resources. We should directly use the Ghost Candle to move forward and ensure a safe passage."

After speaking, he immediately took out a red Ghost Candle.

Without hesitating, he lit it.

The sinister light of the candle illuminated this murky world, its flickering light dispelling the gloom around them. The weirdness that had been lurking in everyone's hearts instantly vanished as if some invisible, terrible danger had been temporarily forced back.

However, the Ghost Candle was burning at an alarmingly fast pace, visibly consuming itself at a rate noticeable to the naked eye.

"Without ghosts nearby, a Ghost Candle can last less than five minutes at most."

Having taken a look, Su Fan estimated, "Around three and a half minutes should be quite safe. It's really hard to imagine the impact of Ghost Painting being so substantial. During normal paranormal events, even when there are ghosts around, a Ghost Candle easily lasts half an hour."

"So we need to speed up."

Li Jun, leading with the Ghost Candle, moved quickly forward, directly taking the unknown road to the Ghost Envoy's location.

The group remained silent, simply picking up the pace to keep up.

The seemingly endless winding road was actually not that long, but as they moved along, all sorts of strange changes occurred around them.

They saw many forks in the road, and glimpses of familiar yet foreign landmarks at the ends of these branches.

There were abandoned, old city buildings, unnervingly weird old mansions, and paths leading to graveyards for the buried; they even saw shaky figures at the ends of some branches...

This place was full of unpredictable weirdness, beyond the grasp of normal thinking.

But Li Jun did not venture down these side paths. It seemed that under the cover of the Ghost Candle's light, some unknown danger was blocked, which allowed them to smoothly reach the valley.

The true location of the Ghost Envoy.

"We're here, right in this place," Li Jun stopped in his tracks, his expression growing even more solemn.

Their GPS indicated they had arrived at the destination, but the valley that Yang Jian had used to isolate the Ghost Envoy had disappeared.

In its place was a small village.

A sign stood at the head of the village road, inscribed with three characters: Huanggang Village.

"Where's the Ghost Envoy?" the woman with heavy makeup said with a trace of horror.

"We need to go back."

Feeling that something was terribly wrong, Li Jun hurriedly turned around to leave.

Su Fan, Leuk San, and the others also furrowed their brows tightly, intently staring at the sign with "Huanggang Village" written on it.

They had all read the files. This S-level paranormal event, codenamed Ghost Envoy, actually stemmed from the Ghost Coffin incident, which had occurred just outside of Dachang City in a place called Huanggang Village.

And now, this village was appearing right here.

But the Ghost Envoy had disappeared, as had the coffin-shaped Ghost Domain. Without their objective, their mission was essentially futile.

This showed that the collision of two paranormal events had led to some unpredictable, terrifying change.

Retreating was both the most prudent and the most correct action.

Although they hadn't encountered any danger on the way, the shock was evident on their faces as they turned to leave.

Very soon.

Their apprehension and premonition of unease became reality.

Having not walked far after turning around, just passing through a grey, foggy woodland, everyone discovered that a village had materialized before them again.

Huanggang Village.

"Are we trapped?" the group immediately realized their plight.

It wasn't terrible, but it was certainly not good.