

Revival 546

Chapter 546 543 Selected and Hidden Dangers

"I have something else to do, so I'll be leaving now. I won't stay for dinner, the person who came by earlier has already left. He entered the wrong door, but after I warned him, he'll be more careful in the future."

After President Fei left, Yang Jian also prepared to leave.

"Ah, leaving so soon? I've already prepared dinner, why don't you stay and eat before you go?" the woman named Wann Yue said, somewhat surprised as she stepped out.

Yang Jian said, "No need, I still have things to take care of."

"All right then, I won't insist on you staying. Be careful on your way," Wann Yue said.

"You too."

After Yang Jian finished speaking, he left without looking back.

Wann Yue watched Yang Jian leave, her gaze shifting slightly. She was somewhat puzzled about the man who had suddenly burst into her home, acting as though he knew her and Bao'er. And how had he gotten in just now?

It didn't seem like he picked the lock—it seemed like he had a key.

Additionally, Yang Jian as she remembered him seemed somewhat different from reality.

He was not as warm as she had imagined, but instead, there was an indescribable coldness.

"Aiyah, why am I thinking so much," Wann Yue thought, remembering that she was still cooking and hurried back to the kitchen.

Memory is the easiest way to deceive someone. Even if she sensed something, she still chose to believe her memory rather than this out-of-place reality.

When Yang Jian left the apartment building and was about to exit the residential complex, a loud thump suddenly came from the nearby green space.

As if something heavy had fallen from the top floor and smashed hard onto the ground.

Yang Jian paused in his steps. The commotion attracted several residents within the complex, who curiously turned towards the direction of the noise, and quite a few residents from the higher floors opened their windows to look out.

Soon, they saw a man in a suit and leather shoes lying on the ground, blood pooling all around him, his breathing already gone.

Noises of unrest spread through the complex.

But Yang Jian had already left the complex.

"Quite the ruthless move," he thought to himself.

He had considered altering President Fei's memory to make him one of his chess pieces, working for him just like Li Yao.

However, after a brief contemplation, Yang Jian abandoned the idea.

An enemy is an enemy; he was not naive enough to keep enemies close by. Besides, President Fei was a smart man, and even if his memory were altered, once he realized what had happened, he might turn against Yang Jian again.

The probability was slim, but Yang Jian would not bet his life on this possibility.

So he could only rest assured once he was erased from this world.

"Beep beep~!"

The car horn sounded, and a luxury car drove up and stopped beside Yang Jian.

The window rolled down, and Li Yao, wearing sunglasses, poked her head out with a smile on her lips. "I knew you'd be here, so I've been waiting for you since a while ago. How did things go? It should have been smooth, especially since without Zhang Jian's interference, President Fei, a mere mortal, couldn't have caused any trouble."

Yang Jian opened the car door and got in. He said, "The deed will probably spread throughout the entire circle of friends by tomorrow. Now that we still have time, who do you think should be the next one we pull out?"

Li Yao flipped through some documents beside her. "With President Fei and Zhang Jian gone, the company's operations will definitely face issues. Therefore, next, I suggest we pull out a prominent ghost master from the circle of friends. Only then can we achieve great results with our opening move. Considering you've already taken care of Gao Zhiqiang at the headquarters, I personally think one of these two people can be our next target."

As she spoke, she pulled out two profiles.

These two profiles belonged to Jang Shangbai and He Tianxiong.

Yang Jian took the profiles and looked them over carefully, his brows knitting slightly.

Both of these men were ghost masters. He had met one of them, Jang Shangbai, who was said to command three ghosts and held a significant position at headquarters, also a prime candidate for the team leader position.

As for the person named He Tianxiong, he honestly did not recognize him.

He personally felt that this must be a top-tier ghost master hidden within the circle of friends, for a power would not display all its pieces openly.

"Are these the only two candidates?" Yang Jian suddenly asked.

Li Yao hesitated for a moment before replying, "There are many people who have joined the friend circle, and there are quite a few ghost controllers, but there aren't many who are core figures. You probably aren't interested in targeting some of the corporate presidents; those people just provide financial support and can't influence the real situation. However, apart from Jiang Shangbai and He Tianxiong, there is another ghost controller in this city."

"But I don't recommend that you make him your first target."

Yang Jian asked, "Who is that person?"

"I don't have his intelligence data. I only know his name is Fang Shiming, about twenty-five years old. The reason the friend circle has come this far is mostly because of his presence. Otherwise, after the last clash with Dahai City's paranormal forum and Ye Zhen, we would have already been defeated."

Ye Zhen?

This was the second time Yang Jian had heard this name from someone else's lips. The last time was when he went to rescue Tong Qian and resolve the incident, Luo Su Yi mentioned it.

Luo Su Yi, Lin Luomei, and others are members of the paranormal forum.

If his memory served correctly, Ye Zhen was recognized as one of the top ghost controllers in the circle, having established the paranormal forum and with quite seniority.

"Is this Fang Shiming capable of contending with Ye Zhen?" Yang Jian expressed his doubt.

"He is at least at that level. You know about Ye Zhen? Then you should be somewhat familiar with his temper. Although he can be a bit neurotic at times, when he gets tough, he is absolutely the type to wipe out your entire clan," Li Yao said somewhat helplessly. "The fact that Fang Shiming can make Ye Zhen step back shows how dangerous he is."

"The power of the friend circle is indeed not to be underestimated," Yang Jian said earnestly, "since that's the case, then I have no choice but to target He Tianxiong."

"That's right, Jiang Shangbai has joined the headquarters, and if he were to be killed, I suspect the headquarters would be difficult to explain to. With He Tianxiong, there are no such misgivings. If you take him out, the headquarters definitely won't say a word. After all, this guy's hands aren't clean; he has a pile of case records. If it weren't for the current situation being so critical, people like him would have been dealt with long ago."

Li Yao nodded, feeling that this choice was very correct.

"Shall we set off now? I have an idea where He Tianxiong might be; he shouldn't be hard to find."

"Let's go somewhere first," Yang Jian said, giving an address.

This was the address given to him by President Fei, who claimed that the contents inside were enough to exchange for his family's safety.

"Alright."

Li Yao didn't ask why; she immediately started the car.

Meanwhile.

In a high-end residential complex within the city area, at the home of a resident.

A man who had worked all day just opened his door to come home and called out a few times, only to find no one at home. Normally, his wife would have been back from work by this time, but the house was lit, the TV was on, and there was no one to be seen.

"Did she go downstairs to buy something?"

The man thought to himself.

He took off his leather shoes, slipped on slippers, and walked into the living room, only to suddenly notice an oil painting with a European-style frame hanging above the sofa on the wall.

The painting seemed old and out of place with the house's minimalist decor, giving off an air of ancient artistry.

"When was this painting bought?" the man wondered aloud, unable to help but take a few extra glances at it.

The frame of the painting was a dark red color, and it wasn't clear if it was due to the material, but the peeling, faded paint made it look very old. The painting depicted an old house, but the house was merely a background and didn't seem so important. What was important was the person standing in front of the house.

The painting appeared blurred, not very clear; the features of the figure were indistinguishable, but it was certain that this should be a woman, giving off a misty sense of artistry.

Additionally, the whole tone of the painting was very dark.

With the figure's vague features, against the dim background, an indescribable and eerie strangeness seeped through.

The man looked closer and suddenly stepped forward, reaching out to touch a particular corner of the painting. He realized it wasn't something from within the painting, but a drop of red paint that had somehow dripped onto the canvas.

No, this didn't seem to be paint, but rather a drop of fresh blood.

"Hanging it up without even cleaning it, it's filthy," the man shook his head and turned to go wash his hands in the washroom.

As the man turned away, a few more drops of fresh blood seeped out from where the painting had been.

Inside the painting, in a dim, inconspicuous place, there was a depiction of a modern woman in a strappy dress. The woman's body was damaged, only half remaining, and blood continuously flowed, forming a small rivulet. This blood flowed to the end of the path, precisely to the right lower corner of the painting frame, where the fresh blood had just seeped out.

Chapter 547 544: The Man Kneeling on the Ground

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Around eight in the evening, Yang Jian and Li Yao pulled up in front of a high-end residential complex and stopped the car.

The management of the complex was quite strict; outsiders could not enter without showing documents. After some effort and explanation to the skeptical security guard, they were reluctantly allowed to pass.

"You're actually being so polite to a security guard, that's really rare." Li Yao was somewhat surprised by Yang Jian's behavior, thinking it would be in his nature to just drive straight in.

Yang Jian replied coolly, "You must have some kind of misunderstanding about me. I don't like to cause trouble."

Don't like to cause trouble?

Li Yao gave him a cynical look, clearly not convinced by his statement.

"Wait for me downstairs. I'll go get some things and come back," said Yang Jian.

"Is there something you don't want me to see? Or are you hiding a beauty here?" Li Yao joked with a smile.

Yang Jian said, "The less ordinary people know about certain things, the better. President Fei mingled the boundaries between ghost manipulators and ordinary people, which led to the situation he's in now. You should take that as a warning."

"Are you warning me, or are you concerned about me? I think you're concerned about me, even though you won't admit it, but I'm sure of it," blinked Li Yao.

Yang Jian didn't reply, but instead headed straight into the building.

Taking the elevator to the eleventh floor, he quickly arrived at the door of a room with the number 1101.

He didn't have the key to the door, but that wasn't going to stop him.

With just a casual push, the sturdy security door immediately collapsed to the ground with a bang, without even putting much effort into it.

He went into the room and turned on the light.

The place was empty, with no extra furniture and no signs of anyone having lived there—it all looked like it had just been recently renovated, and the air still had the smell of a new house.

Yang Jian entered one of the rooms.

This appeared to be a study.

Neatly placed on the bookshelf were stacks of folders, each labeled with a name. They must contain the personal files of fellow ghost manipulators, certainly more detailed than the information collected by Li Yao.

"Hmm?"

Yang Jian's gaze shifted, and he suddenly noticed a glass box placed next to the bookshelf.

Inside the box was a doll made from old rags and black hair, which looked out of place in this environment. It was dirty and smelly, and it was puzzling why the owner would keep such an item in a reinforced glass box, prominently displayed.

"I didn't expect this surprise discovery. This is one of those life-saving dolls that Shen Liang gave me, which can avoid ghost attacks. It's really unexpected that President Fei, being an ordinary person, managed to get such an item. Although it's valuable, it seems of no use to him, just a collector's item."

Yang Jian walked over and took the item directly.

While he already possessed a fair amount of resources, having more of these life-saving items was always better.

Despite the unexpected treasure, Yang Jian didn't forget his main purpose and began to look through the files of these individuals.

Considering the time constraints, Yang Jian first picked out the files of He Tianxiong and Jang Shangbai. In addition, Fang Shiming, considered by Li Yao to be the most threatening, was also a focus of attention.

"Interesting fellow. Although a bit troublesome, killing him shouldn't be too hard—after all, he only controls two ghosts," Yang Jian soon said with a cold smile looking at the file on He Tianxiong.

President Fei's file was indeed valuable, recording information about fierce ghosts.

After going through this file, Yang Jian picked up the file on Fang Shiming.

This character, who could match Ye Zhen evenly, interested him.

As soon as the folder was opened, a photo fell to the ground.

Yang Jian crouched down to pick it up and his expression immediately tensed when he saw it.

The object in the photo was a pair of scissors covered in rust, looking as if they had been dug out from the soil, with the handles wrapped in dense black hair, connected to scalp and covered with disgusting, black flesh.

"Ghost Scissors"

These three words were written next to the photo with a water-based pen.

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"Why do people in my friends' circle have this ghostly thing?" Yang Jian's gaze was fixed on the photograph.

He instinctively felt that this object was similar in nature to the Coffin Nail and the Firewood Knife in the hands of the corpse at the Caesar Hotel; it was not a modern artifact but one of those bizarre relics from the Republic of China Period, and these things all possessed terribly powerful abilities.

Yang Jian had suspected that these objects were made by top spirit manipulators from the Republic of China Period using the power of fierce ghosts.

Of course, the possibility that these objects were ghosts themselves could not be ruled out.

"The photo and Fang Shiming's files are together, which means there is a high possibility that this object was in Fang Shiming's hands," Yang Jian frowned and pondered, "So what is the ability of these Ghost Scissors?"

He flipped through the files but found that much of Fang Shiming's information was missing.

There were just some speculations written down by President Fei.

"Confirmed to possess Ghost Scissors, suspected of having Ghost Domain, extremely dangerous..."

"It seems that even President Fei couldn't gather information about this," Yang Jian slowly closed the file, feeling an inexplicable shadow cast over his heart.

This shadow didn't come from the incomplete information about Fang Shiming, but from the photograph of the Ghost Scissors.

While Yang Jian was reviewing the files.

Downstairs in the residential area, Li Yao was already getting impatient as she waited. She felt it was a very bad move for Yang Jian to leave such a beautiful woman like her out in the cold wind.

If it had been anyone else, Li Yao would have turned her head and left by now, not standing there like a fool.

But what could she do? It was Yang Jian she was waiting for, the man she deeply loved.

As Li Yao foolishly waited, suddenly she saw quite a few residents appear downstairs in the complex, and the security guards were rushing over to this side. These people seemed to be heading towards a particular spot, and within a short while, a crowd had gathered in one area.

"Hmm?"

Li Yao gave a soft exclamation, driven by curiosity to join the throng of onlookers.

No sooner had she arrived than she saw a female resident covering her mouth, turning around, and then bending over to vomit near the green space.

The sight that the crowd was gathering around seemed so disgusting that it was hard for people to stomach.

Li Yao had just walked over when she saw a young security guard trembling as he took out his phone, seemingly to call the police, his face pale with panic and fear spreading.

The onlookers were all silent, not saying a word, creating an oppressively heavy atmosphere.

When Li Yao found a gap and squeezed through, her complexion instantly changed.

There, on the side of the road, was a huge painting, discarded by someone unknown. But what was truly chilling was that half of a human corpse was protruding from the painting. The body was in a kneeling position with its arms, stiff and pale, clutching desperately at the frame of the painting. The legs were mutilated, with wounds that appeared to have been inflicted by scraping, and one particularly horrific laceration had torn open the thigh, revealing the white bone within.

It seemed these wounds had been inflicted in a frantic struggle before death.

But that was not the most important part. The most eerie thing was that the corpse's head was missing.

The neck was tightly stuck to the painting without leaving any gap, as if the head had sunk into the painting. But behind the thin layer of the painting, there was nothing but an old wooden board.

"This, this is a supernatural event... related to the painting, could it be a haunted painting?" Li Yao's mind buzzed, her body felt cold, and she began to shiver uncontrollably.

"This must be some kind of joke, a haunted painting appearing in the city center."

Li Yao's beautiful face was now terribly distorted with fright, and despite her horror, she involuntarily moved backward, wanting to get as far away from the dreadful painting as possible.

But the other onlookers hadn't realized the terror behind this strange incident. Though the scene was horrifying, many with stronger stomachs still surrounded to look, and a few odd ones even took out their phones to take pictures. Of course, there were also those who were too scared and quickly dragged their friends to leave.

Just as Li Yao was retreating and about to turn and flee.

But then, to her eyes, the body lying before the painting suddenly moved, and it seemed to come to life and began to slowly rise.

In an instant.

Li Yao's fear reached its peak, as an assistant at Ping'an Tower, she knew about supernatural events and was not like those ignorant and fearless residents.

"Ahh!"

A scream erupted from her mouth as she shouted hoarsely, "Yang Jian~!"

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A sharp scream erupted from Li Yao's mouth, carrying a tremor and revealing a strong sense of panic, sounding somewhat hysterical.

However, this scream did not summon Yang Jian but instead startled the neighboring residents.

Many people turned their heads to look at Li Yao, their eyes filled with an odd expression, as if curious why she had reacted so strongly.

As for the person who stood up with a picture frame over their head, the others did not seem as alarmed as they had been at first.

Because the person was not dead, since they could stand up, they must be a living being.

As for ghosts or supernatural events, they never even considered those possibilities; the concept did not exist in everyone's mind.

"It must be some magic trick, probably some kind of performance art, I almost died of fright. I really thought it was a dead body just now," someone commented while also sighing with relief.

"It shouldn't be, this doesn't quite look like it. The wound on the leg doesn't seem fake, it's still bleeding."

"Maybe it's some kind of realistic dummy discarded by someone in the community."

However, the security guard immediately said, "I've already called the police. For the safety of all the residents, I hope everyone stays back for now. Whether it's a realistic dummy or a magic act, let the case officers handle it."

"Let me see what this thing really is."

One bold person, driven by curiosity, walked over and grabbed the picture frame to give it a shake, seemingly attempting to take the frame off.

Just a slight shake.

The painting on the corpse's neck immediately fell down, but what was horrifying was the body's missing head – nothing but an empty space above the neck, with the severed stump continuously oozing blood, as the dense smell of blood filled the air.

And the oil painting that fell to the ground was now turned over to reveal its front side.

The painting depicted a dim urban background with towering buildings, hidden in the dark world with only vague shapes of a skyscraper and window outlines; the tone was oppressive and dark. In the center of the painting was a large road with a female figure whose features were blurry.

This woman's clothing style did not belong to this era, reminiscent of a European style with a hint of the Chinese Republic era.

The character's portrait in the painting was unclear, which seemed to be the style of this type of oil painting, but the only abnormality was that the woman's hands in the painting were exceptionally clear, as if they were popping out of the painting like a 3D image, almost as though there really were hands growing from the painting itself.

Besides, in an inconspicuous corner of the painting,

there was a modern-style haircut head eerily appearing there, discordant with the painting as if it were an extra piece.

However, no one was paying attention to these details at that moment.

The bystanders were all startled, instinctively stepping back and looking at the headless body that kept bleeding with eyes filled with fear.

Because no matter how you looked at it, it did not resemble a realistic dummy, nor was it any kind of performance art.

What kind of performance doesn't have a head?

But what they feared was merely the corpse itself, still unable to imagine the immense horror that its appearance signified.

At that moment, Li Yao had already fled.

Her face was pale, shouting Yang Jian's name while running frantically towards the building Yang Jian had entered earlier. Though her high heels slowed her down and she even twisted her ankle a few times, at this point, she could no longer care about that.

If you're targeted by a ghost, it won't just be a twisted ankle at stake, but your very life.

In front of a real ghost, an ordinary person's chances of survival are even slimmer than that of an insect.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

Li Yao, gasping for air, didn't even take the elevator but ran up the stairs, still calling out for Yang Jian, hoping for a response.

But in the empty stairwell, only her voice echoed, as if Yang Jian was not there.

Li Yao didn't think much about it; she only knew that finding Yang Jian was the only way to be safe. Without the protection of a ghost controller, her life was in jeopardy.

The strength that burst out in her panic was quickly exhausted.

By about the tenth floor, Li Yao was so tired she could barely lift her legs, her face covered in sweat, and her breathing felt sharply painful.

She swore she had never been so exhausted in her life.

Finally.

Li Yao saw Yang Jian's figure at the window in the stairway of the eleventh floor.

"Yang, Yang Jian... Thank goodness, I finally found you. Something, something has happened, this community, it's haunted..."

She gasped for air, unable to catch her breath, her speech incoherent.

"I saw it," Yang Jian remained motionless, gazing down at the community below from his position.

The onlooking residents, the moving headless body, and the oil painting lying on the ground... even though they were far apart, he could still vaguely make them out.

However, at that moment, Yang Jian's Ghost Eye had shut down in a disappointing manner.

It was as if it had crashed, completely unusable.

"It's exactly the same as last time; the Ghost Eye always dares not look directly at the ghost painting," Yang Jian said with a slight frown.

This abnormality was rare for him, but it also indicated from the side that this thing posed a significant threat to him.

"Yang Jian, what should we do now? Let's get out of here, I don't want to die in this place," Li Yao, who hadn't been attacked yet, was already scared out of her wits, nervously clutching Yang Jian's arm.

Yang Jian slowly turned his head, "What are you afraid of? If those onlookers haven't died, you definitely won't be in trouble either. If that thing really wanted to kill people, it would have started by now. The fact that only one person has died must mean the others didn't fit its pattern for killing."

"What did you see downstairs just now? Are you sure it was a ghost painting?"

He was too far away, and though the reaction of his Ghost Eye had given him the answer, he still needed to confirm it for himself.

Li Yao seemed to have calmed down a lot now, she swallowed and took a breath, "I'm not sure, I just saw a painting, an oil painting. The painting was propped on the head of a corpse, but the head of the corpse itself was gone... it was as if the oil painting had eaten it."

"An oil painting that kills?" Yang Jian's expression shifted slightly, "Then it's definitely a ghost painting."

He had read the files on ghost paintings. At the onset of the ghost painting incidents, many people disappeared mysteriously, occasionally leaving behind mutilated corpses. Besides, there was one commonality at the scenes: there was always an oil painting present.

"What was painted on the oil painting?" he asked further.

Li Yao hesitated, "I ran away because I was scared, I didn't, didn't see it."

"Is that so..." Yang Jian mused.

"I won't be in trouble, right? Could the ghost painting have set its sights on me?" Li Yao asked cautiously.

Yang Jian said, "I'm not sure. The killing pattern of the ghost painting is not yet determined, or maybe it has been, but the intelligence headquarters hasn't shared it if it has. They would have no need to hide it from me. Don't be so nervous for now; the chances of the ghost painting targeting you are slim."

He had encountered ghost paintings once before in Dachang City, and he had been fine then. If there had been a problem, he would've died long ago.

Hearing Yang Jian say this, Li Yao breathed a sigh of relief once again.

"It seems the hidden dangers from the operation the day before yesterday have emerged. Now, this really is a headache. The ghost painting could have appeared anywhere else, but it had to show up in the city. If this isn't handled properly, it could turn into another Hungry Ghost incident."

"Let's go down and take a look; some people should be on their way."

Yang Jian had already seen several coordinates approaching quickly on his satellite-positioning smartphone.

Clearly, the headquarters had received the news and would arrive soon to handle the situation.

When he took the elevator down, several special vehicles had already stopped inside the residential complex.

The onlooking residents had been taken away, and the isolation process was beginning nearby.

Those who had arrived included Chen Yi, Jang Shangbai, and Zhang Lei, who had been temporarily pulled from Ping'an Hotel, forming a makeshift team of three Ghost Controllers.

However, Yang Jian knew each of them.

"Yang Jian, you're here too? The headquarters sent you as well?" Zhang Lei was surprised to see Yang Jian walking out of a building.

Chen Yi and Jang Shangbai also turned to look at him.

"I was just passing by and happened to stumble upon it. How are things? Serious?" Yang Jian greeted them.

"I've just got here myself, not very clear on the details. Chen Yi should know more about it," Zhang Lei shook his head. He was just there to make up the numbers, adding manpower.

Chen Yi did not approach the ghost painting but spoke gravely, "It's not too serious yet, but it's showing signs. This painting is not the first one to be discovered today. The other two in charge have also dealt with similar cases. At least three or four such oil paintings have been collected, and nobody knows how they emerged—feels like an invisible curse that is starting to spread."

"However, the situation is still under control, for now. The loss is not significant. So, are you interested in this matter?"

Yang Jian responded, "Who would be interested in such a thing? I just think it's very dangerous, considering it's been defined as an S-class paranormal event abroad; there must be something truly terrifying about it. Just be careful when you handle it. I'll not get involved."

Having said that, he had no intention of staying and turned to leave.

Chen Yi did not stop him; after all, Yang Jian hadn't been assigned the task and didn't have to deal with it.

Jang Shangbai, on the other hand, was slightly concerned upon seeing Li Yao with Yang Jian.

Why was Li Yao with Yang Jian at this time?

"Pack up the painting and take it away, and deal with the scene," Chen Yi instructed the accompanying personnel to start working.

At this moment, Yang Jian was lost in thought, "More than one ghost painting? So, does this mean that the oil painting that suddenly appeared does not belong to the actual paranormal source, and that the truly terrifying ghost painting is still hidden somewhere unknown?"

"This is going to cause quite a few people to lose sleep."

Even though the ghost painting incident had not erupted yet, this harbinger was already enough to instill fear.

Chapter 549 546 He Tianxiong's Home

"We must act quickly, as many things are set to happen after tonight."

Yang Jian had left the neighborhood where the incident occurred, and was now driving with Li Yao toward the residence of someone named He Tianxiong. The emergence of the ghost drawings made him feel the urgency of the situation.

"Indeed, the incidents are too coincidental. We had barely taken action when this happened. If all goes as expected, you'll soon receive a call from your operator, and I guess by tomorrow morning, you'll need to report back to headquarters. It's very likely that dealing with the WeChat group issue will be exposed too," Li Yao said, having calmed down after the earlier scare, as she analyzed the situation, "Once things play out this way, you'll be put in a reactive position."

"I'm aware of that." Yang Jian's face was expressionless, "After dealing with this He Tianxiong, that should be about it. We can take our time with the other key members."

Li Yao remained silent, still replaying the earlier scene in her mind.

Why did that person get stuck in the painting?

Being at the scene, could she be targeted by the ghost drawings too?

And in such a big city, now that the ghost drawings have appeared, where could their source be?

She felt uneasy, and even a sense of inexplicable chill. The glittering lights of the bustling metropolis outside offered her no sense of security or warmth, and even made her want to flee the city.

The precedent set by Dachang City was there for all to see, and she couldn't afford to be dragged into supernatural events.

Sure enough.

Not long after they continued driving, Yang Jian's satellite-positioned phone rang.

"Hello, Yang Jian, it's me, Liu Xiaoyu."

Yang Jian answered the phone, "Speak, what's the matter."

"Suspensions of ghost drawings have arisen in the downtown area. I'm letting you know so you can plan to stay at the Ping'an Hotel and not return to Dachang City. We might need your help here," Liu Xiaoyu said hesitantly, with an almost pleading tone.

"I'm not too keen on getting involved in this."

Yang Jian replied bluntly, "I've already taken great risk dealing with the Ghost Envoy incident. Continuously engaging in supernatural events like this, even for a ghost handler of my level, is unsustainable. Death is inevitable eventually. Do you think I have it easy living? Or do you just want me to die faster?"

"That's..."

Liu Xiaoyu didn't know how to respond and could only muster a tough explanation, "But after all, you joined headquarters, and there are some things only you can handle."

"I'm responsible for Dachang City. If there's a problem there, I'll naturally step up. But the issue is that this is someone else's city to manage. Isn't that also a rule set by headquarters?" Yang Jian countered.

"Sorry." There was a pause on the phone from Liu Xiaoyu.

"Five days, I'll stay here for five more days. After that, regardless of the situation, I'll return to Dachang City. If the ghost drawing incident breaks out within these five days, I'll lend a hand. If there's no progress after five days, I'll leave. This isn't said to you but to Vice Minister Cao. He should understand my stance," Yang Jian stated.

"I have other things to attend to, so let's leave it at that for now."

Their conversation was brief, and they soon disconnected.

At this moment.

Inside the communication room.

Shen Liang opened the door and walked into Liu Xiaoyu's office, asking, "What did Yang Jian say?"

Liu Xiaoyu hurriedly stood up and said, "Commander Shen, Yang Jian said he will only stay here for five days, then he'll return to Dachang City."

"Five days?" Shen Liang was startled.

"Yang Jian was very firm, and I couldn't persuade him," Liu Xiaoyu hurriedly added.

But Shen Liang laughed, "I thought he would leave tomorrow. I'm surprised he's willing to stay for five more days. That's beyond my expectations. Given Yang Jian's character, asking him to stay three more days last time already upset him. This time, he's much more generous. It seems he doesn't want to see things get out of control either."

"Is five days enough time?" Liu Xiaoyu wondered.

"It's enough. If it can be resolved, it'll be resolved in these few days. Don't underestimate the capabilities of headquarters in this city," Shen Liang said, "Continue with your work. I'm going to see the reports from the others, to find out exactly how many ghost handlers we can call upon if the situation erupts."

After seeing Shen Liang leave, Liu Xiaoyu murmured to herself.

From what she knew of Yang Jian, he surely wasn't staying in the city for the ghost drawings. He must have other matters to settle first. After all, he was the least willing to be involved in supernatural events without good reason.

About half an hour later.

Li Yao's vehicle stopped in a high-end villa community on the outskirts of the city.

"This community's villa number eight is one of He Tianxiong's places. According to his habits, there's a good chance he's here at this time. I hope we're not making a trip in vain. But if you need efficiency, isn't using the Ghost Domain more convenient? You could search the entire city directly," Li Yao remarked as they arrived.

Yang Jian looked at her and said, "Do you think I'm the only one in this big city with a Ghost Domain? Apart from headquarters' Jang Shangbai, Li Jun, and others, that guy from the WeChat group named Fang Shiming is also suspected of having a Ghost Domain. And there are other ghost handlers in the city. At least on the drive here, I could faintly sense several different directions from where anomalies were emanating."

"After all, this is the safest city in the country. Many people come here looking for refuge, so the waters here run deep," he added.

"That makes sense," Li Yao said, suddenly realizing the complexity.

"Wait for me here," Yang Jian said without further elaboration and stepped out of the car towards the community.

He did not use the ghosts' powers, as he had yet to even confirm whether the person was in the community. It was clear that conserving resources where possible was essential.

In Yang Jian's balanced state, there's no such thing as perfect equilibrium. Sooner or later, the day would come when the revival of one ghost surpassed the suppression of others, leading to an imbalance and the risk of a fierce ghost rising again.

However, this was a far longer span of survival than when he first harnessed the power of the Ghost Eye.

Inside villa number eight of the community.

The lavish decoration, shining with opulence, displayed an overtly flamboyant style typical of nouveau riche taste.

Everything here glistened with gold, as if the walls, floor tiles, and furniture were all coated in a layer of gold, a luster that ordinary materials couldn't achieve.

A not-so-large villa that could be described as the epitome of luxury, no one knows why the owner would be willing to squander such a huge sum of money on such a thoughtless endeavor.

To the other owners in the neighborhood, this seemed like a foolish thing to do, but in He Tianxiong's view, he was the smartest for making such a decision.

Such a house may not be able to fend off supernatural incidents, but at certain times, it could provide the most perfect protection for him. The large expenditure of money was worth it because life itself was the most precious.

Today, He Tianxiong was indeed at home.

He had left Ping'an Tower in the afternoon and returned to his place, and at this moment, he was reading a book in his study.

"If you don't understand, you should read more books. Being dumb is not scary; what's scary is not changing yourself."

He Tianxiong sat on a recliner with his legs crossed, flipping through his favorite book, the Thirty-Six Stratagems of warfare. Although he had read it many times before, he read it again every day, gaining new insights each time.

"Woof woof!"

Suddenly.

The peaceful night was broken by the barking of a dog downstairs, the barking urgent as if a stranger was attempting to approach the house.

"Hmm?"

He Tianxiong immediately put down the book, his gaze turning toward the window with suspicion.

He saw his German Shepherd barking towards a dim direction, but looking along that direction, there was nobody in sight; the streetlamp there was quite bright, allowing him to confirm that there were no people around.

"This dog barks for no reason all day long, I'll stew you sooner or later."

He Tianxiong cursed as he sat back on the recliner.

But just after he had sat down for a short while, he abruptly put down the book again.

The barking stopped.

It stopped abruptly, as if the sound was cut off by something forcefully, not because the dog got tired and stopped of its own accord.

"Bang!"

Then, the utterly silent room was filled with the sound of the front door opening. The sound wasn't loud, but with the anti-theft measures installed in his study, he could clearly hear any movement from the living room on the first floor.

"Something's up, damn it."

He Tianxiong's nerves tensed instantly. In such a short time, to silently kill his dog and open his house door were things no normal person could do, even the top foreign spies couldn't accomplish these two things almost simultaneously.

Just as he thought about stepping out of the study to see what was going on, he hesitated.

"Anyone who dares to barge into my house like this is up to no good; it could be someone seeking revenge. Better safe than sorry, better hide for a bit first." As He Tianxiong moved, his eyes flitted, and instead of leaving the study, he headed for another hidden door.

Although he considered himself second to none in the ghost-controller circle, he still chose to act cautiously.

At this moment.

In the brightly lit living room at the center.

Yang Jian stood on the glossy floor tiles, looking at the surrounding gold-encrusted decorative style, his brows furrowing lightly, "Did they add gold during decoration? There's a thin layer of gold leaf on the walls. Although it's a tiny amount, it's blocking my Ghost Domain."

A ghostly eye on his forehead eerily scanned the surroundings.

His vision was obstructed, unable to see through the walls to cover the whole house, leaving many blind spots.

"However, decorating like this at such an expense isn't very meaningful. It only causes a little trouble for those with a Ghost Domain power, but it's just a little trouble after all."

Yang Jian could confirm that He Tianxiong was inside the house.

He saw signs of activity, so the house wasn't empty.

Just as he was about to head upstairs, a man's voice came from the living room.

"I thought a thief had entered my house, intending to scrape off the walls. Unexpectedly, it's Yang Jian, the Ghost Eye of Dachang City. What brings Mister Yang to my home? You surely didn't take a wrong turn and accidentally enter through the door, did you?"

Yang Jian turned to look, realizing the voice was coming from a loudspeaker inside the room.

"You're much more cautious than I imagined, not only keeping a dog outside but also using gold as a decorative material. It's indeed difficult for most ghost-controllers with a Ghost Domain to enter your house undetected." Yang Jian calmly replied, "You don't need to hide; I know you're here. You can't conceal yourself from me."

"But I also wouldn't dare to carelessly appear within your Ghost Eye's sight, would I? If you erase me with a glance, wouldn't I die a wrongful death?" He Tianxiong's voice was filled with caution, "Let's discuss whatever it is like civilized people. There's no need for such scary visits."

"Do you think the bit of gold you've got is enough to sustain the entire house? Or should I consider dropping something through your roof?" Yang Jian asked flatly.

"No, no."

He Tianxiong's tone suddenly changed, seemingly realizing what Yang Jian was about to do.

As expected.

The next moment, the house began to shake precariously, as if it were about to collapse at any time.

"Wait, wait, don't tear down my house, we can talk it out..." He Tianxiong panicked; he did not want his hard-earned home to be forcibly destroyed by Yang Jian.

Soon.

A figure appeared on the hallway of the third floor, anxiously looking down at Yang Jian in the living room.

With the appearance of He Tianxiong, Yang Jian no longer bothered tearing down the place. The house immediately stopped shaking, and everything quickly returned to calm.

"That's more like it. It's better to come out and face death than to force me to demolish such a house. Who knows, maybe I'll need it later." A smile appeared on Yang Jian's lips, cold and devoid of any emotion.

He Tianxiong's eyes shrank, a chill running through his heart.

As expected, Yang Jian was there to cause trouble; otherwise, Yang Jian wouldn't have specifically come to his house without knowing him.

Chapter 550 547: The Person on the Shoulder

To be honest, Yang Jian was not particularly keen on meeting He Tianxiong, and if possible, this guy would have been instantly sent by Yang Jian into the fifth level of the Ghost Domain to vanish from this world, just like Zhang Jian.

There could be no allowance for him to speak.

However, this dazzling villa presented a slight obstacle, preventing Yang Jian from finding He Tianxiong immediately.

"This guy has harnessed two ghosts, which are much higher in rank than Zhang Jian's, and even though the ghosts are not in a crashed state, they can still cause me some trouble," Yang Jian's gaze shifted slightly, settling on He Tianxiong's shoulders.

He Tianxiong's shoulders dipped slightly, as if pressed down by something.

Ordinary eyes couldn't see the hidden ghosts, but his Ghost Eye could see them very clearly.

They were a pair of dry, skeletal feet without shoes, covered in livor mortis spots, which were now stepping on He Tianxiong's shoulders, one foot on each side, as though using him as a stepping stone, or as if He Tianxiong had no choice but to support this ghost with his body to prevent its feet from touching the ground.

Looking up slightly, above the livor mortis-covered feet was a half body wearing black cloth trousers, not in the style of this era, but rather like an old-fashioned style from decades ago; the somewhat loose trousers swaying slightly, as if the corpse on He Tianxiong's shoulders was not stable.

However, no matter how He Tianxiong moved, there was no chance the corpse would fall off.

His gaze flicked back to the waist of the ghost and stopped there, Yang Jian didn't continue looking because he knew that if he looked up any further, he might be immediately killed by the ghost.

According to the intelligence from President Fei.

He Tianxiong, codenamed Ghost Stomper.

The rule for murdering was, you must not look up.

If the ghost caught you looking up at it, then it would immediately step off He Tianxiong's shoulders and kill you, and it didn't matter whether you actually saw the ghost or not, merely making the motion was enough.

It could be said that the level of danger was extremely high.

Because the one to act was not He Tianxiong, but the ghost within his body, which made him a very special ghost controller.

"So he's standing on the third floor to satisfy the ghost's condition to kill, with the intention of tempting me to look up, just so that the ghost on his body becomes aware of me," Yang Jian thought to himself, but he did not look up; although standing on the first floor, his Ghost Eye continued moving, staring intently at He Tianxiong.

He knew from the information he had seen earlier that his Ghost Eye had some constraints on it.

If it wasn't for that piece of information, Yang Jian might have been facing the possibility of being killed by He Tianxiong's ghost by now.

"This Yang Jian didn't look up," He Tianxiong's expression shifted slightly, "How is this possible?"

According to normal human habits, anyone on the third floor would subconsciously look up, and then his ghost would step down from his shoulder to kill Yang Jian, but this Yang Jian was staring with his forehead.

On that forehead, a bizarre red eye was fixed on him, like a ghost peering into his soul.

"This fellow must be doing it on purpose, avoiding looking up," He Tianxiong thought, and with this realization, his heart sank even deeper. "There must be a leak in my network of friends."

After all, he was different from other ghost controllers, as he couldn't fully control the ghost within his body. He could only choose the right time to let the ghost out to kill, but he couldn't select the target for the ghost.

If Yang Jian never raised his head and caught the attention of his ghost, even as a ghost controller, he wouldn't be able to make his ghost leave his shoulder. At most, he could prevent the ghost from killing.

But what He Tianxiong needed most now was for the ghost to kill Yang Jian for him.

A brief ten seconds of scrutiny allowed them to form a rough guess and a clear judgment of each other's intentions.

Yang Jian had the upper hand.

"Stop this, we don't have any deep-rooted hatred. There's no point in fighting; I heard there was an oil painting murder in the city today. Likely a sign of the Ghost Painting. As one of the responsible parties, you would be involved, right? In the face of such an important matter, there's no need for you to waste time on me."

Immediately, cold sweat broke out on He Tianxiong's forehead, and his shoulders felt heavier than usual. He began to persuade, "If you're willing to back down, I can agree to any conditions you have, as long as they're not excessive."

Yang Jian's ghostly gaze shifted, but he did not speak.

He was thinking, thinking about how to kill this He Tianxiong in a way that would have the least consequence.

"No deep-rooted hatred? I've heard that your friend circle is planning to take me down, that you've finalized the plan and are about to execute it soon."

Yang Jian said, "You must be one of the executors of this plan, so today I came to have a look. If possible, I'd like to make the first move and kill a few of your key members. Before you, President Fei and Zhang Jian have already met their end, now it's your turn."

Hearing this, He Tianxiong's expression turned stern.

Although he knew there was a leak within the friend circle, he hadn't expected that even such a secretive plan was known to Yang Jian, and that he was seriously killing his way through.

"Indeed, your information is accurate. I have nothing to explain about this. It's a matter of stance, not of enmity. The decisions of the friend circle are not made by me alone, but are voted on by a board of

directors. However, this plan has not yet been executed, and there is no need for us to be at each other's throats just yet. There is still room for negotiation."

Being stared at by that eye, He Tianxiong felt uncomfortable all over. He took a few steps trying to avoid that eerie gaze, but inside he was already filled with trepidation.

"I have a plan that benefits us both. Let's shake hands and make peace today. I won't participate in any plans against you from the friend circle. We live and let live. As a personal compensation to you, I will give you this villa, and I can guarantee that I will never seek revenge against you in the future."

"How about it? For people like us, nothing is more important than living, and you should know that I'm sincere."

These words were the result of serious thought. Firstly, people were already coming to his door, and if he didn't show some humility, he would have to fight this brute to the end, which wasn't worth it. Secondly, Yang Jian already knew he lived here, so he couldn't stay in this house anymore, to avoid being slaughtered whenever Yang Jian felt like it.

They say Yang Jian holds grudges; Wang Xiaoming's brother, Wang Xiaoqiang, was killed by him in Dachang City.

Moreover, as long as he survives tonight, he can lay low and let Fang Shiming handle the rest, sitting back and watching the outcome. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

Yet Yang Jian responded, "Zhang Jian said something similar to you. These are just cowardly words when the moment of truth arrives. Moreover, your sincerity now doesn't mean you'll always be sincere. We

can negotiate, if within five minutes you haven't been killed by me, then I'll believe in your sincerity. After all, if someone slaps me, I can't just suffer in silence, can I?"

Hearing this, He Tianxiong's brow furrowed slightly.

The tone was excessive, but... he understood the meaning behind Yang Jian's words.

...

If killing me was easy, he would have taken the chance to do it on the way here today. If it wasn't, he would be willing to resolve things peacefully.

"Are your words true? Can it be settled within five minutes?" He Tianxiong voiced his doubt.

If that were the case, it would mean that Yang Jian didn't plan to fight to the death and would hold back, which would give him a chance.

"Do you think I'm standing here wasting words just to deceive you?" Yang Jian said, "If you want to live, you need skill. Those without it who still think about harming others deserve to die if they do."

"A person like you indeed has the right to say such words." At that moment, He Tianxiong no longer saw Yang Jian as a young fool.

This guy was dangerously frightening.

"Let's begin," said Yang Jian, his head not lifted as he spoke in a deep voice.

As soon as he finished speaking, He Tianxiong's face dramatically changed, and he turned to run. His quick reflexes belied the fact that he was someone with a ghost perched on his shoulder. In the blink of an eye, he disappeared into the corridor on the third floor, followed by the sound of a door slamming shut, and then silence filled the house.

He had slipped away.

And he did it quickly.

Yang Jian still stood in his place, making no move, only the ghost eye on his forehead watched in the direction where He Tianxiong had disappeared.

"I can't let the ghost on his shoulder come down. Otherwise, even if I kill him later, it'll get troublesome. A ghost without a necromancer to control it isn't easy to deal with. But I don't have information on his other ghost; I need to pay attention to that."

He looked down at the time: "If I can't easily handle He Tianxiong within five minutes, I might have to consider temporarily letting him go. After all, there's Fang Shiming behind him, that guy suspected to possess the Ghost Scissors. I can't afford to go all out here and reveal my trump card too soon."

He Tianxiong commanded two ghosts, and one of them on him was of a unique kind. Such people are a bit troublesome to kill.

Of course, if Yang Jian was determined to kill him, he could do it, since he had the immortal Eight-Tone Music Box and the Ghost Candle with him. If he kept fighting, he would definitely not die in the end, but this He Tianxiong would surely be doomed.

"Well, let's see how long you can hold out." Yang Jian thought to himself, his expression growing more solemn.

He didn't take the situation lightly, even when facing Zhang Jian. He had cautiously activated three layers of the Ghost Domain for self-protection, and in the end, he used five layers of the Ghost Domain to get rid of him, going all out to ensure nothing would go wrong.

The next moment.

Yang Jian moved; with one step forward, he vanished from the first floor and immediately appeared on the third floor.

The surrounding lights flickered as if they were being interfered with—what had been a well-lit villa instantly became dim, and even the temperature around seemed to drop, creating an indiscernibly gloomy atmosphere.

Click!

The firmly locked door was effortlessly opened without a hint of resistance.

Yang Jian walked into the room, his figure gradually swallowed by the darkness within.

At that instant.

He Tianxiong was breathing heavily and sweating profusely. Using his familiarity with his own house, he quickly moved from the third floor to the second floor.

He didn't take the stairs but moved through a pre-arranged elevator shaft connecting the floors.

"All the room doors have a Gold barrier. Although the quantity is small, it can hinder the Ghost Domain's coverage. Jang Shangbai tried it last time. Without the Ghost Domain, this Yang Jian definitely can't find me right away, after all, he doesn't have a tracking function."

"What I need to do now is to survive at all costs, to avoid confrontation with this guy. Apart from the uncertainty of winning or not, he controls three Ghost Persons, and if we come head-to-head, I'm bound to die before him from a vengeful ghost revival. Besides, he knows my critical information, the ghost stepping on my shoulder probably won't get a chance to step down."

He Tianxiong fled all the way, playing hide and seek with Yang Jian inside the villa, while analyzing the situation in his mind.

It was as if he was dealing with an actual ghost in Yang Jian.

But before he could think further, he heard the steady footsteps of Yang Jian coming from above his head, as if he had sensed his proximity but couldn't pinpoint his exact location due to environmental barriers, resulting in an error.

"Bang!"

Then, He Tianxiong heard the ceiling above him shaking, as if someone were stamping their foot, but such strength was definitely beyond human.

"Is that Yang Jian's Ghost Shadow? He wants to break through the house to find me. I can't be naive anymore. This man is too dangerous. I must use whatever I have, or else I might really die here."

Without time to think further, he gritted his teeth and discarded something from his pocket, then rushed toward a small room on the second floor.

That small room was a safety room he had carefully constructed, costing a fortune. It could block the intrusion of most ghosts, but blocking a person... was a bit difficult.

Yet He Tianxiong could only gamble on those five minutes.

Just as He Tianxiong ran out of the room on the second floor, the next moment, a tall, headless shadow had already appeared in his previous spot, emanating a faint red glow—a pair of eerie red eyes.

"You run quite fast, but it's too late now. If you don't use a ghost to fight back, such petty tricks are useless," said Yang Jian.

The commotion on the third floor stopped immediately.

Yang Jian had disappeared from the third floor; he had located He Tianxiong.

In the dim environment, he locked onto his panicked fleeing silhouette.

In an instant.

He raised his palm to his forehead, instantly aligning the five Ghost Eyes within his body, casting a red light around him.

A chilling terror surged, and the sensitivity of being a necromancer caused He Tianxiong to freeze. He couldn't help but look back.

"Damn it."

His mind stalled, and all he managed was an instinctive curse.