

## Revival 551

### Chapter 551 A Death Substitute

Yang Jian seemed to give He Tianxiong a chance, but when he actually made a move, he was unequivocally decisive. He knew better than anyone how terrifying ghosts could be—any small mistake might lead to his own demise. Therefore, he wouldn't even give a chance to test the waters this time.

After all, the ghost of He Tianxiong was also a kind of abnormal existence; he couldn't afford to give him too many opportunities.

The red glow of the fifth layer of the Ghost Domain suddenly enveloped the area in front, completely shrouding He Tianxiong.

This eerie ability, derived from the Ghost Eye, could even dispatch ghosts, and had even instantly killed Zhang Jian before.

However, this time, an incomprehensible situation occurred.

He Tianxiong stood in place, his face filled with horror, yet he himself had no injuries, and from the look on his face, he seemed to be somewhat surprised as well.

"You're alright?" Yang Jian's gaze sharpened.

He Tianxiong first let out a sigh of relief, then looked with immense gratitude towards an inconspicuous corner.

This action was noted.

Yang Jian immediately noticed a tattered Scapegoat Cloth Doll lying in the direction He Tianxiong had looked, with most of its body missing. Although the doll was unremarkable, the moment he took notice of it, he understood what had happened.

"You really do spare no expense, using a Scapegoat Cloth Doll to die for you once. Are these things common in your circle of friends? To be so generously wasted?."

This peculiar cloth doll could transfer a ghost's attack and save a life in extremely dangerous situations. Yang Jian had used one before during the Ghost Envoy incident at the training base. Although it wasn't for himself, the effect was impressive.

He Tianxiong didn't speak, his forehead still beaded with cold sweat.

He only had one of these dolls; they weren't plentiful by any means. This time, he wasn't even sure if a cloth doll could save his life. It was simply a trial, as he'd never encountered such a circumstance before.

"If it weren't for this thing just now, I would definitely be dead... That eye, too dangerous. If I can't find a way out of the Ghost Eye's sight, I won't survive today."

He Tianxiong came back to his senses. Instead of foolishly standing there trying to outlast Yang Jian, and without answering Yang Jian's questions, he continued to turn and run.

The brief lull gave him a sliver of space to struggle.

Yang Jian's expression was cold: "Looks like you only have one of these things, not as many as I imagined..."

The Scapegoat Doll had blocked a fatal attack once, but this time, He Tianxiong definitely couldn't withstand a second.

Immediately, Yang Jian raised his palm a second time.

"Again?" Seeing his odd gesture, He Tianxiong turned pale with fear, and without hesitation, turned and fled.

However, in the next moment, Yang Jian's figure seemed to pause for a bit.

Taking advantage of the gap, He Tianxiong burst through a door, slammed it shut behind him, and quickly escaped the area.

"After stacking the fifth layer of the Ghost Domain twice, the Ghost Eye shows signs of recovery."

Yang Jian felt the Ghost Eye beneath his skin restlessly moving, and a wave of piercing pain hit him. The lights around flickered uncertainly; even the Ghost Domain couldn't be maintained stably.

The Ghost Eye seemed to revert to the time when it was not very controlled.

"The limit, huh? If I continue to use the Ghost Eye consecutively, the balance among the three ghosts inside my body will be disrupted. Indeed, this method causes significant harm to myself. From the situation just now, twice in short succession appears to be the limit. A third time... there's a possibility of revival. Four times, I reckon the ghost within my body will completely lose control over the Ghost Eye."

He remained silent, his heart making a rough evaluation of his physical condition.

"Although there's a limit to the number of times I can use it, it's undeniable that I was indeed capable of killing He Tianxiong, someone who had tamed two ghosts."

Looking at the broken Scapegoat Cloth Doll on the ground, it was enough evidence that He Tianxiong had died once. If the attack just now hadn't been fatal, then the doll wouldn't have died either.

"It seems that in order to kill He Tianxiong next time, I'll have to use Ghost Shadow or Ghost Hand. Blindly pursuing this kind of foolproof attack isn't very wise." Yang Jian's ghostly eyes gradually closed, and the lights surrounding him once again became bright.

The surrounding darkness dissipated, and the villa became bright once more.

There was no need to maintain the unstable Ghost Domain, especially since there was Gold pasted everywhere, creating many dead angles in the Ghost Domain. It was better to wrap things up.

At this moment, He Tianxiong, who was hiding in the room, also noticed that the lights were back to normal. He gasped for air and muttered to himself, "Sure enough, no matter how fearsome Yang Jian is, he's still a ghost master with limits. He must have used his ghostly eye's power to kill Zhang Jian earlier, and just now, I escaped death again with the Scapegoat Doll."

"Using the ghostly eye repeatedly, Yang Jian won't be feeling good. He must have reached the limit of his ghostly eye, and now I suppose he can't even use the Ghost Domain."

As one ghost master to another, He Tianxiong understood Yang Jian's current condition very well, as he had also experienced it several times.

Constantly using the power of fierce ghosts in a short time was essentially committing suicide. So, in most cases, ghost masters don't recklessly use the ghosts' powers unless it's a matter of life and death.

But even though the Ghost Domain was gone, He Tianxiong's face remained grave because Yang Jian still had the abilities of two other ghosts to use, and next time he might not be so fortunate to escape a deadly predicament.

"Damn it, compared with Yang Jian's ghosts, your ghostly thing is simply trash, always just standing on my shoulders. Now that I'm about to die, you don't even come down to lend a hand." He Tianxiong couldn't help but curse, his gaze lifting slightly to the dry, corpse-spotted feet that still firmly stood upon him.

Even during such a perilous moment, the ghost had no intention of attacking Yang Jian; He Tianxiong's life or death also couldn't sway the ghost's actions.

Unless Yang Jian looked up and noticed the ghost.

"But despite the danger just now, at least I took the moment Yang Jian had issues to enter this safe house. For the moment, he shouldn't be able to invade, and now the time... there are two minutes left." He Tianxiong glanced at the time again.

It was just a little short of the five minutes they had agreed upon earlier.

If Yang Jian really kept to their arrangement, it was highly likely that he wouldn't die today.

"Bang!"

Before he could think further, a loud noise came from the door. The front door dented in severely as if a few more hits like that would completely smash the specially customized door.

He Tianxiong jumped frightfully. He now had no room left to flee; if Yang Jian truly came out, he would have no choice but to face him head-on.

He took off his shirt only to find that the flesh on his chest had rotted beyond recognition; the flesh had nearly dissolved away, leaving blackened bones studded with small golden nails—it seemed to be a repair job to keep his own bones from fracturing.

In the empty chest cavity, it seemed as though nothing was left. By all accounts, He Tianxiong should have been long dead.

But he was still alive.

He was alive because of his second ghost.

That was a chunk of flesh from a dead person hidden inside the front of his chest.

This dark, rotten piece of flesh was slowly growing, no, rather, it was slowly taking his place. It first decayed his original flesh and then grew anew. He Tianxiong had no idea what it would eventually become. All he knew was that when his entire body rotted away, that would be his time to die.

By then, what kind of ghost he would become didn't matter anymore.

Chapter 552 The Critical Phone Call

In fact, the first ghost that He Tianxiong had managed to control was not this thing stepping on his shoulders but the thing that was gradually eroding his flesh all over his body. Back then, he watched as his body decayed bit by bit each day, while something not his own kept growing back. The days of being tormented yet unable to die were the nightmare of his life.

However, this curse-like affliction on his body was not entirely a bad thing.

He Tianxiong discovered a very bizarre situation: he could no longer die.

He jumped off a building, his head cracked open, and he was even sent to the crematorium. Yet, he woke up again at night. His cracked head miraculously healed, but the downside was there were more decayed spots on his body.

Besides that, He Tianxiong discovered another situation.

If he encountered a ghost, the ghost definitely wouldn't attack the rotten parts of his body. Even if he was attacked, he wouldn't suffer any damage.

However, this seemed to be of no use unless his entire body had rotted and regrown this death-like flesh.

But by that time, he would definitely be dead.

Nevertheless, after he had controlled his second ghost, the situation improved.

The ghost stepping on his shoulder had successfully slowed down the rotting of his body. He could clearly see that the flesh just below his shoulders was his own healthy flesh, and this erosion had retreated before the feet of the dead stepping on his shoulders.

In He Tianxiong's mind, as long as his head didn't rot, it didn't matter if his body did because consciousness was the most important.

"Can this body withstand the attack of that thing?" He Tianxiong looked at his body, no longer human-like, still without much confidence.

Unless the ghost on his shoulder stepped down.

But Yang Jian knew his own weakness: his ghost was now utterly useless.

Bang!

Another loud noise, the door caved in again, and the gap was no longer tightly closed. There was now an opening. His heavily-funded safe house had been breached in just two blows.

Through that cracked gap, a flickering black shadow gradually seeped in, and it was spreading further.

"It's Yang Jian's shadow," He Tianxiong's eyes narrowed.

He had read Yang Jian's file and knew that his shadow was a ghost. Although he wasn't clear about the specific details of this ghost, as long as it was a ghost, it was a huge threat to him.

"He doesn't even want to open the door; is he planning to kill me directly with this ghost shadow? This thing can't be killed." He Tianxiong's hand, which had somehow found a gun, could only helplessly put it down.

Not even showing his face, he was not giving me any chance to turn the tables.

This Yang Jian was cautious to this extent.

After the ghost shadow penetrated in, it gradually began to compress the space of the small room. With no Ghost Domain, He Tianxiong had nowhere to retreat, and could only watch helplessly as the eerie black shadow drew closer to him.

Soon.

His feet, with nowhere to stand, stepped onto the black shadow.

With just the contact, He Tianxiong felt a bone-chilling coldness seeping through his feet. He felt the black shadow was gradually invading his body. Just from the contact, his legs completely lost sensation and began to move beyond his control; his body was being rapidly taken over.

"Yang Jian, do you really have no intention of letting me go?"

He Tianxiong screamed in panic, "If I die, after the fierce ghost revives, you'll also be in trouble. We have no enmity; there's no need to fight to this extent."

As he spoke, he lost sensation in his waist, and only the empty cavity in his chest was not invaded yet—that was the abode of the second ghost inside his body. It seemed the ghost shadow met with resistance there.

But what made He Tianxiong tremble was that his legs below the waist started to move on their own, his body was being pulled apart bit by bit.

Not feeling any pain, but clearly, this was a sign of being dismembered.

"I said if you hold out for five minutes, I'll consider settling things with you. Now there are a few seconds left, but I believe this is enough time," Yang Jian's voice came from outside the door, and he himself had not shown his face yet.

At that moment, He Tianxiong felt an immense despair. He knew that if this continued, he would just be killed by Yang Jian bit by bit. Although death wouldn't come quickly, the outcome couldn't be changed, and he wouldn't even be given a chance to fight back.

This guy knew his situation crystal clear, dead to rights.

It was all because of those idiots on his social circle. If there hadn't been trouble there, even if he faced this Ghost Eye Yang Jian, he wouldn't have lost so miserably.

He Tianxiong, who had subdued his second ghost, was considered a notable figure in the circle, yet he died in such a suffocating manner.

He Tianxiong clenched his teeth as he looked at the ghost stepping on his shoulder, while his body was being dismembered, and yet the ghost remained motionless.

However, at that moment.

A vibration came from the private cell phone in his pocket.

"Hmm?"

Yang Jian frowned as he pulled out his phone and glanced at it. He hadn't wanted to take calls at that time, but he answered it anyway when he saw the caller ID.

"Hello. Is this Yang Jian?" A young girl's voice came over the phone, sounding restrained and somewhat hesitant.

"It's me. What's wrong, Miao Xiaoshan? Why are you calling me so late?" Yang Jian replied.

She was his classmate from junior high to high school, Miao Xiaoshan, who had been studying in the same city since the last college entrance examination.

"Are you busy right now?" Miao Xiaoshan asked softly over the phone.

Yang Jian glanced at the concave door in front of him: "Nothing much, just about to go to sleep."

"Although it's not quite appropriate to say this at this time, If you're free tonight, can you come to my school dormitory to check on something? A friend of mine in the same dorm has gone missing," Miao Xiaoshan said with a hint of nervousness in her tone.

Yang Jian said, "If someone has gone missing, you should report it to the police."

"I feel like it's not as simple as a regular disappearance. My intuition tells me it may have something to do with that 'thing,'" Miao Xiaoshan said in hushed tones.

"Do you think it's a supernatural event?" Yang Jian's tone was very calm; dealing with supernatural events had become part of his ordinary life.

Miao Xiaoshan said, "Yes, but I can't be sure, which is why I wanted you to come and have a look."

"When did your friend go missing, and has she been anywhere or done anything unusual before that?" Yang Jian asked.

The chances of a supernatural event occurring out of the blue were very slim; most had signs beforehand.

For example, the Ghost Door Knocker incident he had experienced before, as well as the Ghost Infant incident... It's just that people tend to unconsciously overlook these details.

"She went missing today, and I'm certain she never left the school. She visited the art gallery in the morning and then brought back a painting; after that, we don't know when she disappeared, and she didn't have her phone with her..." Miao Xiaoshan explained.

Art gallery, a painting?

Upon hearing these two words, Yang Jian's expression instantly changed.

"Stay away from that painting and find an open place to wait for me."

"I understand."

Upon hearing this reminder, Miao Xiaoshan's tone immediately revealed a hint of fear.

Having experienced the supernatural before, she could clearly discern from Yang Jian's words that the painting in the dorm, just a bed's space away from her, had issues.

Inside the room.

He Tianxiong also heard Yang Jian making the call and hastily said, "Yang Jian, the five minutes are up, you should keep your promise."

However, no one answered him from outside, all he heard was the hurried sound of footsteps moving away. Simultaneously, the Ghost Shadow that had invaded his body receded like the tide, slipping through the door crack and disappearing into the room.

It was quiet outside the door.

"Did he, did he give up on killing me?" He Tianxiong was nearly weakened, sitting on the ground gasping for air and feeling the sensation returning to his body with an indescribable sense of relief.

He knew it was not because Yang Jian couldn't kill him, nor was it a matter of time, but because of that phone call, the person on the other end of the line.

In Yang Jian's eyes, his life was not even as valuable as a single word from that caller.

"I never want to face this guy again. Now I understand Jang Shangbai's wariness of him a bit better," he thought to himself.

He Tianxiong felt his body trembling, facing Yang Jian was like facing a real ghost, powerful, despairing, giving no one any chance to resist. All one could do was to struggle, to flee, and to wait for death in despair.

Chapter 553 Roommate

Inside the female dormitory of a well-known university in the city.

Miao Xiaoshan didn't want to call Yang Jian originally, not that she didn't want to contact him—for they had known each other since middle school in Dachang City and were very close—but because she didn't want to trouble him. She understood that Yang Jian was no longer the classmate who used to pester her for homework answers.

Yang Jian had more important things to do now.

However, the mysterious disappearance of her roommate, coupled with an uneasy hunch in her heart, ultimately pushed Miao Xiaoshan to muster the courage to make the call.

Yang Jian had once promised her that she should call him if she ever needed help.

"So what happened? What did your high school acquaintance, Yang Jian, say?" A curious girl from the upper bunk asked inside the dorm, "I don't see the point in calling. He's just here to work; what would he know? I think it's better to report it tomorrow. Besides, it's so late that even if you call, it's useless. He definitely won't come."

"Yeah, just go to sleep for now. Maybe things aren't as bad as we imagine. Perhaps Zhang Xia has gone out on a date, and by tomorrow she'll surely be back. Always suspecting the supernatural, that's an illness, and I think it's curable," another roommate named Sun Yujia said with a smile.

"Maybe Xiao Shan just misses that old high school classmate and is using this as an excuse to call. She normally wouldn't have the guts to do it."

"Heh, that makes sense." A few girls teased each other, not believing that a roommate had truly disappeared.

The security at this school was so good, with regular patrols—how could someone possibly disappear mysteriously.

"Can't you all just stop the nonsense for now? Let Miao Xiaoshan finish her call first," another girl named Liu Zi said impatiently. She was a local and had some authority in the dorm like an elder sister; her words carried weight.

Sure enough, the other teasing girls immediately fell silent.

Liu Zi wasn't in a good mood today; she even felt a bit uneasy because she'd already learned about the identity of this high school classmate of Miao Xiaoshan's named Yang Jian from her boyfriend.

He was quite special.

Special enough that even her rich second generation boyfriend didn't qualify to mingle with such people.

So ever since that day, she had been especially courteous to Miao Xiaoshan.

The phone call didn't last long.

Soon, the call ended, and Miao Xiaoshan lowered her phone from her ear. After hanging up, her face turned slightly pale, and a look of terror flashed in her eyes as she unconsciously glanced towards her roommate Zhang Xia's bed.

The bed was very tidy, with no extra clutter, but there was an old oil painting with a historical vibe placed against the wall.

Yang Jian had mentioned that there was something wrong with that oil painting.

"Miao Xiaoshan, what's wrong? Why do you look so pale?" Liu Zi inquired.

Miao Xiaoshan shivered, snapping back to reality with a hint of panic in her voice, "Quick, we need to leave, get out of the dorm, leave this place now."

As she spoke, she quickly started to get dressed in a hurry, as if running for her life.

"What's happened all of a sudden, and where do you want to go in the middle of the night when it's so cold outside?"

Miao Xiaoshan's abnormal behavior confused her roommates.

"Anywhere is fine, just not here. Stop looking at me and get dressed quickly, follow me," she urged.

Miao Xiaoshan became even more anxious when she saw that none of her roommates were taking action. She tried to pull her roommates from their beds, but instead of being grateful, they shook her off.

"Miao Xiaoshan, calm down. What are you freaking out about all of a sudden? You weren't stimulated by something, were you?" the roommate named Sun Yujia said, trying to comfort her.

Liu Zi also hurried over and asked, "Did that high school classmate of yours named Yang Jian say something to you over the phone? Tell us, and we can offer our advice. Don't panic yet."

"Yang Jian said there's something wrong with that painting. Zhang Xia's disappearance might be related to a paranormal event. Don't waste any more time; listen to my advice and leave this place for now. I'll explain everything to you later," she explained.

Although Miao Xiaoshan was ready to flee the dormitory, she could not bear to leave her roommates behind.

But the roommates did not believe her words and had no intention of leaving the dormitory.

After all, who would want to run out into the cold night just because of one's groundless words?

And besides, it wasn't even allowed to go out at this time.

"A paranormal event? You mean our dormitory is haunted?" Liu Zi reacted, her voice filled with disbelief.

"I don't know. I just know Yang Jian said there is something wrong with the painting and told us to leave this place," she said.

Miao Xiaoshan stamped her feet anxiously, "Why are you still lying in bed? Hurry up and go."

One of the roommates laughed immediately, "Miao Xiaoshan, you must have been fooled by your high school classmate. A paranormal event, really? I've never seen a ghost in all my life. What era do you think this is? Do you still believe in this stuff? I think you're just too naive, believing everything that's told to you. If there really were ghosts, then I'd like to see what a ghost looks like."

"Yeah, Miao Xiaoshan, that Yang Jian is definitely trying to scare you. He's too bad, knowing you're scared of ghost stories yet deliberately telling you such things. Don't be so jumpy; just go to sleep already. I guarantee nothing will happen tonight," Sun Yujia said earnestly.

But the more they said this, the more anxious and unsettled Miao Xiaoshan became.

They had no idea what she and Yang Jian, along with their other classmates, had experienced back at No. 7 Middle School in Dachang City.

In their entire class, nearly fifty students, only seven were alive to leave the school by the end of the night.

That day's experience was the nightmare of her life.

Seeing Miao Xiaoshan so emotionally stirred up, Liu Zi started to waver as well.

The idea of the dormitory being haunted by ghosts and encountering supernatural events seemed like a far-fetched tale, even laughable.

But what if, just what if, it were true?

After all, Yang Jian was someone even her boyfriend was extremely wary of; maybe he did know some inside information.

After some thought, Liu Zi said, "Let's listen to Miao Xiaoshan for now and leave the dorm first. We can discuss everything else tomorrow."

"You've got to be kidding, Liu Zi. Do you really believe what Miao Xiaoshan says? If you want to go, then go, but I'm not joining your madness. I'm going to sleep; I have to attend classes tomorrow," that roommate said before lying back and wrapping herself in the quilt, ignoring everyone else.

"All of this is so confusing. I can't wrap my head around it. Ah, I can't be bothered with all this, ghosts or no ghosts. I don't believe in that stuff. Miao Xiaoshan, stop dragging me, I'm really sleepy. I'm going to bed too. You have something to say, tell it to Liu Zi, she believes you anyway," said Sun Yujia, retreating back under her covers helplessly.

Miao Xiaoshan was anxious and at a loss, with her roommates completely disbelieving her. It was too difficult to pull them out of their beds in the middle of the night.

But if we don't leave now, and something really happens, then we won't be able to escape at all.

Back in No. 7 Middle School, she had witnessed a ghost appear right before her eyes, and if they had been just one step slower at that time, everyone would have died in the school.

So time is precious.

Maybe I should go alone?

Such a thought flashed across Miao Xiaoshan's mind, but she couldn't bear to expose her roommates to danger.

Seeing that they had no intention of leaving the dormitory, Liu Zi also began to hesitate.

After all, it's quite shameful to run out in the middle of the night because of a ghost rumor, as if behaving like an imbecile.

However, just at that moment.

Crackle!

The lights in the dorm suddenly flickered unnaturally.

Immediately, everyone looked up at the light on the ceiling.

"There couldn't really be a ghost, could there?" Liu Zi thought to herself.

But the next moment, a loud bang resounded, and the dormitory door was forcefully kicked open with tremendous force.

Everyone was startled by the noise.

Turning quickly, they found a stranger standing at the door.

It was a young man, about twenty years old, with a handsome appearance and overly pale complexion, looking like a somewhat attractive, fair-faced young man; but his whole being exuded an unsettlingly cold demeanor, especially those piercing eyes, so sharp they felt like needles on one's back, utterly unnerving.

"Didn't I tell you over the phone to leave the dormitory? Why are you still here?" The man frowned slightly and spoke directly, his tone revealing dissatisfaction and reproach.

This person was not pleasant to deal with.

At first glance, including Liu Zi, all the girls had this thought pop into their heads.

And the second thought was, could this person be Yang Jian, the high school classmate Miao Xiaoshan had mentioned?

"Yang Jian, I..." Miao Xiaoshan, as if she had done something wrong, wanted to explain, yet didn't know what to say.

Yang Jian, observing Miao Xiaoshan who was ready to leave, and the other roommates still lying in their beds, roughly guessed what was going on.

"If some people don't want to leave, then let them stay here. You remember how Qian Wanhao died, right?"

As he spoke, he walked in.

His ghostly eye had already reacted; the Ghost Domain could only extend outside the dormitory, which was enough proof that this painting was identical to the one he had encountered in that apartment complex.

The curse of the ghost painting.

"Hey, this is the girls' dormitory; boys are not allowed to stay. Didn't you see we were all sleeping? If you're looking for Miao Xiaoshan, you should wait outside," a roommate chided, raising her head.

Yang Jian just glanced at her briefly, "Do you have a death wish, woman?"

The roommate immediately silenced herself. She had never seen anyone with such eyes before: dismissive, cold-blooded, devoid of any emotion, as if she was just a corpse in his eyes, suggesting that any further words would bring about severe consequences.

"Yang Jian, don't be like this," Miao Xiaoshan said nervously, grabbing his hand.

Yet from his hand, she could not feel any warmth that a living person should have, but she still did not let go.

It wasn't Yang Jian's choice to become like this; it was an inevitability from their time at No. 7 Middle School.

"Having unreliable teammates once is enough; if some people want to die, you can't accompany them."

Yang Jian grabbed her hand firmly, "Close your eyes, don't look at anything you shouldn't, follow me and leave this place."

Miao Xiaoshan had no resistance and immediately closed her eyes.

Yang Jian led her, striding out of the dormitory.

"But, my roommates..." Miao Xiaoshan said quietly.

"They are not my roommates, and I have no duty to care for them. If it really comes down to it, you can just change roommates later; anyway, you haven't been getting along with them for long," Yang Jian said, his tone still indifferent.

Miao Xiaoshan didn't know how to respond and fell silent.

The rest watched the scene in astonishment.

"No way, Miao Xiaoshan just got carried out by that Yang Jian? Can he be any more forceful? Kick the door and take her away, am I watching a drama here?" exclaimed the roommate named Sun Yujia.

"That's not the point here," Liu Zi's unease quickly magnified.

Because she realized from the time Miao Xiaoshan made the phone call until now, it had been less than five minutes, and within these few minutes, Yang Jian had appeared outside their dormitory.

It's important to note that Yang Jian isn't a student at this school, and even if he lived nearby, it would be impossible to arrive at the dormitory so accurately and quickly in such a short time.

This was completely unscientific.

"I, I'm going out too," Liu Zi suddenly panicked, quickly putting on her shoes and grabbing a jacket before rushing out.

But once outside, she was stunned.

The empty corridor was eerily silent, with no one in sight.

Where was Yang Jian, who had carried out Miao Xiaoshan earlier?

Connecting this to the earlier talk of the dormitory being haunted, Liu Zi now felt it could very well be true.

The fear in her heart grew boundlessly, and she couldn't worry about anything else, running madly outside.

Chapter 554 has a problem

"Alright, you can open your eyes now."

Yang Jian's voice rang in her ears, and when Miao Xiaoshan opened her eyes again, she found herself in the school's basketball gym.

The lights in the gym were already on, and at this time, it was deserted except for the two of them.

Accustomed to the eerie changes of location, appearing in places she couldn't possibly have reached in such a short time, Miao Xiaoshan felt odd but not panicked.

"Is it safe here?" Miao Xiaoshan asked.

Yang Jian rubbed his forehead and casually took a seat in the spectator stands, "I'm not sure. If that thing begins to kill, there won't be a safe place in the entire city."

"Is it the painting from my dorm room?" Miao Xiaoshan leaned against Yang Jian as she sat down, then started to fix her shoes that hadn't been put on properly before.

Yang Jian said, "That's just one of the paintings. This is a kind of weird and terrifying curse. As long as that thing appears somewhere, people will be killed by a ghost. We haven't determined the source yet, and many people have been troubled by this issue recently."

"Is it very dangerous? How does it compare to the ghost at No. 7 Middle School?" Miao Xiaoshan asked after a moment of silence.

"To ordinary people, there is no big difference. But for me, the difference is significant. At No. 7 Middle School, I could save a few, but if targeted by this thing, I might die too."

Yang Jian said, "Do you remember what Zhou Zheng said during the lecture that time?"

Miao Xiaoshan nodded.

"The pattern in which a ghost kills is very important. If we can figure that out, we can at least ensure we survive when facing a ghost. But the problem is, you can only understand the pattern after interacting with the ghost." As he said this, Yang Jian slightly raised his head to look at Miao Xiaoshan's tense but cute face.

"The process requires risking our lives. Some who guess wrong die without understanding, others who guess right are lucky to survive. For most ordinary people, there's only one chance to make a mistake."

"Nobody is that lucky to find the ghost's killing pattern on the first try, so the best option is to stay away from these events. You've been through the situation at No. 7 Middle School; you should understand it's not the time to be thinking about others. It's about saving every single person you can. If they don't appreciate it, you shouldn't bother,"

"Otherwise, you'll die too."

Miao Xiaoshan lowered her head and said softly, "But they are my roommates; I can't just stand by and watch them die. Didn't you save us back at No. 7 Middle School?"

"You can't save everyone."

Yang Jian said in a low voice, "These incidents are increasing, and more and more people are becoming victims. If you try to save everyone, you'll end up saving no one because you'll die faster than they will. Zhou Zheng is the perfect example. I don't want to become the next Zhou Zheng. If I have to choose, why wouldn't I ensure the safety of my friends and family first?"

"Yang Jian, you've changed from how you used to be," Miao Xiaoshan muttered.

"It's because you're too kind. If I thought like you, I probably would have died a long time ago," Yang Jian replied.

Miao Xiaoshan said, "Let's not argue, okay? Since that painting is so dangerous, can you find a way to evacuate everyone from the dormitory building? I don't want them to go through those horrible things. After all, supernatural events are too cruel for them... consider this me begging you."

Seeing Yang Jian's indifferent demeanor, she pulled his arm, looking plaintive.

"You don't need to beg me; just tell me you need my help."

Without saying much more, Yang Jian picked up his satellite phone, "Evacuating a dormitory building is something we can't accomplish, even if we talk ourselves hoarse. We might even be taken for lunatics and get arrested,"

"Only headquarters has the power to do that."

Soon, the call on the satellite phone connected.

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

"I heard. What's the matter?" Liu Xiaoyu responded eagerly.

Yang Jian said, "I'm at the college basketball court. There's a ghost painting in one of the women's dormitory buildings here. You might want to notify the school to evacuate everyone from the building."

"How far has the situation progressed? Are there any casualties?" Liu Xiaoyu's speech suddenly quickened, sounding urgent.

"No one's dead yet, but since a ghost painting has appeared in a dormitory building, it's only a matter of time," Yang Jian said.

Liu Xiaoyu immediately replied, "I understand. You can handle the situation there, right? We'll send a team to assist you. We don't have anyone else to spare; all the leaders are occupied with tasks. Could you do me a favor this time?"

"Then you owe me a favor," Yang Jian said.

"Thank you," Liu Xiaoyu sighed with relief.

"We'll leave it at that. Have them come find me at the basketball court when they arrive." Yang Jian finished and cut off the communication.

Miao Xiaoshan noticed Yang Jian's phone, identical to the one Zhou Zheng used to have. Now she realized what Yang Jian had been doing for the past six months and why he had changed so much.

"Some things, even if unavoidable, should not be agreed to too readily, or people will take it for granted," Yang Jian said, putting down his phone. "From the moment I arrived here, I knew these problems would fall on me. Frankly, I don't want to deal with this stuff."

"I'm afraid of dying, after all. Who would want to deal with ghostly things if they had the choice? If you encounter a powerful ghost, not even Jesus would stand a chance. Who could withstand that?"

He shook his head slightly.

Yet from the day he became a ghost handler, he had no control over his fate, unable to stop moving; otherwise, the evil ghost within him would consume him until nothing was left.

"Yang Jian, I'm sorry..."

At this moment.

In the dorm room where Miao Xiaoshan had been staying.

With Zhang Xia's disappearance, and the departures of Miao Xiaoshan and Yang Jian, as well as Liu Zi who had also chased after them, there were now only two roommates left in the dorm.

One was named Sun Yujia, who slept in the bunk above Miao Xiaoshan, and the other was named Wang Yue, who slept in the opposite bunk.

Although it was getting late, neither of them felt sleepy.

The events that had transpired within that short ten-minute span still preoccupied their minds.

"That high school classmate of Miao Xiaoshan's, Yang Jian, is such a bad guy. You can tell he's no good just by looking at him. Taking Miao Xiaoshan out so late at night definitely means no good. We must never let this kind of person freely come and go in our dorm again. If he tries to force his way in again, I'll report him," Wang Yue fumed, still replaying Yang Jian's glare in her mind.

She had never seen such a look in anyone's eyes before.

It was as if it touched the soul, leaving her still with a lingering sense of dread.

It seemed like something out of a novel, the look in his eyes carrying a murderous intent.

"Wang Yue, don't you think something is strange?"

"What's strange?" Wang Yue said.

Sun Yujia peeked out from the bedding, "Obviously, it's that Yang Jian."

"Isn't he just a pretty boy? He's not even that handsome, just putting on airs all day. People like him, with neither money nor a diploma, will suffer sooner or later," Wang Yue said.

"The weird thing I'm talking about isn't that. How did Yang Jian get to the school? And how did he appear outside our dorm? When Miao Xiaoshan made the phone call just now, Yang Jian wasn't supposed to be in school, but from hanging up the call to Yang Jian's appearance, doesn't that seem too quick?"

Upon closer thought, she realized that there were just too many things about this Yang Jian that defied logic.

In fact, her reaction was quite delayed. Liu Zi had already noticed this, which is why she chose to believe Yang Jian's words and hurriedly chased after him, leaving the dorm.

"What are you trying to say?" Wang Yue was still angry and didn't think much about it.

Sun Yujia whispered, "I'm just feeling more and more that something isn't right. And also, Liu Zi was acting really odd just now, rushing off in such a hurry and not returning. Do you think those stories about our dorm being haunted could be true?"

"We're about to go to sleep, can't you stop with the ghost stories?" Wang Yue said. "I don't want to hear it. I'm really tired now and just want to sleep; let them do whatever they want."

Sun Yujia didn't respond, and the dorm fell quiet once again.

However, a shadow had been cast in both of their hearts, as no one had mentioned turning off the lights up to this point.

The dorm room remained brightly lit.

Yet as the two lay in their bunks, they couldn't fall asleep, becoming increasingly alert instead.

Their minds kept going over the recent events, pondering over Miao Xiaoshan's earlier words, and thinking about the numerous illogical things concerning Yang Jian.

About fifteen minutes later, Sun Yujia couldn't help but say, "When Miao Xiaoshan was talking to Yang Jian on the phone, I heard him say that there was a problem with the painting in our dorm and told Miao Xiaoshan to stay away from it. He must have meant the oil painting that Zhang Xia brought back from the art gallery, right?"

As she thought more about it, she grew increasingly unsettled.

If what Yang Jian said was true, then the problematic oil painting was near her bunk, less than four meters away.

After hesitating for a while, Sun Yujia mustered up the courage and sneakily lifted a corner of her quilt, peeking towards Zhang Xia's bunk to see if the painting really was problematic.

But when her gaze landed on the lower bunk opposite, she discovered that the oil painting that was supposed to be there was gone.

"Hmm? It's gone."

Sun Yujia paused for a second, then started to search in a slightly panicked manner.

She clearly remembered that the painting was just there, and Yang Jian and Miao Xiaoshan had not taken it with them when they left, so how could it have disappeared in such a short time.

The strange and abnormal occurrences only heightened her unease.

Soon.

Sun Yujia found the old oil painting.

It was still in the dorm, but it wasn't in its previous spot. Instead, it had eerily appeared right next to Wang Yue's bedside.

"Wang Yue..." she called out reflexively, her voice tinged with horror.

Her inner alarm had completely broken. Sun Yujia now believed that the oil painting in their dorm was indeed problematic.

Chapter 555 The Ominous Painting

In the dormitory.

Sun Yujia saw with her own eyes the strange appearance of the old oil painting, that was thought to be problematic, next to Wang Yue's bed. She was very certain that the painting had been placed on Zhang Xia's bunk before and hadn't been moved since Zhang Xia's disappearance; no one had touched it in the meantime, after all it was someone else's personal possession, and they all had that level of decency.

But now, the problematic painting was hanging next to Wang Yue's bed, almost touching her, while Wang Yue herself was still burying her head in sleep, completely unaware.

Accompanied by Sun Yujia's terrified scream, it seemed that Wang Yue, who was truly asleep, was woken up, and she said impatiently, "What now? I was almost asleep, and with your shout, I'm definitely going to have insomnia tonight."

"You... that, the painting is, is by your side," Sun Yujia said with a tremor in her voice.

"What painting is by my side?" Wang Yue had no idea.

"It's, the problematic painting that Zhang Xia brought back from outside... That painting is now by your bedside," Sun Yujia said.

"How could that painting be by my..." Before she could finish her sentence, Wang Yue turned her head and was immediately stunned.

A huge oil painting over half a person tall was standing right next to the wall by her bed. On the painting was a woman with blurred features, wearing a European-style red dress. The character didn't take up much of the painting; most of it was background, which looked somewhat familiar. Despite the dimness and oppressive dark tone, the buildings resembled those of this university.

After a brief moment of stupefaction, Wang Yue also quickly came to her senses, exclaiming in surprise, "How did this painting appear by my bed? Who put it here? It's filthy..."

Sun Yujia's tone remained fearful, "No, nobody touched that painting, it's like it suddenly appeared by your bedside. I remember very clearly, when Miao Xiaoshan and Yang Jian left, the painting was still sitting on Zhang Xia's bunk, and after they left, you and I haven't gotten out of bed..."

No one had touched the painting, yet it had appeared by her bed?

Looking at the painting so close at hand, Wang Yue suddenly felt an eerie sensation.

"Let's get out of here quickly, I feel like our dorm is getting more and more off," Sun Yujia only had terror in her eyes. If it weren't for the fact that Wang Yue was with her, she would have already run out in fear.

"You're right, we can't stay in this dorm anymore, whether there's a problem or not, let's leave first," Wang Yue replied.

At this moment, she also remembered the strange behavior of Miao Xiaoshan and Liu Zi, especially since Miao Xiaoshan had directly said that the painting in the dormitory was problematic and might be haunted.

She hadn't believed it before because there was no evidence to prove that such an absurd thing was real.

But now she vaguely felt that Miao Xiaoshan's words might be true.

This painting really had a problem.

The next moment, Wang Yue almost jumped down from her bed in an escape, almost falling to the ground, then she began to get dressed and put on her shoes in panic.

Sun Yujia moved even faster, she had wanted to leave the dorm as soon as she realized something was wrong, so she was already dressed.

"Wait for me, don't leave me behind," Wang Yue became even more panicked, she was scared of being left alone in the dorm by Sun Yujia.

Even staying here for another second made her feel afraid.

"Then hurry up," Sun Yujia urged anxiously: "If only we had believed Miao Xiaoshan earlier and left with them."

"What are you afraid of, it might not even be a haunting, and even if it really is some kind of supernatural event, I don't believe a ghost would dare to show itself; at worst we'll just go next door and hide. With more people around, ghosts are definitely scared," Wang Yue tried to bolster her courage.

In her mind, a haunting was just a minor irritant, at most something that would scare people, nothing too serious.

This was typical reckless ignorance.

Without having experienced a real supernatural event, one cannot understand that sense of despair and horror.

Miao Xiaoshan had actually experienced the Ghost Door Knocker incident at No. 7 Middle School, so as soon as she knew there was something wrong with the painting, she was terrified and wanted to grab all her roommates and run away immediately. If it wasn't for their lack of appreciation, they wouldn't have wasted so much time; that's why Miao Xiaoshan didn't retort when Yang Jian cursed at them for being "pig teammates."

"Are you ready? Let's go."

Seeing that Wang Yue was almost done getting dressed, Sun Yujia hurried to open the door, ready to leave.

"Wait, I need to grab my bag."

Wang Yue put on her shoes and, remembering something, prepared to go back up to get her things.

"What are you doing grabbing things at a time like this," Sun Yujia stamped her feet anxiously at the doorway.

Wang Yue said, "It's the new bag I just bought; it still has my phone and wallet inside, and if they vanish..."

But before she could finish speaking, Sun Yujia, standing at the door, suddenly narrowed her eyes, her face turned pale instantly, and a chilling fear surged from her heart.

It's because she saw something incredibly creepy.

The painting, which had mysteriously appeared on Wang Yue's bed, had now changed; the originally dim, oppressive urban background shrank while the blurry female figure in the middle was enlarged, almost filling the entire frame. But that wasn't the real reason for her fear.

The truly terrifying thing was that the hands of the blurry female figure in the painting were now appearing outside of the frame.

The hands, pale and almost devoid of blood, hung slightly below the frame with ten fingers clearly visible. Under the light, they even reflected a faint white glow.

This was a pair of perfectly shaped woman's palms, but they were reaching out from an old oil painting, leaving no doubt in anyone's mind that the true owner of these hands was likely a terrifying ghost hidden within the painting.

The horror of such a scene struck Sun Yujia, who was already panicking, and fear instantly engulfed her.

She wanted to flee but her body seemed to have lost all sensation and she couldn't move at all.

Even time appeared to slow down around her, as she clearly saw Wang Yue reaching out toward the pale palms that extended from the oil painting.

Wang Yue was trying to get her bag because from her angle, she couldn't see the eerie hands protruding from the painting, which were resting atop the bed—if she could, she wouldn't have remained oblivious.

"Quick, run, there's a ghost, stop going for your bag."

Sun Yujia wanted to shout to warn her, but when she opened her mouth, no sound came out.

Engulfed in extreme fear, people couldn't even speak, let alone run away—they could only freeze in place like idiots, watching the danger unfold before them.

This situation was not uncommon.

In supernatural events, the reactions of many ordinary people were just like Sun Yujia's—a few with stronger mental resilience might manage to act after some time.

Because of her height, Wang Yue couldn't easily reach her belongings and ended up having to climb two steps to stand higher.

"Found it." Wang Yue saw her bag in the corner by the head of the bed and quickly reached for it.

Thinking to quickly grab her stuff and get out, she decided not to stay in the dorm if it was haunted, resolving to sort things out the next day.

But as soon as she reached out her hand, a pale palm emerged from nowhere and grabbed her wrist.

It was cold, stiff, and the bone-chilling cold that came from her wrist made her shiver.

"Ah!"

Wang Yue let out an instinctual scream, desperately trying to pull back her hand, no longer caring about her newly bought bag.

But the pale, ice-cold palm held her wrist tightly, not letting go; instead, the swift movement caused the old painting beside the wall to fall.

Wang Yue lost her balance and fell to the dormitory floor as the oil painting from her bed also came crashing down.

It landed squarely on her.

Wang Yue screamed frantically, trying to shake off the thing on her, but that's when she realized the fearsome hands grabbing her were stretching out from the painting.

But now she didn't care about anything, fighting and screaming on instinct.

Her cries were shrill and desperate.

At the dormitory door, Sun Yujia was too scared to move, watching this scene unfold before her eyes.

No matter how Wang Yue struggled, she couldn't shake the painting off her.

Instead, within a short while, Wang Yue's struggling and screaming sounds couldn't be heard anymore.

Because Sun Yujia saw only Wang Yue's legs remaining outside; the rest of her body had already sunk into the painting, which seemed like a bottomless pit that could swallow a person alive. The hands that reached out from the painting were still tightly gripping Wang Yue's legs, apparently trying to pull her entire body into the painting.

Outside the painting, the familiar legs thrashed and kicked in panic, though Wang Yue's voice could no longer be heard—but one could imagine her despair and fear. Sun Yujia was at a loss, paralyzed by fear and sitting on the ground, crying.

Time passed without knowing how long.

In the end, Sun Yujia saw the legs sticking out of the frame slowly stop struggling, as if giving up or as though Wang Yue was already dead, the legs outside were left motionless, twitching only occasionally.

The scene calmed down.

The eerie painting lay quietly on the dormitory floor. Beneath the painting, a pair of struggling, distorted legs rigidly poked out, motionless.

And at that moment,

Liu Zi, who had left earlier, had already appeared on the playground beneath the dormitory building, out of breath.

She wanted to find Miao Xiaoshan and, of course, the most important was to find Yang Jian to inquire about the real situation.

But who could have imagined that she would lose sight of both of them as soon as she began her pursuit—running around the playground without even a glimpse of their figures, their disappearance revealing an incomprehensible eeriness.

"Call, right, give Miao Xiaoshan a call."

Liu Zi, utterly unaware of the horrifying episode unfolding in her dormitory, took out her cellphone and dialed Miao Xiaoshan's number.

This call was made with a plea for help.