

## Revival 521

### Chapter 521

Entering code name: The World of Ghost Drawing's Ghost Domain, the situation was more complicated than imagined.

Everything seen and experienced here was eerily unprecedented, and the information obtained from foreign archives was very limited, with even some important information and warnings intentionally reduced or deleted.

The information in the archives was of no help to Li Jun and his team.

They had to figure everything out for themselves.

They certainly wouldn't forget that this seemingly harmless Ghost Domain had already wiped out a top-level ghost tamer team from abroad six months ago, causing a large number of innocent people to go missing.

If it weren't for that, the incident wouldn't have been classified as an S-class paranormal event.

In the world shrouded in gray, ashes-like substances fluttered endlessly. Anything from the real world was isolated here; it was like stepping into the underworld of hell itself, and various eerie atmospheres revealed in the silence made one feel oppressively suffocated.

Li Jun, Leuk San, Su Fan... The five of them had planned to check on the Ghost Envoy, but when they reached their destination, they discovered that everything familiar had vanished.

A village appeared before them, taking the place of what should have been the Ghost Envoy.

Everyone understood what this village truly meant.

The whole village, including its buildings, was part of the ghost.

Because they knew, they stopped outside the village, not daring to move forward anymore, for fear that they might face an attack from the daunting Ghost Envoy.

"It seems we now have a situation that wasn't part of the plan. We're facing a deadlock, caught between a rock and a hard place,"

Leuk San's sickly face revealed a strange smile, "The only good news is that we haven't been attacked by the fearsome ghosts yet, be it the Ghost Envoy or the World of Ghost Drawing, things are relatively calm for now."

"But I don't think this calm will last forever, right? If something unexpected happens, we will end up like that foreign team, annihilated here. Even with our weird abilities to save our lives, it's still hard to say if we can make it out alive, after all, we're dealing with two S-class paranormal events, and nobody can be sure."

Li Jun's expression was gravely serious, the plan was to use the Ghost Domain of the World of Ghost Drawing to subdue the Ghost Envoy and then capture it. If something went wrong, they would retreat immediately. Although unexpected changes were anticipated, the probability should have been low.

Indeed.

When dealing with paranormal incidents, one can't count on luck. What you fear most often comes to pass.

"Li Jun, you're leading the team this time. Don't you have any ideas?" asked another ghost tamer; "If we need to leave now, it shouldn't be difficult, especially with Su Fan here. He should know the way out."

After speaking, he glanced at Su Fan, who was still playing with his cellphone.

But Su Fan slowly spoke up: "The way out may not be safe. It might be the most dangerous choice, but now I have a suggestion."

"Let's hear it," Li Jun immediately asked.

Pointing towards the village, Su Fan said, "Enter the village, capture the Ghost Envoy."

"Are you joking? That could get us all killed if we're not careful, and it's not as if you haven't seen the file on the Ghost Envoy," the man exclaimed.

"The original name was the Ghost Coffin incident. Who solved that?" Su Fan asked.

"It was Yang Jian. I met him half a year ago. The first time I saw him, he was outside a village. Back then, he and Feng Quan, along with another ghost tamer, successfully resolved the Ghost Coffin incident," Li Jun recounted, remembering when he first met Yang Jian and how they almost came to blows.

Back then, Yang Jian was a truly dangerous youth. He has improved a lot since, at least he has become somewhat steadier.

"If Yang Jian was able to resolve the Ghost Coffin within the village, then why can't we?" Su Fan looked at the others and said, "Back then, Yang Jian only had one ghost under his control. If he could solve it with those conditions, why can't we, a top-level ghost tamer team, solve it? Or are you all scared by the Ghost Envoy incident?"

"And I have a feeling the way out is within the village."

As he finished speaking, he put down his cellphone.

Because in the game he played just now, his character died no matter which path he took, even if he stayed put; only after entering the village did his character survive for a while.

This keen insight led Su Fan to sense that there lay the safest place.

"How sure are you?" Leuk San asked after a pause.

With no certainty, Su Fan replied, "It's only a speculation, who dares claim they're confident in the face of an event of this level? But I can feel the Ghost Envoy has been suppressed; otherwise, there wouldn't be such a change. It's the initial state of the Ghost Coffin incident. Though dangerous at the time, the Ghost Coffin could at least be captured."

"And the previous Ghost Envoy incident? It was uncapturable, unrestricted, a genuine Unsolvable Level paranormal event."

"The various changes occurring in The World of Ghost Drawing may be worse than before, but there's also a chance for a breakthrough."

Li Jun fell into thought upon hearing this suggestion.

Su Fan's point was simple: since the Ghost Envoy incident had already escalated to such severity, there is no reason for it to become worse now. This change might be a positive one, not a negative one.

We're just scaring ourselves.

"Su Fan is right. Although the archives have given us some intelligence, they can also mislead us. There's nothing to fear. If Yang Jian could capture the Ghost Coffin here, so can we. Let's enter the village, and if worst comes to worst, we'll die there," Li Jun decided, his expression steely.

This mission had to be completed. Turning around to flee might allow an escape from this place but would also mean losing the only chance to capture the Ghost Coffin.

Although it was different from the original plan.

But no matter how smart the planner, it's impossible to predict every situation; they are the ones who must make the decisions.

Enter the village?

Hearing what Li Jun said, a faint heaviness descended on the hearts of the others.

Were they to have a direct confrontation with the Ghost Envoy?

"I don't care. Dying a few more times doesn't really affect me. What if we win?"

A twisted smile spread across Leuk San's sickly face, his yellowing skin creasing like crumpled sheets of yellow paper, striking fear in the hearts of those who saw it.

"Then let's not waste words, let's move," Li Jun declared.

The others did not respond, tacitly accepting Li Jun's plan, knowing they had no room to refuse; after all, they were already involved, and backing out now would be impossible to explain to the headquarters.

Once the decision was made.

The five of them began crossing the road.

The village was extraordinarily quiet.

Not a sound to be heard, not even the chirping of an insect, which was a stark contrast to their initial visit.

"What is that?" Suddenly, Su Fan pointed at the entrance of the first house upon entering the village.

An old brick-and-tile house stood before them, its facade dimly lit, but within, a shadowy figure seemed to be watching them from the darkness, eyeing these five strangers.

"A hanged corpse."

Li Jun's gaze flickered as he saw the body of a dead person hanging from the house's beams, feet dangling off the ground and swaying slightly.

"That rope..."

But then, Li Jun's heart sank when he spotted the straw rope around the corpse's neck.

It was the same Ghost Rope that had been forcibly taken away by the Ghost Envoy at the training base, previously in Yang Jian's hands.

"It's the same one."

Li Jun even noted that the other end of the rope was wrapped with gold, a clear sign that it indeed was the genuine Ghost Rope, not merely a derivative.

"The Ghost Rope in Yang Jian's hands was in a state of revival. If there were no other ghosts to suppress it, the Ghost Rope would immediately launch indiscriminate attacks. But why is it so calm this time..." Li Jun furrowed his brows.

He had received intelligence about the Ghost Rope from Yang Jian.

"Is it because of that body?"

Finally, Li Jun's gaze returned to the body hanging beneath the beam.

Perhaps it was not really a corpse at all but an actual... ghost.

The Ghost Rope and this ghost had entered into a delicate balance.

"Keep moving forward, ignore that thing. We only have one target," Li Jun said after observing for a moment, deciding not to dwell on it and continuing ahead.

Meanwhile, he made a conjecture.

If the entire village was part of the Ghost Coffin, then the presence of the Ghost Rope here implied that the ghosts from inside the Ghost Coffin had been dispersed.

Maybe, this was truly a good opportunity.

They continued on.

In the third house of the village, they saw another figure sitting in a wooden wicker chair, its face indiscernible because although it was sitting upright, the head was twisted 180 degrees to look backward, the back of its hair-dense head facing them.

The body was already decaying; the hands resting on the wicker chair showed signs of livor mortis, and the legs were particularly stiff. A foul stench wafted from inside the house.

As if it had been dead for many days.

"Another ghost," Li Jun remarked after glancing at the body, his heart sinking once more.

The previous Ghost Rope, the hanged man it bore, and this body with its twisted head... they had hardly been in the village for long and had already confirmed the presence of at least three ghosts.

"If all these things wake up, then we..." The heavily made-up woman showed a look of unease.

Clearly, they could see that all these ordinary rural houses were inhabited not by people, but by real ghosts.

For some reason, though, these ghosts seemed to be suppressed, showing no sign of activity.

But a ghost is a ghost.

Even if they are still now, it doesn't mean they won't suddenly become active later.

"Find the Ghost Coffin. According to the files, its location should be in a house in front of the village," Li Jun said, looking down the road within the village.

The distance wasn't great, just about a thousand meters at most.

But passing by each house and seeing what was inside was enough to make one's blood run cold.

Not all houses contained something, though; some were empty.

Chapter 522 Inquiry

"No sign of activity yet?"

At this moment, on the rooftop of a tall building not far from the training base.

Yang Jian was still gazing out at the grey, foggy world from atop a concrete bollard.

Nearly an hour had passed since the start, and under normal circumstances, there should have been some result by now, after all, they weren't really combating the terrors inside, but seizing the opportunity to imprison the Ghost Envoy and then retreat.

If everything went smoothly, it would be resolved within half an hour.

The longer it took, the greater the possibility of danger.

"No matter what happens inside, as long as it doesn't spiral out of control, that's the best outcome, otherwise..."

Yang Jian turned to look back at the brightly lit city.

Dachang City's nightmare had already happened once, and nobody wanted to experience it a second time.

Moreover, if things really did get out of hand, all the ghost masters present would likely have to take action, whether willing or not. Cao Yanhua had kept everyone in J City for seven days precisely to prevent any accidents; otherwise, some would have returned to the cities they were in charge of already.

Yang Jian had come personally to see if this operation would go smoothly, precisely because he considered this possibility.

If all went well, only then could he focus on dealing with those people in the friend circle.

If not, he needed to be the first to receive the news, to be prepared for what might come next. He absolutely couldn't sit in a hotel unaware of everything.

Yang Jian was, of course, not the only one closely monitoring the situation here.

In the Black Night, several drones circled in the sky, each specially crafted to relay the situation from all directions, as no one was willing to approach this place in person.

"Let's grab something to eat first."

Yang Jian was a bit bored, and getting hungry, so he took the opportunity to leave for a while.

By the time he returned, he was holding a large bunch of kebabs and several bottles of cola.

However, just as he began to eat, there was a rustling sound behind him, as if something was climbing up to the rooftop. Soon, the sound of feet touching the ground echoed.

"Hmm?"

Yang Jian turned to look.

He saw a person with a waxy-yellow complexion, a sickly and somewhat strange expression, standing behind him with a slight smile on his face, not saying a word.

In the dimly lit environment, atop the rooftop of a tall building, the scene was particularly eerie.

To the uninitiated, it might seem as though they had encountered a ghost.

But Yang Jian didn't feel a thrill of fear, because he recognized the person; he had seen him before at the headquarters' conference table. Although he couldn't remember the name, he remembered the face.

"It's not easy to find you, Yang Jian with the Ghost Eye," the person said, his voice sounding odd and quite uncomfortable to listen to.

"Who are you?"

Yang Jian continued to eat his kebabs as he asked, not showing any sign of nervousness.

As long as it wasn't a ghost, he wasn't afraid of any person.

"My name is Leuk San. We've met before at headquarters. You might not have noticed me, but I certainly noticed you," the person claimed to be Leuk San.

But wasn't Leuk San already in The World of Ghost Drawing's Ghost Domain with Li Jun and the others? Normally, it would be impossible for him to be here.

However, Yang Jian was unaware of the names on the operation's roster since everything was classified.

"Are you looking for me?"

Yang Jian paid attention to the previous statement: "Finding me at this critical moment can't be good."

He became more vigilant, unsure whether Leuk San was from the friend circle, especially since he had just received a text message from Li Yao that afternoon.

"It's not exactly good news, but it's not bad news either. I just have some questions I'd like to ask you, Yang Jian, and I hope you can tell me without withholding anything," Leuk San said.

Leuk San didn't come any closer, knowing that Yang Jian had become wary of him.

Moving rashly in a situation where he was not trusted might get him killed by Yang Jian on the spot.

Yang Jian immediately understood his implication; "You want to probe for information? If that's the case, you should ask the headquarters. All the paranormal cases I've handled have been documented; you can easily check and find the information."

"Do you believe those files?" Leuk San's waxen face broke into a knowing smile.

"It depends," Yang Jian said casually.

"That's precisely why I want to learn about the Ghost Coffin's data and information," Leuk San said. "No one in this world knows better about the Ghost Coffin... and the Ghost Envoy than you do. After all, you are the person who imprisoned the Ghost Coffin with your own hands, and you were the one who led a group to survive the subsequent Ghost Envoy incident."

"So you think I'm hiding something?" Yang Jian asked.

"Isn't that the case?" Leuk San asked.

Drinking some water, Yang Jian replied, "Actually, you've really got me wrong there. Regarding the Ghost Coffin's records and subsequent Ghost Envoy files, I really haven't hidden anything. Because I know what I can and can't hide. The Ghost Envoy incident is extremely hazardous, and I also wanted to resolve this issue as quickly as possible."

"It's just that this ghost labeled 'Ghost Envoy' is indeed unsolvable. Even knowing all the information, everyone is still helpless against it."

Leuk San asked again, "The Ghost Envoy is unsolvable, so what about the original Ghost Coffin? How did you deal with that?"

"The Ghost Coffin? The ghost and the Ghost Coffin are one and the same. In the previous mission, I did everything I could to diminish the terror of this ghost, forcibly took away the Ghost Coffin, and stopped it from fully reviving. Strictly speaking, the ghost and the Ghost Coffin have been separated. The Ghost Coffin should now be back in Wang Xiaoming's hands. If he is cautious enough, he shouldn't allow the Ghost Envoy to contact the Ghost Coffin again, because nobody can withstand a Ghost Envoy that can restart indefinitely," Yang Jian explained.

"You're right. But the situation we're facing now is a bit special," Leuk San said.

Yang Jian frowned slightly: "The situation you're facing?"

Leuk San glanced towards the gray, murky world of the Ghost Domain: "I'm part of this operation. I, along with Li Jun, Su Fan, Ah Hong, and a few others, have gone deep into The World of Ghost Drawing's Ghost Domain and have reached an unbelievable place... the valley previously influenced by the Ghost Envoy has turned into a place called Huanggang Village."

"What?"

Yang Jian was momentarily stunned upon hearing this news.

Huanggang Village.

That was where he had encountered the Ghost Coffin incident, where he almost died in that ghastly place.

"Professor Wang's inference was correct, the Ghost Envoy was suppressed, but not to the extent we had anticipated. The Ghost Envoy didn't suppress the Ghost Domain to a point where it could be detained. Instead, it disrupted the Ghost Envoy's Ghost Domain, splitting it and forming a village. That village is very dangerous. We won't encounter any danger when we walk on the roads of the village, but the moment we set foot in any of the houses, we will immediately be attacked by vicious ghosts."

Leuk San revealed some information about the inside: "Some of the ghosts' abilities are very familiar... We even encountered that Ghost Rope of yours before."

"How do you know I have a Ghost Rope?" Yang Jian's expression shifted slightly.

"Li Jun told me."

Leuk San seriously said, "So we speculate that all the ghosts previously taken by the Ghost Envoy have now reappeared in Huanggang Village. Now, that place is even more dangerous than before."

"But these aren't the main points, right?"

Yang Jian said, "My Ghost Rope included, or any other ghost for that matter, they aren't the main targets of this time. Your target is the Ghost Envoy?"

"Exactly. The World of Ghost Drawing has dispersed the Ghost Envoy's Ghost Domain. Since it is dispersed, then the Ghost Envoy must also be in this village, and it is in a suppressed state. It's definitely not as terrifying as before. This is our best chance to confine it," Leuk San stated his purpose.

Yang Jian's gaze flickered slightly as he envisioned everything about Huanggang Village in his mind.

Every house might have ghosts.

The ghosts taken by the Ghost Envoy before all appeared in the village.

The real Ghost Envoy is hidden among them.

"Do you want to confirm the Ghost Envoy's location using me?" Yang Jian immediately understood Leuk San's intentions.

"You should know where the real Ghost Envoy is, right? We can't afford to explore each house one by one, " Leuk San said.

Yang Jian frowned: "Perhaps in that house where the Ghost Coffin was placed before."

"We've been there, encountered a violent ghost attack, but managed to confine it. It was not the Ghost Envoy," Leuk San said.

"If that's the case, I really don't know where the Ghost Envoy might appear," Yang Jian shook his head, indicating his inability to help.

He had not truly resolved the Ghost Coffin incident, instead simply left the violent ghost with the coffin. At that time, the ghost had not fully revived, so it wasn't unsolvable; it only required relinquishing the Ghost Coffin.

"Is that so? Then that's a pity," Leuk San said with some regret.

He didn't think Yang Jian was deliberately concealing anything; he really knew only that much. Even if one was personally involved, they couldn't completely understand a supernatural incident.

"Since that's the case, then we'll have to continue searching slowly."

After finishing speaking, Leuk San prepared to turn and leave.

Yang Jian quickly said, "I think you shouldn't focus entirely on the Ghost Envoy incident. Don't forget about the Ghost Drawing incident. If you don't retreat in time, getting trapped inside will lead to danger sooner or later."

"I'm aware."

After saying that, Leuk San turned and climbed down along the wall.

The moment he turned, Yang Jian's eyes narrowed. This Leuk San was actually a paper man; his back was hollow, supported only by a few wooden sticks forming a frame.

However, from the front, he looked exactly like a living person.

"He's not the real Leuk San, something like a Ghost Slave, perhaps?" Yang Jian speculated in his mind.

At that very moment.

In the eerie Huanggang Village within the World of Ghost Drawing.

Li Jun and the others stood on a road in the center of the village. In front of them was a civilian house, dark and gloomy inside, eerily silent.

This house was previously where the Ghost Coffin was placed, yet they had not found the Ghost Envoy inside it.

Although Huanggang Village remained as before, its location had changed.

"With limited information, it seems we can only search slowly," Leuk San said, looking towards the direction of the training facility and speaking unhurriedly.

"There isn't much room for error; every house may have a ghost, and no one knows if it's the Ghost Envoy or not. With at least several dozen houses here, finding the real Ghost Envoy will be very difficult," Li Jun also frowned deeply.

In his hand, he clenched a piece of paper.

It was a map he had drawn on the fly.

The map showed black areas representing the locations of houses, while several gray-white roads divided what would have been a single stretch of black into many small sections.

If one ignored the gray-white roads, the connected black areas resembled the shape of a black coffin.

And the roads dividing the Ghost Domain were not safe either.

Because this road belongs to the World of Ghost Drawing...

The stuff that floated down from the sky like gray ash accumulated on the ground to pave the roads of the village.

The gray-white surface of the road had signs of encroaching on the surrounding houses, but when it neared the dark, gloomy houses, it disappeared eerily, as if swallowed by the darkness, unable to continue spreading.

A delicate balance had formed between the Ghost Envoy and Ghost Drawing.

But this balance could not last forever. If one day the Ghost Drawing's murderous rules were triggered, the fragile balance would be shattered in an instant, and Li Jun, Leuk San, and the others could face a nightmare.

"If I could find a way to help them pinpoint the Ghost Envoy's location, maybe this mission could be a complete success," mused Yang Jian, while eating skewers on the training facility rooftop.

Confining a ghost of this caliber is not generally easy, although Wang Xiaoming's plan was very effective, brutally suppressing the Ghost Envoy's Ghost Domain to its weakest state. But without finding the Ghost Envoy's location, it remained difficult.

Searching house by house was akin to seeking death.

No one could withstand it, and time wouldn't allow it.

Chapter 523 Places That Have Been Visited

The night had not yet passed.

In the bustling metropolis, the lights were still brilliant, lively, and noisy, everything as usual.

But most people in this city would never imagine that on the outskirts of town, a bizarre event concerning the life and death of everyone was taking place.

The operation, despite being highly confidential, was not difficult to learn about for some people in certain circles.

After all, it involved an S-level event. Those who were interested were certainly not few, and it's likely that even some foreign powers were paying close attention.

However, compared to the interest in the ghost drawing event.

The top floor of Ping'an Tower.

Friends in certain circles were paying more attention to Yang Jian's movements.

"Latest intelligence: Yang Jian's location has changed. He has appeared near the ghost drawing event... The exact location is the top floor of the training base."

At the conference table, President Fei received a piece of intelligence and immediately changed his expression, "President Fang, this is a good opportunity. If he dies at this time, we can completely attribute the cause of death to this ghost drawing event."

Next to him, Jang Shangbai's face also shifted slightly as he looked aside.

He was somewhat curious about what method Fang Shiming would use to take down Yang Jian, considering Yang Jian was also a top ghost user who controlled three ghosts, and not so easily killed.

"What's the hurry?"

Sitting in a higher seat, Fang Shiming glanced over lazily: "Yang Jian is just there to observe the situation this time, with no intention to get involved in the event. If we make a move now and fail to take him down, the consequences could be very severe. I'll only act when he truly gets involved in a supernatural event."

"Only with the ghosts in the event working together with some of my methods can we ensure a foolproof outcome. We have to be meticulous in our work, President Fei. You are not a ghost user, you don't understand some things, because you can never imagine how terrifying a top ghost user on the verge of death can be. Hence, the plan against Yang Jian is shelved for today; we'll act when the opportunity is ripe."

"Our main purpose today is to observe the ghost drawing event," Fang Shiming finished and glanced at an electronic screen not far away.

On it were images transmitted from several drones.

Even though it was night, one could still discern a grayish-white world emerging in the darkness afar.

That was the World of Ghost Drawing within the Ghost Domain.

It was this ghostly thing that had wiped out a top foreign team of ghost users, leaving none alive.

And the experience of combating it had become top-secret intelligence, not recorded in the shared archives.

"The chances of successfully capturing the Ghost Envoy are not great; it's been too long, and I fear there may have been unexpected developments inside."

Jang Shangbai snorted lightly: "I previously suggested to the headquarters to take out the Coffin Nail, but my advice was ignored due to Yang Jian's meddling, and no one listened. If the headquarters pays a heavy price this time, perhaps there will be a chance to restart my plan."

"Disagreement with your proposal is not because of Yang Jian; it's because Vice Minister Cao saw through our intentions," President Fei spoke calmly: "He does not want the Coffin Nail to fall into our

circle's hands, otherwise my influence in headquarters would grow stronger. Yang Jian's involvement just happened to coincide with Cao Yanhua's wishes; he is most delighted to see someone stirring trouble."

"Moreover, retrieving that Coffin Nail would also entail the risk of the Hungry Ghost escaping, and no manager would make such a foolish decision. So forget about it, even if this operation fails, they would not agree to your plan, unless..."

"Unless the ghost drawing event and the Ghost Envoy event spiral completely out of control, leaving Cao Yanhua with no other options but to take a gamble," Fang Shiming spoke slowly.

Yang Jian, who was near the event site, was unaware of the discussion taking place within friends' circles. In his view, if they intended to make a move against him, they would at least wait until the Ghost Envoy event was thoroughly concluded; otherwise, it would all be meaningless.

Meanwhile, Li Jun and others who were temporarily trapped inside the world of the ghost drawing had no choice but to grit their teeth and press on.

Since they could not determine the location of the Ghost Envoy and simply waiting was not an option, they had to attempt to clear one building at a time—perhaps they would be fortunate enough to quickly locate the target.

It had become exceedingly dangerous, for the inhabitants of each house were no longer villagers, but wanderers, actual ghosts.

The three-story rural house stood with its doors wide open, pitch-black inside, so dark one couldn't see their own hand in front of their face, as if all light had vanished. Yet from this dark building came the sound of heavy footsteps, as if someone was walking inside, sometimes on the stairs, sometimes pacing on the roof, sometimes accompanied by strange noises.

Without a doubt, there were ghosts inside this three-story building.

"Should we continue, Li Jun? This is the seventh house we've checked, and in your state, you can't last much longer. If we keep this up, you'll quickly die at the hands of a vengeful spirit's revival," said Su Fan, who had been playing with his phone while walking, lifting his head with a hint of caution.

The few of them had teamed up, feeling their way from house to house.

This building in front of them was the seventh one they had encountered that had ghosts in it.

They had disposed of the ghosts in two of the houses, but then felt that this method was too inefficient, so they decided to explore a bit, identify the ghosts, and then retreat.

Not planning to forcibly capture all the ghosts.

Though the danger had significantly reduced and efficiency had somewhat increased, it was still terrifyingly risky.

Luckily, they were well-prepared, and with five people moving together, no one had been lost so far; they had all survived perfectly thus far.

But being alive didn't mean being unharmed.

Li Jun, leading at the front, moved sluggishly, his body dried out, resembling a corpse about to be charred, sending shivers down the spine of anyone who saw him. Through the cracks in his scorched black flesh twinkled an eerie green Ghost Flame burning within.

This green light emanating from him formed his Ghost Domain, pushing through the darkness to carve out a path.

"I bear a great responsibility for the Ghost Envoy event. If I hadn't disobeyed orders, the thing would never have escaped given the laboratory's level of security—it would have been firmly trapped inside, not becoming an unsolvable presence like it is now," Li Jun looked back slightly.

Half of his face was charred black, the flesh gone, and his eye sockets burned clean, leaving only a hollow void.

Through that void, not a trace of flesh could be seen, only a cluster of deep, endless, sinister flames.

Within the depths of the flames, many ghastly silhouettes seemed to be struggling, trying to surge forth.

"So, you're thinking of going all out?" Leuk San said.

The others understood that Li Jun was close to a ghostly revival.

To survive, he had to either pull out of this operation and seek a new balance by controlling the third ghost or die here.

There was no second possibility.

"At least I still have the right to fight for my life. I've witnessed the true horror of the Ghost Envoy. At that time, no mere effort could deal with the ghost, anyone who encountered it would die without a chance to escape. You've all seen the information clearly, this is our only chance," Li Jun turned his head resolutely and walked into the three-story building.

The pitch-black living room brightened a bit with his arrival.

The light emitted by the ominous Ghost Flame improved visibility, allowing one to see everything around clearly.

"There's really no other way." A hint of helplessness spread across Leuk San's sickly face.

He had no choice but to follow Li Jun in.

After all, Li Jun was leading the operation, and his room to refuse was limited, but most importantly... Li Jun might die, but Leuk San would not.

The dim lobby felt somewhat cramped with their arrival, and they also noticed that the noises inside the house had ceased. There were no footsteps, no sounds from the stairs, as if the noises they had heard at the entrance were illusions.

"The ghost is on the second floor."

The next moment, Su Fan's phone game indicated his character happily bouncing up the dark stairs, but when he arrived on the second floor, the screen suddenly flashed.

It displayed "Character has died, please restart."

The unexpected death of the game character implied that danger lurked on the second floor.

"The ghost is upstairs?" Everyone now looked up at the ceiling in unison.

Separated from the ghost by just one wall, less than five meters away. There were many of them, but this pressure made everyone's hair stand on end.

What kind of ghost would they encounter this time?

"I'll go upstairs first." Under the eerie light, Leuk San's sallow complexion seemed even more sinister, but he seriously took on the task of leading the way.

Because only he had a high probability of surviving if he encountered an attack from the ghost first.

The others had no objections, and quickly stabilized their formation, with someone leading the way, another covering the rear, and a third on standby for emergencies.

All of them were highly strung.

Leuk San ascended the stairs with steady steps, free from any panic or excessive nervousness.

Indeed, his psychological quality was very high.

The brief climb was uneventful, and Leuk San reached the hallway on the second floor, where he saw two rooms.

The rooms had old wooden doors, which couldn't close properly and were left ajar.

But at the doorways, Leuk San noticed many footprints.

The footprints were haphazard, marked with some gray-white ash, as if brought in from the outside.

"Could the ghost inside have gone outside?" Leuk San's expression changed.

Outside was The World of Ghost Drawing. According to previous speculation, the ghosts in the Ghost Coffin were trapped in these dark houses and couldn't leave. But these scattered footprints suggested that something had indeed gone out and had even picked up the ash from outside.

Although Leuk San was filled with doubts, he didn't stop. Instead, he approached the room with the messy footsteps.

If the ghost wasn't powerful, they could incarcerate it immediately.

And if the incarceration failed, they'd just retreat to the street.

The ghost couldn't possibly follow them out.

However, when he cautiously pushed open the door, what he found made his eyes suddenly shrink, and his heart clenched fiercely.

A figure, identical in appearance to him, with a battered body as though deceased, stood at the doorway, staring out with lifeless, ashy eyes, emitting an extraordinary terror.

Yet when Leuk San looked closely, he couldn't help but step back several paces.

This replica of him wasn't a corpse, nor a human, but a lifelike paper effigy.

Not just the one at the doorway, but within were scattered heaps of ragged paper effigies. Though damaged, Leuk San recognized that each one resembled him, and he was certain that he had crafted these effigies himself.

Messy ash-laden footprints at the entrance, and inside, paper effigies tattered and torn as if long since dead.

In an instant, a terrifying thought crossed Leuk San's mind: "I've been here before, and not just once."

Chapter 524 I love you

After exploring for so long, Li Jun and the others had thought that although they hadn't successfully completed the plan, they had still created some hope.

In this village with only so many households, as long as their luck wasn't too bad, it wouldn't be difficult to find the Ghost Envoy by simply groping their way forward—of course, that was assuming nothing unexpected happened with the ghost paintings.

But what none of them had expected to find inside this house, suspected of being haunted, were many incredibly bizarre and inexplicable things.

One after another, paper effigies, each incomplete.

Every paper effigy bore the likeness of Leuk San, with a sickly yellow pallor and a lifeless gaze. On what remained of their expressions were traces of terror mingled with disbelief, creating an especially eerie scene under the greenish glow of Li Jun's Ghost Flame.

One, two, three... a total of five paper effigies.

Leuk San's face grew grave as he counted them.

"Five times, we have come to this house a total of five times," he said with a trembling voice, because this was a terrifying scene beyond his comprehension.

No paranormal event they had handled before had ever undergone such an incredible change.

The others, staring at the five paper effigies in the room, fell silent and somber.

"Impossible, Leuk San, your conjecture must be wrong. This is the first time we've come here; we've never been here before, I remember clearly," Su Fan immediately interrupted from behind, dismissing his speculation.

Perhaps the familiar paper effigy had made Leuk San think of some horrific truth.

But he simply couldn't agree with Leuk San's guess.

Leuk San said urgently, "If we have never been here, why would my paper effigy be left behind? Each time I am killed by a ghost, a paper effigy would take my place in death. Now there are five, which means I have been killed by ghosts five times since entering here, but from before until now, I haven't been killed even once."

"Has our memory been compromised? Or did we encounter the Ghost Envoy before, fail to contain it, leading to it restarting, and now we are repeatedly living through our past experiences?"

Restart?

The Ghost Envoy indeed has this strange ability.

But such a restart is only self-applicable to the Ghost Envoy and can't affect others, let alone everyone's memory.

"Leuk San, that's just a guess from your personal perspective. If we've been here before, not just you, but we all should have left some trace," Li Jun said coolly.

The others fell into silence.

Although they hadn't found any personal traces in this house, the appearance of Leuk San's five paper effigies was incredibly peculiar, as if something indeed had killed Leuk San five times here, and their current visit constituted the sixth.

Had they truly been here before, triggering some kind of restart by the ghost?

Or was there another reason for this situation to occur?

Incomprehensible.

Yet Leuk San's words had reminded everyone.

"Let's get out of here. Regardless of whether we've been here before, a change we can't understand has occurred again in Huanggang Village. This change is quite bad, and if we don't leave now, we might find ourselves unable to leave at all," Su Fan put down the phone he was holding, which lit up, and after a moment of silence, made a cautious suggestion.

"Makes sense. If Leuk San's guess is true, then we can't even trust our own memories anymore. Containing the Ghost Envoy would be a joke at this point, and moreover... the Ghost Candle is still out there," another man said.

Before he could finish, he glanced outside the house.

The sky remained a drab gray, the whole world devoid of color and void of any sound, oppressively silent to the point of fear.

Most people would be scared to death just coming to this place, let alone searching for malevolent ghosts in this unknown land.

The pressure was unimaginable.

Li Jun was now faced with a difficult decision.

As the team leader on this occasion, he had to make a choice when faced with a split decision.

Should they continue searching this terrifying village, or should they leave immediately?

Each choice carried a price. Leaving would mean mission failure, but continuing could potentially lead to the total annihilation of the team here.

The Ghost Candle incident had already wiped out a team before; there was precedent.

"Leaving now would be such a pity. The Ghost Envoy's realm has been suppressed, Professor Wang's plan has succeeded; we just need to ascertain the location of the Ghost Envoy. We can resolve this S-level paranormal event. If we miss this chance... there will never be another, and we can't afford to lose this time," Li Jun's expression shifted as he finally clenched his teeth and spoke.

If it were anywhere else, pulling out would be the end of it.

But here was different. The city not far behind them absolutely couldn't be dragged into a paranormal event. Otherwise, the consequences would be ten times worse than the previous Hungry Ghost incident.

"Are we risking our lives?"

The others stiffened upon hearing this.

From Li Jun's words, it wasn't difficult to see that this time they were resolved to confront the Ghost Envoy, risking total annihilation if necessary.

At that very moment,

Without waiting for further debate, in the midst of the silent environment, a clear sound of footsteps came from the next room.

The sudden appearance of footsteps instantly silenced everyone, and they all stared in unison at the opposite end of the corridor.

Five people, not a single one moved.

But the footsteps continued to echo.

The sound was heavy and stiff, lacking the lightness of the living, as if a walking corpse was on the move.

"Creak!"

The wooden door of the room next door seemed to have been pushed open by something, and the sound of the old hinges scraping against each other jarred everyone's nerves.

Ghost!

The earlier judgment was correct; the ghost was indeed on the second floor.

It was only Leuk San's opening of the first room and the discovery of five paper effigies that influenced everyone's actions. Otherwise, how could they possibly have failed to inspect the second room?

By this point, everyone was prepared to be attacked by the ghost.

However, the wooden door of the second room stopped moving halfway open.

Through the half-open door, they could see nothing but darkness, and at the same time, the footsteps inside ceased.

"I'll go." Without a word, Leuk San simply gave the others a look and moved forward.

The distance was short, no more than five meters; just a few steps were needed to open the half-closed wooden door.

Leuk San was confident he could survive an attack by the ghost. This was risking life for information, for the ghosts in this house might not be Ghost Envoys, and their usual tactics might not apply.

But just as Leuk San was about to act, Li Jun pulled him back and shook his head.

"Why?" Leuk San frowned, voicing his confusion.

Li Jun's face was stern as he immediately lit the Ghost Candle.

If Leuk San's guess was true and they had been here before, then would Leuk San's action also end up like the previous unremembered incidents, dying here and leaving behind a paper effigy?

With that in mind, changing the plan of action might affect the outcome.

So, whether the restarts not remembered were real or not, Li Jun had to break the pattern they had been following.

The Ghost Candle was the item that ensured everyone's safety.

There was no reason to conserve it now.

The next moment.

The flame of the Ghost Candle lit up, instantly dispelling the chilling, uneasy aura surrounding them.

"This burning speed is off," Li Jun's eyes narrowed when he saw how slowly the Ghost Candle was burning.

The burn rate was too slow to suggest the presence of ghosts nearby.

"Together."

Li Jun gave a low shout and charged forward, kicking the ajar wooden door wide open.

A loud noise reverberated through the dark room.

The next moment, five people rushed in.

The light of the Ghost Candle illuminated the darkness, simultaneously bolstering their confidence that they wouldn't be annihilated.

But after everyone charged in, the dim room was empty save for some old furniture and some farm tools that hadn't been used in years.

"Nothing here? Impossible," someone exclaimed in shock.

They had clearly heard footsteps and seen the door being pushed open.

"Clack!"

At this moment,

An old portrait hanging on the wall fell to the floor.

It was an elderly person's portrait, a common sight where portraits were kept in rural homes to commemorate deceased elders.

The fallen portrait lay quietly on the floor.

In the eerie candlelight, the face of the old person in the portrait appeared blurred and strange, with the upper half enshrouded in darkness obscuring the features, but the lower half seemed to carry a faint smile. This smile, though seemingly kind, exuded a bone-chilling horror.

Beside the portrait, there were also some illegible inscriptions.

They seemed to be the elder's birth and death dates, details about descendants, and the like.

Chapter 525

A portrait?

No, to be precise, it was an effigy.

All eyes were focused on it, with expressions of solemnity and hesitation on their faces.

The only thing in the room that seemed peculiar was this effigy. Could it be that the commotion earlier had been caused by this effigy?

Looking at the dim visage of the elderly person on the effigy, a chilling sensation gradually crept up.

This was definitely not the Ghost Envoy!

Everyone had this thought in their minds and were extremely certain of it.

Because the information on the Ghost Envoy was already well-understood, the difficulty lay in how to detain it, but this... seemed like a bizarre thing they had never encountered before.

"A newly discovered ghost?" Li Jun frowned, hesitant to get too close, and looked at the Ghost Candle in his hand.

The flame was still burning steadily, indicating that there were no ghosts around.

But if there were no ghosts, then what was this eerie effigy in front of them?

The information simply didn't match up.

"Regardless of whether this effigy is problematic, the surest method is to lock it up to prevent any accidents from happening later," Leuk San immediately said, taking out a carry-on bag he had brought.

It was made of gold.

Due to gold's excellent malleability, it was more suitable for carrying around.

"Makes sense, let's pack this thing up first, then leave this room. There's something wicked about this place, and I have a very bad feeling," Su Fan said, holding up the illuminated screen of his phone.

The screen continued to display a game that was still running, but the main character in the game had already been shown as dead.

Death came inexplicably, without a single clue to be found.

This kind of sudden death was not new to Su Fan, it usually signified extreme danger nearby. He would never have come to such a place under normal circumstances; if it weren't for this mission he had, he would have already left this place by now.

"Interesting, the vanishing ghost, the mysterious effigy... The changes are becoming greater. This is no longer simply a Ghost Envoy incident, what we may truly be facing isn't a Ghost Envoy, but something else, there are too many uncertain factors," the woman with heavy makeup spoke softly.

While she was speaking, Leuk San had already picked up the effigy from the ground.

"Be careful," Li Jun cautioned.

"The Ghost Candle is stable, no immediate danger," Leuk San briefly glanced at it, speaking calmly.

His ability to confront danger was strong, and he alone could so carelessly handle such terrifying objects. If it had been anyone else, they might very well have been attacked by a ghost and died on the spot.

"If nothing is wrong, that's good."

When Leuk San was about to put the effigy away, curiosity sparked and he took a closer look, which made him involuntarily let out a soft exclamation and stop his movements.

"What's up?" Su Fan asked from nearby.

"Nothing, I think I've just made a new discovery."

Leuk San noticed there seemed to be some dust on the effigy, obscuring part of it; he gently wiped away the dust, wanting to reveal some of the content next to it, as he realized the background behind the effigy looked somewhat familiar.

With the dust gone, the full image of the elderly man was revealed.

It was an elderly male, his face covered in wrinkles, looking listless as if it were a photograph of a corpse, yet his eyes were open with a smile on his lips, as if he was strangely observing his surroundings. No matter the angle, it seemed like the old man was watching you, sending a chill down the spine of the observer.

And the backdrop of this effigy was a gloomy, lightless house.

The door of the house on the first floor was wide open, pitch-black inside, exactly like the house they were currently in; it seemed as if the effigy had been photographed at the entrance of this very house.

Leuk San's eyelids twitched slightly; his focus not on the house that was identical in the background, but rather on the enigmatic figures standing behind the elderly man in the effigy.

There were two on the left and three on the right.

In total, five people.

These five individuals were only a blurred silhouette, like an oil painting not very clear, but one could still discern some of their physical features.

One had indistinct facial features with a waxen complexion; another one was holding a candle with a green flame burning atop it; another held a mobile phone in their hand...

"This is us... the five of us..."

Leuk San's pupils contracted, feeling a bursting sensation in his scalp and an indescribable chill in his heart.

This was even more frightening than the sight of the five effigies in the observation room before.

"How can this be, are we five also in this effigy?" Fearing danger, Li Jun took the Ghost Candle closer; as he saw the scene, he too was instantly struck with suspicion.

"When did this happen? What kind of joke is this, that we've actually taken a photo with a ghost?" Su Fan leaned over for a look and immediately became uneasy.

Because this eerie portrait seemed to be foreshadowing something.

Take a photo?

When it came to taking photos, Li Jun immediately thought of that eerie camera at the headquarters, which was said to be able to capture fierce ghosts and imprison them within the photos upon success.

But the current situation was clearly not caused by the Ghost Camera, since that thing was still at the headquarters, and they hadn't brought it with them on this mission.

There must be some other reason for this occurrence.

"Leuk San, stop looking. Pack up the things; we need to leave here immediately," Li Jun decided to cut the Gordian knot without understanding this strange moment, deciding to deal with the current situation first and foremost.

He put the eerie portrait into a bag, sealed it, and then immediately turned to leave.

"Everyone, follow up. We've finished exploring this house. We have no time to waste here. Let's move on to the next one; we must find the Ghost Envoy as quickly as possible."

The others were eager to leave this eerie house.

Other houses were scary, but at least the situations were understandable. It was either haunted or not. If there were ghosts, they just had to determine whether it was a Ghost Envoy. However, the situations that occurred in this house were quite unusual.

The five paper figures of Leuk San's death, the fallen portrait, and the figures of five people on the portrait...

However, when they quickly exited the house and arrived at the front gate, what they saw made them come to an abrupt halt.

An indistinct black shadow was right now standing not far from the gate, back facing the group, stiff and unmoving. From that blurry silhouette, it could roughly be discerned that the figure was an elder.

The elder's silhouette, cloaked in the darkness of the house, standing behind five people...

This scene?

Shock colored the faces of Li Jun, Leuk San, Su Fan, and the other two.

It was exactly like the eerie portrait they saw earlier.

Could it be that the dead people on the portrait weren't referring to the elder but to them, the five of them?

And the worst part was that the Ghost Candle Li Jun was holding now flickered wildly, burning fiercely as if expanding in size and consuming at a speed visible to the naked eye.

The illogical burning rate proved one thing.

Ghosts were nearby.

"We're in trouble now..." Su Fan's complexion was awful as he clutched his cell phone tightly.

He was beginning to understand why he could never clear the game on his phone; every attempt ended in death, no matter how many times he tried to resurrect and restart.

Away from the safety of their own people, they had never escaped the danger.

The ghosts were beside them.

At this very moment.

Outside this Ghost Domain.

Yang Jian had already finished eating his skewered food, and he still saw no signs of improvement in the situation around him.

The Ghost Painting's Ghost Domain persisted, and there was no good news coming through the phone either.

And it had been three hours since the operation back at headquarters began.

Frankly, that was a bit too long.

"Have we failed?" Yang Jian tossed away his bamboo skewer and stood up with a grave expression.

He had dealt with many supernatural incidents and might not be sensitive to other matters, but he had absolute say in this kind of situation.

From his experience, he could tell that the team sent out by headquarters had definitely encountered a huge problem.

Maybe they had been wiped out.

Maybe they were still clinging to life.

Maybe only a few people were left alive.

But no matter what the outcome, unless something unexpected happened, this operation essentially had failed.

The collision of two Class S supernatural events was indeed too dangerous.

"Time to make some preparations, and I hope Wang Xiaoming has some kind of contingency plan, or else there will be big trouble," Yang Jian now turned, planning to leave.