

Revival 531

Chapter 531 528: The Danger by Your Side

In the dimly lit street, a small cluster of candlelight exuding a sinister aura floated towards him, held above someone's head from afar, moving steadily closer.

The candlelight swayed uncertainly under the cool night breeze, as if it would extinguish at any moment, yet for some reason, each time it seemed about to go out, the flame stubbornly reignited.

Zong Shan was walking alone at the moment, with the road in front of him seeming to stretch endlessly into the dark depths ahead.

And with the Ghost Candle held above his head, he was rapidly distancing himself from the massive and bustling city behind him.

But his mood right now was far from good.

After walking just a short while, Zong Shan's entire body was drenched in cold sweat; because of excessive tension, his body had started to disobey him and seemed somewhat stiff.

This situation arose because he was bearing an unimaginable pressure.

The source of the pressure wasn't from the flickering, vulnerable candle above his head but from a succession of heavy, rigid footsteps coming from behind him.

Ghosts had always been following Zong Shan from start to finish.

He didn't dare to turn his head, nor even dare to make unnecessary noise, let alone any redundant body movements, which he tried to avoid as much as possible.

Nobody knew the killing pattern of the ghost behind him.

Once truly targeted, Zong Shan was well aware he could not withstand an attack from the ghost; even though he was a ghost controller, it would only take a few seconds to be killed on the spot.

"Zong Shan, hold on, someone will replace you the instant the Ghost Candle burns out. Now just continue straight along this road," came a voice.

"Someone has already paved a way for you through the Ghost Domain; you don't need to take a detour."

"The plan is very successful. The ghost has been following you the entire time; Chen Yi's method is very effective. Using Guo Fan as a medium indeed reduces the risk of being killed instantly when using the Ghost Candle."

From the satellite phone came a succession of unfamiliar voices.

The headquarters were already aware of the success of the plan.

Even though there was not a single soul around, various preparations had been made. As long as Zong Shan kept walking like this, the plan would be successfully completed.

Even if there were an interruption now, most of the plan would still be successful.

Because the danger was already moving away from the city.

"It seems that there won't be any more unexpected mishaps this time. Just draw that thing away, and for now, don't think about containment," said Cao Yanhua in the conference room, looking at the images transmitted from the scene and listening to Chen Yi's report, finally heaving a sigh of relief.

After speaking, he turned to Wang Xiaoming, "We owe a lot to Professor Wang's proposal this time. It was risky, but fortunately, it turned out to be all right without mishap."

"It's unlikely that Guo Fan will survive this incident," Wang Xiaoming didn't respond, instead choosing to say.

Cao Yanhua's eyes flickered slightly, "Although nobody wishes for it, some things are inevitably accompanied by sacrifices."

"No, that's not what I mean," Wang Xiaoming said, his expression unusually calm. In his view, the death of a ghost controller was of no significance, especially one like Guo Fan who couldn't affect the overall situation.

"Professor Wang is interested in the object on Guo Fan, right?" spoke team leader Shen Liang with a light smile, "That special spirit tablet... Even though it has a ghost attached to it, it is still a rather special item, usually possessing a certain controllability, worthwhile for research."

Wang Xiaoming didn't deny it and directly said, "I've always been very interested in the spirit tablet Guo Fan had; its material is quite special."

"Special?"

The consultant Zhao Jianguo, who had set aside his newspaper, commented with a curious glance, "It should be quite ordinary, after all, the special aspect of such objects is not in the material. I have reviewed the data on the spirit tablet; it's made of quite common wood."

"Indeed," Wang Xiaoming acknowledged, "but after the appearance of the Ghost Coffin, the spirit tablet in Guo Fan's hands became unusual. Yang Jian had visited Huanggang Village; he saw the original Ghost Coffin, and at that time, there was also a spirit tablet in front of the coffin, with a photo on it. The portrait on the photo had been reported, and the operator Liu Xiaoyu had also searched for the person in the portrait..."

"Of course, it's impossible to find the person in the portrait in reality, because that could be what the ghost looked like, and the spirit tablet from Huanggang Village was just something within the Ghost Domain, not real. However, the appearance of the Ghost Domain must refer to something real, so we cannot deny that at one time, during a certain period, such a spirit tablet was placed in front of a Ghost Coffin."

"Coffins, spirit tablets, portraits of ghosts, materials nearly identical, products of one era—I don't believe in such coincidences, especially concerning supernatural events," he continued.

This reminder caused the faces of several people present to change drastically.

At the same time, a previously discussed topic surfaced in their minds.

Ghost puzzle!

At the beginning of supernatural occurrences, the origins of ghosts always involved fragmented objects, such as incomplete shadows, incomplete heads, broken limbs... these events were of limited danger and relatively easy to resolve.

But now, as the horror escalated, the incomplete ghosts were becoming more and more whole.

Some had suggested that the real ghost might have been scattered, appearing in this world in a fragmented form.

Of course, this hypothesis lacked solid evidence for proof, as the events involved were too complex and often incomprehensible, impossible to validate through speculation and superficial evidence alone.

"If there is a connection between the two, then involving Guo Fan in the operation might have been a mistake," Shen Liang said, frowning.

In the face of such a high-level event, it was crucial to avoid any accidents as much as possible.

"No, it's because of this that I suggested Guo Fan take part in this operation," Wang Xiaoming said, his expression still calm, a glint in his eye indicating a different notion forming in his mind.

"I was hoping to witness something special happen."

Cao Yanhua spoke gravely, "So do you think Guo Fan's loss of control is related to this?"

Under normal circumstances, it seemed improbable for Guo Fan to lose control during the operation, but this time, an exception occurred.

Was it a deliberate calculation by Wang Xiaoming?

Or was it a carefully planned experiment of his?

Or perhaps the successful retrieval of the Ghost Coffin, coupled with the spirit tablet in Guo Fan's hands, had sparked a new research interest in Professor Wang, prompting him to willingly let Guo Fan be sacrificed in this operation.

Although the likelihood was small.

But if Wang Xiaoming deemed Guo Fan's worth inadequate during his assessment of value, such an outcome still had a chance of occurring.

Just like the time when Yang Jian and his peers nearly met their end in Huanggang Village.

Wang Xiaoming did not answer; he simply remained silent.

"Now might not be the best time to discuss this. Since the operation is going smoothly, it's time to bring them out... I hope they're all still alive."

Cao Yanhua's expression shifted slightly as he immediately stood up, "Let's pause the meeting. Professor Wang and I will step out for a moment."

Having said that, he and Wang Xiaoming rose and left the conference room.

The old man known as Old Qin also departed with them.

"Indeed, they had prepared some contingency plans for rescuing people. Professor Wang must have anticipated the risks involved in this operation," Shen Liang said with a shake of his head and a smile upon seeing them leave.

"Nobody can afford the cost of wiping out an elite team of ghost controllers. Isn't that why the Ghost Painting incident was classified as an S-level event? Professor Wang's planning of this operation must have been well-considered," Zhao Jianguo stated.

Shen Liang thought of Guo Fan, and his gaze darkened slightly, "But he has considered too much. Who knows what he's up to. The recent talk about the Ghost Coffin and spirit tablets might have been just for our ears, the real purpose may be known to no one, after all, we're not on equal footing with him either in terms of information or intellect."

"It's not nice to speak ill of Professor Wang behind his back," someone remarked.

"It's worse to be targeted by him. I think the only person who dares to deal with him might be Yang Jian, after all..." Shen Liang stopped mid-sentence.

It was better not to bring up the past animosity between Yang Jian and Wang Xiaoming.

At this very moment.

A special place deep underground.

This was where some paranormal objects were stored, a location Yang Jian had visited before.

Cao Yanhua, Wang Xiaoming, and Old Qin reached a small room in this place.

Through the dark yellow glass window, one could see an old wooden door placed inside.

The door was thoroughly restrained with chains wrapped around it.

However, the door standing on the floor occasionally trembled slightly, as if something behind it was trying to force its way out.

"Thanks for your effort, Old Qin," said Cao Yanhua, who spent some time unlocking the door before speaking gravely.

"Hehe, no need to thank me, it's just a trivial matter," chuckled Old Qin as he walked into the small room.

As soon as he entered, Cao Yanhua immediately closed the door behind him.

The wooden door inside was codenamed Ghost Gate, and it was an extremely dangerous object.

But dangerous objects can also represent enormous value, depending on how you use them.

In the small room, Old Qin now leisurely began to remove the chains wrapped around the wooden door, using his walking stick.

As the restraints lessened, the vibrations from the other side of the door increased in intensity.

It was as if the door was eager to be opened at any moment.

"This is the first time we're using such a dangerous item, I hope nothing unexpected happens," said Cao Yanhua with some concern.

"There's always a chance of accidents in anything, nobody can guarantee 100% safety," Wang Xiaoming stated calmly. "Dealing with these ghostly things inherently involves risk. Prepare to time it, we'll start the first door opening in sixteen minutes."

Cao Yanhua checked his watch and noted the time promptly.

The countdown of sixteen minutes immediately began, and in the room, Old Qin was nearly done unwrapping the chains from the door...

Although there were still more than ten minutes to go, Cao Yanhua didn't dare to let his guard down, his gaze constantly on his watch.

"By the way, while no one's around, there's something you need to be aware of," Wang Xiaoming suddenly spoke.

"What's that needs to be discussed at this time?"

Wang Xiaoming said, "I wanted to bring it up at the conference table, but I thought that would be too dangerous. There are too many uncertainties, and I don't completely trust even you. I have to take a risk and let only you know; it's relatively safer that way."

"If it's that serious, then tell me," said Cao Yanhua as he slightly lifted his head.

Wang Xiaoming glanced at the wooden door in the small room and slowly said, "There's an issue with Zhao Jianguo."

"What does that mean?" Cao Yanhua asked, somewhat puzzled.

Wang Xiaoming replied, "What it sounds like. He has a problem with himself, I suspect he has been invaded by a ghost, not in his body but here." He pointed to his own head as he spoke.

"Are you joking? Is there any evidence?" Cao Yanhua's eyes narrowed instantly.

"He was reassigned to be a receptionist at the training base after a work mistake... and soon after that, my lab ran into trouble. I didn't think too much about it at the time due to the emergency, but in retrospect, what if the Ghost Coffin malfunction wasn't an accident?"

"In other words, who knew I had left the lab at that time, and who had the ability to infiltrate it directly?"

"The only people who have had contact with me were Li Jun, Yang Jian, Zhao Jianguo, and a few security guards at the training base. But the security guards died in the Ghost Coffin incident, so they can't be suspects. The only possible suspects are those three, as they not only had contact with me but were also participants in the Ghost Coffin incident," Wang Xiaoming explained.

"You have no suspicions about Yang Jian?" asked Cao Yanhua, his expression extra grave.

"If I said he was suspected, you, as the deputy minister, might think I'm trying to settle scores through others, especially since we've had some unpleasant history," Wang Xiaoming spoke calmly.

"Unfortunately, he's the least likely suspect, even less so than the possibility of me being compromised."

"So you're suggesting that our headquarters has been infiltrated by... a ghost?" gritted Cao Yanhua.

"It's inconclusive for now, it's just a theory," Wang Xiaoming responded. "I'm not very good at dealing with this sort of thing, so it's up to you, the deputy minister, to decide and address the situation. After all, if this is mishandled, it could lead to a disaster. My research must continue, and I cannot get involved in this mess."

"Besides, now is not the time to think about this; watch the time, the moment to open the door for the first time is upon us."

Caught in contemplation, Cao Yanhua suddenly snapped back to reality.

He quickly turned his attention back to his watch, ready for Old Qin to open the Ghost Gate for the first time.

Chapter 532

The old wooden door placed in this room looked very ordinary, but it was actually filled with weirdness and incomprehensible horror.

Cao Yanhua even remembered clearly the great cost incurred to resolve the incident code-named Ghost Gate. If it weren't for the consideration that sometimes this object could be of help, he would never allow this wooden door to remain here; he would have sealed it up thoroughly long ago.

"Four more minutes," he stared intently at the time on his watch.

The time agreed upon in the previous plan was about to arrive.

After four minutes, Old Qin, who was in the room, would open the Ghost Gate for the first time.

The purpose of opening the Ghost Gate this time was simple: to bring Li Jun, Su Fan, Leuk San, and others back from some unknown place.

Although they had lost contact with the group by now, and it was suspected that vengeful ghosts had appeared outside after their resurgence, it couldn't be guaranteed that the five ghosts that emerged from the ghost painting were indeed them. What if they weren't?

As long as that possibility existed, the operation could not be canceled.

"A maximum of three opportunities to open the gate, with the next opening scheduled ten minutes after the first, and the third time half an hour after the second. If they don't return after the three openings..." Cao Yanhua's heart was uneasy.

Three chances to open the Ghost Gate without bringing back Li Jun and the others would be enough to prove that they were truly dead.

Even if they weren't dead, the rescue operation would be canceled. After all, opening the Ghost Gate was a tremendous risk, and endlessly gambling on the possibility that they were still alive simply wasn't worth it.

Time passed by bit by bit.

Soon, the first retreat time set in the plan arrived.

"Old Qin, time's up. Count silently for ten seconds, then open the gate," Cao Yanhua ordered.

Old Qin's face was wrinkled, his skin covered with age spots, and his slightly cloudy gaze moved slightly, revealing a sense of gravity.

Ghost Gate.

It was one of the few things he felt uncertain about because no one knew what would come out once the Ghost Gate was opened.

But most likely, ghosts would appear.

After silently counting for ten seconds, Old Qin put his hand on the door panel.

Rough, chilly, a restive tremor came from the other side of the wooden door, and one could even faintly hear the sound of sharp nails scraping across the wood.

However, the reality was that there was nothing behind the wooden door; it was simply standing upright on the ground.

The old wooden door lacked a handle, so Old Qin could only pull on the door panel to open it.

It didn't require much effort, just a gentle tug.

Suddenly,

A strong force seemed to come from behind the door. This force slammed into the door panel, causing the ajar door to burst open with a bang.

A chill wind blew out in an instant.

Old Qin narrowed his eyes slightly and instinctively took a step back.

The condition of the Ghost Gate after opening was now fully revealed to the few people present.

It was an area of darkness as thick as ink, like an abyss, or perhaps the entrance to hell. Even if you opened your eyes wide and shone the brightest light, you could not see anything hidden within the darkness. Everything could only be sensed through the wooden door.

On ordinary days, this old wooden door was like a clear boundary that separated the bizarre darkness from the world of reality.

However, now, this boundary was broken as the door opened.

"One minute, open for a maximum of one minute. Whether or not they come out, it must be closed," Cao Yanhua watched the darkness behind the wooden door and the time in his hand.

Wang Xiaoming seemed quite interested. He stood at the entrance of the room, looking through the yellowish window glass at the darkness behind the door.

Even for him, it was his first time witnessing the scene after the wooden door was opened.

But not even a minute passed.

The room's lights began to dim rapidly, barely a dozen seconds after the wooden door was opened, as if the darkness was eroding outwards.

"Hiss hiss!"

The very next moment, even the lights became unstable. The electricity flickered as if it was being interfered with.

"Is it already affecting the environment around it so quickly?" Wang Xiaoming thought somewhat pensively.

Fortunately, this room was specially constructed. Although the light inside had dimmed, the outside was unaffected by any of the eeriness or terror; everything was isolated.

Should there truly arise an uncontrollable situation, the danger would absolutely not spread out.

Old Qin's gaze was fixed on the darkness behind the wooden door, as if waiting for something to happen.

Another dozen seconds passed.

Ripples seemed to emerge from the eerie depths of darkness, and the door frame of the Ghost Gate began to tremble slightly as if something touched it, causing a small disturbance.

But that disturbance had just begun.

Suddenly,

Several fingers, greenish and blackened as if belonging to a dead person, stretched out from the darkness and clutched rigidly onto the door frame, squirming bit by bit. The sound of wood cracking resonated from the solid frame as the ghastly fingers scratched through the dark red paint, leaving behind terrifying marks.

Old Qin's expression shifted slightly, but he remained calm, leaning on his cane and watching the eerie scene unfold.

He had experienced too much. Even if a real ghost stood in front of him, he would not panic too much.

But such a scene was just the beginning.

Not even ten seconds had passed when more fingers emerged from the darkness. These fingers, like wriggling worms, densely covered the entire doorway, each one clinging tightly to the wooden frame, making a creaking noise.

The Ghost Gate shook more violently, as if countless figures were emerging from within the darkness.

The light in the room was so dim it was terrifying, as if one were in the midst of the Ghost Domain.

"Twenty seconds, twenty seconds left, close the wooden door as soon as time is up, or earlier if there's danger," Cao Yanhua, shocked and scared by the scene unfolding, shouted urgently from outside the room.

Clearly, this opening of the Ghost Gate did not bring out Li Jun, Su Fan, Leuk San, and the others, but instead triggered an invasion of ghosts.

But a plan is a plan, and it can't be changed just because of subjective judgment; after all, no one knows what might happen next. Perhaps amidst danger, there remains a sliver of hope.

As the deputy head, he would not allow an elite team of ghost controllers to be annihilated in this incident. Therefore, they had to seize any glimmer of hope that remained.

The number of fingers appearing on the doorframe had reached its limit; there was no more space for those eerie fingers to land on.

Then, right after that, in the corner to the right of the doorframe, a circular outline slowly emerged from the darkness.

Upon closer inspection.

It was a rotten head that was far from normal looking, with thick black hair that was so dense it was frightening, completely obscuring the face of the head. All that could be smelt was a foul stench, like that of long-decayed meat, enough to make one almost vomit.

Old Qin felt nauseous and covered his nose, but he remained rooted to the spot, unmoving.

Calm in an uncanny way, an ordinary person would have been scared out of their wits by now.

As the rotten head with dense hair gradually emerged from the doorframe, everyone could see its hair beginning to droop down little by little because of gravity.

The outline of a human face hidden beneath the black hair gradually became clearer.

At this moment, Old Qin's expression finally shifted slightly.

For he saw that the face beneath the thick hair, as it cleared up, seemed more and more like his own.

This was an incomprehensible and terrifying supernatural phenomenon.

He could not predict what might happen after the Dead Man's Head's hair completely fell and revealed the face.

Meanwhile, Old Qin saw a pair of pale soles appear on the other side of the doorframe. Judging by the direction and height of these soles, they likely belonged to a body lying on a stretcher or hospital bed, slowly being pushed out of the darkness by something.

Or perhaps the thing pushing out these soles was the body itself.

"Time's up, Old Qin, hurry, we can't wait any longer."

At this moment, Cao Yanhua's face was so pale with fright, having witnessed the terrifying supernatural occurrence appearing behind the wooden door, and would be fearful to know what would happen if it wasn't confined to the room.

Only then did Old Qin hum lightly and tap the ground with his walking stick.

In an instant.

The rotten head with dense black hair shrunk back, the ghastly pale soles that had just emerged behind the door retracted as well, and countless fingers hooked on the doorframe all let go, seemingly pulled into the darkness by a great force.

"Bang~!"

A loud noise as the open wooden door slammed heavily against the doorway and completely shut.

All the strangeness vanished, as if all that had appeared was just an illusion in the minds of the people, somewhat unreal.

Yet the marks left by those fingers on the doorframe remained vividly visible.

Old Qin looked at the marks, seemingly weighed down by their significance.

"Old Qin, take a rest. We'll try opening the door a second time in ten minutes," Cao Yanhua said from outside the room, taking a deep breath of relief and simultaneously wiping the cold sweat from his forehead.

It was a false alarm, after all.

But this door was dangerously unsafe; every opening ran the risk of genuine ghost manifestations, which was truly horrifying.

"It seems their situation isn't too optimistic," Wang Xiaoming said, looking at the now closed wooden door.

"Indeed, if Li Jun and the others were alright, they should have appeared during the first door opening," Cao Yanhua grew increasingly uneasy, "Could it be that the five ghosts outside are really them?"

"Don't rush to conclusions. Don't we still have two more chances?"

Cao Yanhua said, "But after the second door opening, we only have thirty seconds... followed by ten seconds. The time of the last two openings combined won't even match the first one. The chances are slim."

Opening the Ghost Gate repeatedly increased the level of danger with each attempt.

Because after the first opening of the Ghost Gate, it seemed as though the ghosts behind it were drawn in and loitered at the door, ready to emerge at any moment.

Therefore, the duration of openings could only get shorter each time.

Of course, keeping the Ghost Gate closed for an extended period could reset this timer, but Cao Yanhua did not know how long it needed to be closed for.

Nor had anyone been specifically assigned to study it.

Meanwhile.

In a certain eerie village.

Li Jun and the others went through unimaginably perilous circumstances and at some cost, they managed to barely stay alive.

They had planned to retreat.

However, before them, on the door of a residence, two paintings hung on the door panels – one on the left and one on the right, like ancient door gods stopping their advance.

For these were not any door gods, but two unsettling portraits, vague but radiating danger, making them tremble with fear.

"What do we do now?" The question came from the only woman in the team, Ah Hong, most likely an alias. Although her name might be fictitious, the emotion in her voice was genuine.

The fear was palpable.

The others looked around uneasily.

It was not just these doors; all around the village houses, the walls were adorned with similar portraits, and even some frames lay scattered on the ground. Some frames were incomplete, some shattered – there was nowhere left that felt safe.

The marks of a ghostly invasion were everywhere.

Chapter 533 The Right Time

"We must open the right door at the right time to get out of this ghostly place, or else we will be trapped and die alive in here."

It was still thought to be inside the Ghost Domain of Huanggang Village.

The leader, Li Jun, had an especially solemn expression on his face. He no longer thought about how to imprison the Ghost Envoy, but about how to get these people out alive. The last attack from the fierce ghost would have wiped them out if they hadn't been fully prepared and if the members of the team hadn't been strong enough.

But surviving a crisis did not mean they were safe yet.

They had discovered something even more terrifying, they were completely trapped.

Trapped in this Ghost Domain.

And they had entirely lost contact with the outside world.

"The right time, the right door?"

Leuk San standing nearby was slightly startled, "So when is the next right time to open the door?"

Li Jun checked the time, "In ten minutes. I had arranged three times with Professor Wang, but we have just missed one opportunity. We have two more left. If we still can't open the door and leave here after those two chances, then all we can do is give up... And given the current situation, it's unrealistic to expect support from other ghost controllers."

"Indeed, if even we can't leave here, support won't make much difference. Cutting the losses in time is the most important thing."

Su Fan took a drag on his cigarette and furrowed his brows as he stated a rather cruel reality.

"Only two more chances left? That's not completely hopeless, better than I had imagined," Leuk San actually said with a smile at this time.

"You can still laugh at a time like this?"

The ghost controller named Xu Yiping's mouth twitched fiercely, "Look at the situation around us. Making one wrong move could lead to our annihilation here. The influence of the ghost drawing is growing stronger and soon we won't have anywhere to escape to."

Everyone fell silent.

They looked at the portraits hanging on the walls of houses in all directions, guessing what was happening. These portraits on the walls and in front of the doors were the best proof.

It seemed that Huanggang Village was supposed to be under the Ghost Envoy's Ghost Domain, but it had now been invaded by a ghost named Ghost Drawing.

They were still alive because there was some kind of balance maintained between the two ghosts, allowing them to survive in these cracks without falling into a situation of being hunted down by ghosts.

But this balance was already tipping. Once Ghost Drawing completely invaded, the danger they would face would undoubtedly be ten times, a hundred times what it was now.

After all, this Ghost Drawing had already wiped out a foreign ghost controller team.

Its ferocity and terror had been proven.

"Pat—!"

Within the silent, dim surroundings, it seemed as if something had fallen to the ground making a noise.

The tense people immediately looked toward the source of the sound.

It was a huge portrait hanging on the wall of a nearby civilian house, large enough to be taller than a person. For some unknown reason, it had suddenly become unstable and had fallen to the ground, flipping over to face down.

"We need to move," said Su Fan, glancing at the dimly lit screen of his phone.

It showed: You have died.

This disclosure meant that if they continued to stay here, they would certainly be killed by ghosts.

"Go? Where to now? These things are all over the village; we've seen them all along the way. There's nowhere left to go... After all, it's somewhat safer in the village here since it's the Ghost Envoy's territory. Once we leave the village, we'll have to face Ghost Drawing alone," the only female in the team, Ah Hong, voiced with a trace of despair.

"This is an S-class paranormal event; it's also known in the circle as an Unsolvable Level event. Forget about resolving it, just surviving it takes a desperate effort. If we don't keep moving, we'll be attacked again in no more than three minutes, and even if we don't die, resisting the ghosts' attacks will likely lead to the fierce ghosts' revival sooner or later," Su Fan said with a wry smile.

"It's hard to imagine how Yang Jian from Dachang City recently resolved the Hungry Ghost incident... You should know that all of his teammates nearly died then, and it was all on him to turn the tide. I've underestimated him before, but now it seems I was thinking too simply."

Past incidents, albeit dangerous, at least provided a chance to retreat, but now, even escaping from here was difficult.

"Indeed, only Yang Jian in the head office has experience dealing with S-class paranormal events, and that too twice. He also survived when the Ghost Envoy attacked the training base and even directly changed the Ghost Envoy's killing pattern, essentially weakening an S-class fierce ghost. If he were here on this operation, maybe we wouldn't be in such a sorry state," Leuk San nodded, agreeing deeply.

Having witnessed the terror of such events, they became even more aware of the newcomer, Yang Jian's, unusualness.

"Headquarters wouldn't let Yang Jian participate in this operation, and Yang Jian wouldn't agree either."

At that moment, Li Jun looked slightly anxious. Although he was speaking, his mind was preoccupied with considering which path to take next.

"Why?"

Ah Hong said with some surprise, "Clearly he has the ability..."

Li Jun cut her off, speaking gravely, "Because we can't rely on one person to achieve victory, even if Yang Jian joined us, what about the next S-level paranormal event? And the one after that? He has done what he needed to do, and we must do what we need to do. If we die here this time, it's simply proof that this is the extent of our abilities."

"None of you are newcomers anymore, you all know the principles very well. There are now eight minutes left, let's survive this together. If we haven't left this place by the time the door opens next, then the third opening will be in half an hour, and I think the chances of surviving until then are not great."

"It's time to go."

Suddenly, the previously silent Xu Yiping urged them urgently and pointed to where the portrait had fallen just moments ago.

Unbeknownst to them, a vague shadow had started to linger around the fallen portrait.

The shadow resembled a person, but it was distorted and indistinct, like a shadow.

Yet, this shadowy figure had facial features.

Despite being blurry, one could still feel the ghost near the portrait looking their way.

"Snap!"

Another portrait nearby fell to the ground.

Everyone shuddered, feeling intimidated.

The situation was indeed becoming more and more ominous.

"Follow me."

With a low growl, Li Jun chose a gray-white road and continued deeper into the eerie village.

Retreat was no longer an option; they could only try to get close to the Ghost Envoy hiding in the village.

Only this would allow them to endure this period, dangerous as the road may be, they had to face it.

The dangers they faced here were unclear to anyone, and whether they could survive was unknown.

However, on the outside.

Zong Shan, who was leading five ghosts with a Ghost Candle, was about to face the next crisis.

His Ghost Candle was almost spent...

This signaled that "Guo Fan," who had followed him all this way, needed to replace the Ghost Candle soon. Otherwise, once the Ghost Candle burned out, the five ghosts behind Guo Fan might undergo unexpected transformations.

This change had no good or bad, only varying degrees of danger.

Chen Yi, who had been following all this while, also furrowed his brows deeply.

He wasn't short on Ghost Candles, but as they progressed, the distance between the ghosts and people had reached a very dangerous point, so the probability of being attacked by ghosts during the next candle exchange was... significant.

"I can't delay this any longer."

Biting the bullet, Chen Yi braced himself and walked forward.

Not far ahead.

The replaced Guo Fan still maintained that fixed posture and walked ahead.

Ahead was the Ghost Candle in Zong Shan's hand, flickering in the dim environment. Despite the lack of light, the mass of darkness that was so different from its surroundings was particularly noticeable, with the nearby ghosts being drawn to it.

As Chen Yi approached "Guo Fan," it was as if he had entered a realm of darkness, the Ghost Domain, with an especially chilly atmosphere around him.

The terrifying silence was punctuated only by the dull sound of footsteps.

But compared to Guo Fan, who had become a ghost, Chen Yi was even more wary of the other ghosts.

Because he had now entered the range of the Ghost Candle, it meant that, at any moment, he could be killed by a ghost.

Chapter 534 Yang Jian's Plan

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No matter whether it was Chen Yi's actions, or Liu Jun and others struggling to survive in the Ghost Domain, or even the headquarters' Cao Yanhua planning a rescue operation... none of these activities were directly related to Yang Jian for the time being.

The reason he made the trip tonight was not that he wanted to handle these matters.

Instead, he figured that if things became unmanageable, he would still need to arrange for others to take care of them. Rather than doing that, it would be better to see the situation first—it's always better than being caught off guard by a sudden incident.

"The Ghost Envoy's Ghost Domain has disappeared, and the ghost paintings' Ghost Domain has also vanished; it seems likely that this time, the incident has been resolved," Yang Jian thought as he strolled through the bustling streets, his head slightly lowered in contemplation.

"That's right, after all, the best resources were used this time, and the top ghost controllers were arranged. If they couldn't handle it, the situation would have collapsed long ago, and it wouldn't have lasted until today."

He slightly raised his head to observe the stream of vehicles and pedestrians on the street.

The scene was still brilliantly illuminated, flowers blossoming like brocade, and pedestrians walked leisurely while couples played and laughed among themselves, as if the terrible supernatural event occurring in the suburbs was completely unrelated to this place.

How could these people know that if tonight's situation was not handled and ghosts entered here, the international metropolis, bustling with activity, would collapse in an instant?

Death would come to everyone.

"In the case of S-level supernatural events, the most dangerous aspect is not the insolubility of ghosts, but rather, the ghost controllers are very likely to face an Upper Ghost. If the number of people in contact with the ghost does not hold the advantage, then despair will infinitely expand... After all, the more ghosts there are, the higher the chance of being killed by one, and an inescapable Ghost Domain is also a common feature of S-level supernatural events."

Yang Jian recalled the Hungry Ghost incident and then compared it with the Ghost Envoy incident.

He summarized some personal experiences.

Especially in the aspect of the Ghost Domain, which is the hardest to deal with since, until now, ghost controllers who can possess a Ghost Domain are pitifully few.

As far as Yang Jian knew, only Liu Jun from headquarters had a Ghost Domain. Apart from him, someone within his circle of friends also had one.

But their Ghost Domains should not be compared to his own.

After all, Yang Jian's Ghost Domain had already managed to invade the Ghost Envoy's Ghost Domain.

So, in a certain field, he still held the advantage.

But this advantage didn't really say much, because the ghosts that ghost controllers possess are different, and it is only natural for their abilities to vary.

Before long

After taking a stroll around the streets, Yang Jian chose to return to the Ping'an Hotel to rest.

However, just as he took the elevator to his room's floor and approached the door, the door to the neighboring room suddenly opened.

"I thought you wouldn't be coming back so late," a pleasant voice said with a lazy yawn. It belonged to a slender woman dressed in a black dress, reminiscent of a model walking down the runway.

Li Yao?

Yang Jian's gaze shifted, and he looked at her. "Have you been waiting here for me all this time?"

"Otherwise, what would I be doing here?" Li Yao leaned against the door frame with a charming smile; "You must have received the message I sent you earlier."

"I did receive your text during the day; are the people from our circle planning to take action against me?"

Upon finishing his question, Yang Jian's brows furrowed, "You had already sent a message during the day, and now you come to my place to talk about this matter; does that mean there has been a change of plan on their side?"

Li Yao walked over with a smile, took Yang Jian's arm, and said, "Come to your room, and I'll tell you there."

"Alright," Yang Jian said, giving her a deep look before turning his gaze away.

Although Li Yao seemed very close to him, he actually detested this woman in his heart, but he had grown accustomed to hiding his emotions, so he always appeared cold and impassive no matter the situation.

Just like a dead man.

This wasn't directed at her alone; Yang Jian had long sensed that his emotional responses as a human were gradually fading away.

They proceeded to the room.

Yang Jian sat casually on the sofa, "Don't worry, there's no surveillance here. If you're not comfortable, our conversation can take place within the Ghost Domain."

"Are you sure it's wise to use your ghost's power so casually?" Li Yao curled up her legs, leaning against Yang Jian's shoulder, and said playfully.

"There won't be any big issues for a while. I'm different from the other ghost controllers," Yang Jian responded with a cold tone but exuded confidence.

Having survived two S-level supernatural events and experienced several brushes with death, he had unconsciously left others far behind on the path of controlling fierce ghosts.

"We don't need to go through so much trouble. The reason I came directly to you is that I didn't trust the message sent by a single text," said Li Yao with a shift from her playful demeanor to a more serious tone.

"The people from our circle have decided to get rid of you before the team leader's plan ends. Fortunately, the headquarters' recent actions have had some impact, and their plan will likely be postponed a little," she said.

Yang Jian nodded, "I roughly guessed as much, and I've made the necessary preparations."

Such swift action was very characteristic of ghost controllers.

...

"But I don't know the specifics of the plan yet. However, judging from the discussions at their meetings, it seems they're leaning toward making a move during your next supernatural event. That way, they can completely erase any suspicion of setting you up and avoid being held accountable by headquarters," Li Yao whispered into Yang Jian's ear.

"That's a pretty good idea," Yang Jian's eyes sharpened.

It looked like the group from the circle of friends had done their homework.

Dying in the next supernatural event would leave little room for doubt.

If it weren't for Li Yao's intelligence, Yang Jian had no doubt that he would have been killed, especially since he would have been unprotected and embroiled in a supernatural event, on top of being deliberately targeted. Death would indeed come unexpectedly.

"You're even praising them. You should be feeling tense right now, considering a whole group from the circle of friends is against you," Li Yao rolled her eyes.

Yang Jian pursed his lips and said, "You're wrong. They are the ones who should be tense. Once their plan is exposed, they'll have to face my furious retaliation. They are well aware of my threat, which is why they are so eager."

"So what are you planning to do?" Li Yao asked again.

"I need a list of the names and details of the Ghost Domain manipulators from the circle of friends—the more detailed, the better," Yang Jian said gravely.

Li Yao was taken aback at first, then widened her eyes and looked at him, "Are you thinking of striking first?"

"No, that would be too rash."

Then Li Yao started to urgently persuade him, "If you strike first, it's like stirring up a hornet's nest. Then, the people from the circle of friends will have an open excuse to deal with you. Moreover, if the situation escalates, headquarters won't protect you. The current situation is very delicate."

"If you step forward and disrupt the balance, you will offend many people—whether it's headquarters, the circle of friends, or other forces, they will look for ways to nip this problem in the bud."

"You are young and don't realize how deep the waters here are. This isn't as simple as dealing with supernatural events or killing a few people,"

Li Yao felt Yang Jian's idea was too simplistic and far too dangerous.

Ghost manipulators were not just simple individuals—there were many unseen and untouchable forces behind them.

Every front man among the Ghost manipulators was tied to significant matters. If Yang Jian started to eliminate other Ghost manipulators, the consequences would be terrifying.

After all, this world, in the end, is the world of humans.

It is not a world dominated by the Ghost Master. As long as the order remains, humans still control power and wealth, which meant that Yang Jian could not act recklessly.

"You do have a point,"

Yang Jian didn't deny Li Yao's perspective. He stood up from the sofa, walked to the large floor-to-ceiling window in the living room overlooking the dazzling city nightscape, and then counter-questioned, "Do you think I would die if I jumped from this ten-story building?"

"No," Li Yao immediately replied.

"And if you jumped?" Yang Jian asked.

Li Yao gave him a look, "That's obvious. Of course, I would be dead."

"That's the point. You're looking at the problem from your perspective, and I'm looking at it from mine. So you're not wrong, and neither am I. It's correct for you to fear the power of wealth and authority since you're just an ordinary person. But I'm different."

"My body harbors three ghosts, and if I so wish, I can wipe out any city within a minute."

"One minute might even be conservative. If I really got going... it would take less than ten seconds,"

Yang Jian placed his hand on the thick glass window, his pale, bloodless palm seemingly seizing the lives of everyone in the city.

Li Yao shivered upon hearing this, staring at Yang Jian's not-so-tall silhouette with shock, awe, and an indescribable fear in her eyes.

"Humans are truly fragile in front of ghosts, as frail as ants, crushed to death without even knowing how they died," Yang Jian turned his head and continued, "If even my own life has to be controlled by others, then what's the point of me struggling to survive up to now with the mastery over three ghosts?"

"I... understand. I will gather their information as soon as possible." Li Yao's voice was slightly uneasy, he was shaken by Yang Jian's words.

Or rather, Yang Jian's existence completely overturned her understanding of Ghost manipulators.

No Ghost manipulator had ever dared to make such bold claims—destroying a city in ten seconds.

But Li Yao had no doubt that Yang Jian could really do it.

No, not just Yang Jian. He might be just one of them. There were probably many others like Yang Jian in this world who could do the same.

If these people stepped out from the shadows into the public eye, the world would be turned upside down with the exposure of supernatural events.

"If there's nothing else, then you should get back to work. If it's discovered that you have been here for such a long time, your situation might become precarious," Yang Jian then said seriously.

He didn't want anything to happen to his undercover informant.

Not at least until the matter with the circle of friends was settled.

"Alright, I'll go and start compiling the data now," Li Yao stood up and quickly walked out.

As she reached the door, ready to close it, she couldn't help but take another glance at Yang Jian.

Yang Jian remained standing next to the window, a tall headless figure enveloping him in darkness, his figure obscured, blurred and elusive, with only a ghastly white palm and a sinister crimson eye remaining distinct through the shadows.

"He's not human... but also not a ghost," an idea flashed through Li Yao's mind.

Chapter 535

By the time Yang Jian had returned to the Ping'an Hotel to rest,

the danger on the outskirts of the city had not yet disappeared. In fact, for some, the current situation was even more severe than before. Although the overall situation might have slightly improved, the ghost had not yet departed, let alone been resolved.

The flame of the Ghost Candle burned eerily and distinctly.

It was like two dense clumps of dark fog, coalescing without dispersing. At the heart of those two candle lights, Zong Shan, the guide, was tensed to the extreme.

The light of the Ghost Candle in his hand was gradually weakening, and the white candle was now down to a small section, barely lasting another ten minutes. Once this Ghost Candle was completely burned out, the enticing light for the ghost would be extinguished.

He knew that there wasn't too much danger after the candlelight in his hand went out.

But it would be different once the Ghost Candle on Guo Fan's body went out.

Guo Fan now had attracted no less than five ghosts on his way here. Once the Ghost Candle extinguished, these five ghosts would immediately risk going out of control. With such close proximity to each other, no one could predict the consequences of such a loss of control.

"How is Chen Yi getting on? Isn't it ready yet?" Zong Shan was burning with impatience.

To replace the Ghost Candle, Chen Yi had to act first; as long as he succeeded, Zong Shan could breathe a sigh of relief and complete the handover of leading the ghosts with the other ghost tamers.

And the other ghost tamer responsible for the handover had already been arranged by headquarters to be nearby, holding a Ghost Candle ready to be lit at any moment.

But if the handover went anything but smoothly,

or if the Ghost Candle on Guo Fan failed to be successfully replaced after going out, then the one holding the Ghost Candle now, and Chen Yi over there, could both instantly be killed by the ghosts.

It could be said that if even one part of the process went wrong, everyone would be forced to face the ghosts directly.

At that time, they'd have to use their own ghosts to fight back.

"No movement?" About ten meters behind, Chen Yi's face was solemn as he frowned deeply and approached the current "Guo Fan"

Guo Fan, as he was now, was no longer himself. The ghost in his body seemed to be in a state of resurgence. Whether the real Guo Fan was dead or something else, Chen Yi had no idea. His only task right now was to successfully complete the handover.

Staring at the person in front of him, who was cold, rigid,

Chen Yi could no longer detect even a slightest trace of life, clearly indicating a thorough replacement by a fierce ghost. If there had been even a sliver of consciousness, there wouldn't have been such silence and lack of signals throughout the journey.

Therefore, Chen Yi was extremely cautious.

But just being cautious wasn't useful right now; he had to act, and with action came the risk of everything

A single miscalculation could lead to death by the ghost.

For an incident of this level, Chen Yi didn't have much confidence in surviving.

"We can't wait anymore. Since Guo Fan hasn't made any moves for now, at least I don't need to deal with him immediately. Let's replace the Ghost Candle first," Chen Yi thought to himself.

Chen Yi quietly followed alongside Guo Fan.

He observed Guo Fan's pallid profile and his eerie expression with an indescribable discomfort.

Perhaps it was due to being so close to a ghost that he was being affected.

Or maybe Chen Yi worried that this ghost had been motionless throughout the journey and could behave erratically at a critical moment...

Under tremendous pressure, Chen Yi's worries emerged involuntarily.

Despite his concerns, he didn't slow down his actions.

At that moment, Chen Yi held a white candle in his hand. This candle was set on a golden candlestick, made of Gold to block the invasion of supernatural powers. It was also designed to fix the candle onto a ghost's body to ensure it wouldn't fall off along the way.

Another white candle on "Guo Fan's" shoulder was nearly burned out, its flame flickering and seemingly ready to go out at any moment.

"I must blow out the Ghost Candle on Guo Fan first, light this Ghost Candle while the ghosts behind are still not far away to draw them back, and then in the shortest time possible, attach it to Guo Fan's body. After all this is done, I must find a way to leave here as quickly as possible, to avoid being killed by the ghosts," Chen Yi formulated his action plan in his mind again.

Not a single step could be mistaken, not a single step could be haphazard.

As for why it was necessary to blow out the Ghost Candle on Guo Fan's body first?

It was simple.

If Chen Yi had lit the Ghost Candle in his hand first, at this moment there would be two Ghost Candles burning together.

The effect produced by the overlapping of these Ghost Candles might not just attract ghosts but could also make the ghosts ignore the rules of killing and start murdering directly.

At this moment, Chen Yi cautiously adjusted his position and moved to the side of "Guo Fan."

With one hand, he took out a lighter and first lit the flame.

In this dimly lit area, the ordinary light from the flame seemed especially feeble, like a glimmer of phosphorescence in the black night, inconspicuous as though it could be extinguished at any moment.

"Good, no problems."

Chen Yi placed his hand on the lighter to feel it, and although the light was not prominent, the temperature was still scorching hot.

"Then, let's begin....."

His gaze moved to "Guo Fan."

When it came time to act, Chen Yi showed no hesitation, his actions very decisive after having confirmed the current situation.

He immediately stepped forward a few paces, approaching the current "Guo Fan."

The emanating chill from the body gave the illusion of being in a freezer, and although this ghost had no reaction, seemingly as harmless as a domesticated animal, all signs indicated that it was very dangerous, only that so far he had not yet been attacked.

Chen Yi didn't blow out the remaining Ghost Candle but instead directly reached out to snuff out the remaining candlelight.

Immediately.

The Ghost Candle stuck on Guo Fan's shoulder was extinguished before it could burn out completely.

The darkness dispersed at that instant, and the surroundings seemed to brighten up suddenly.

In that moment, Chen Yi even caught a glimpse with the corner of his eye of five inverted figures on the ground not far behind...

The ghost had been close by all along, never leaving.

But now, Chen Yi wasn't contemplating anything else, instead quickly lighting the Ghost Candle in his hand and smoothly completing the handover.

But just as the candle in his hand touched the flame on the lighter, a sudden twist occurred.

The flame on the lighter began to rapidly shrink and then, without warning, it went out.

The Ghost Candle had not been lit successfully.

"Hm?" Chen Yi's eyes suddenly narrowed at this scene.

He seemed to sense something, and as he slightly lifted his head, he saw that "Guo Fan," who had originally been turned away from him, had now, unbeknownst to him, turned around.

On that pale face, devoid of any color, a pair of hollow, lifeless eyes seemed to be looking at him.

In an instant.

Chen Yi's hair stood on end, feeling a terrible chill invading his body, as if his blood were about to freeze.

This coldness, he didn't know if it was due to fear or because he was too close to the ghost.

But now Chen Yi knew that his worst fears had been realized; without the influence of the Ghost Candle, the ghost was no longer as harmless as before.

He feared it had already set its sights on him now.