

Revival 566

Chapter 566 Departure

"I've had someone bring over your roommate; once they arrive, I'll leave."

Returning to the dormitory, Yang Jian found that the room had already been cleared out, with many items taken away, especially books and illustrations of that sort.

Although many items were gone, it didn't affect much.

"Do you really have to go? After all, it's already quite late." Miao Xiaoshan said.

"Yes."

Yang Jian didn't say much, just responded, somewhat silently, "As of today, many things are out of our control, you saw what happened earlier."

Miao Xiaoshan also fell silent.

In the silent dormitory, the atmosphere seemed heavy, utterly devoid of joy for a reunion or having escaped from death.

Breaking the silence was Yang Jian's cell phone.

At this moment, his satellite-positioned phone rang.

Yang Jian thought for a moment but decided to answer the call, wondering if it might be information about the ghost drawings.

"Yang Jian, it's me." Liu Xiaoyu's voice came through.

"I know, speak up, I've just finished with things here, and I am in a bad mood," Yang Jian immediately said.

Liu Xiaoyu replied, "Glad you're okay. It's like this: headquarters just issued a notice asking you to attend a meeting at eight o'clock tomorrow morning. You know the location. The content should be about the ghost drawing incidents that have occurred recently. The vice minister thinks it's necessary to discuss this matter."

"Can I skip it?" Yang Jian said. "I don't have as much time as you guys to spend all day in meetings."

"Well... you should make the trip. I feel this issue isn't that simple, otherwise they wouldn't be notifying everyone this time," Liu Xiaoyu hesitated before speaking up.

Yang Jian frowned. "Alright, I got it. Let's leave it at that."

"Okay." Liu Xiaoyu immediately cut off the communication on their end.

"Did they have something else for you?" Miao Xiaoshan, seeing Yang Jian put down his phone, couldn't help but ask.

Yang Jian said, "Nothing much, just the company calling me in for a meeting. You know how tough it is these days in the workforce; the salary isn't much, yet they demand so much from employees, whether it's working overtime, business trips, or meetings. They're never this proactive when it comes to benefits. So, you should study hard and not drop out like me, ending up with no prospects."

"In short, working is a dead-end path."

"You're exaggerating again, it's not that bad," Miao Xiaoshan looked at him oddly and said.

"But it's not far from it," Yang Jian said offhandedly.

After chatting for a while, two staff members soon arrived with the two female students, one of whom was Liu Zi who had run out earlier, and the other Sun Yujia, who had been accommodated by Yang Jian after jumping from the building.

As for Zhang Xia and Wang Yue inside the dorm, they had disappeared without a trace, presumably never to be seen in this world again.

"Mister Yang, the people have been brought here," a staff member said.

Yang Jian responded, "Alright, you may leave now."

The two staff members nodded and left, leaving behind Liu Zi and Sun Yujia.

Yang Jian glanced at them. Although the incident had passed, the girl named Sun Yujia was clearly distressed, fear apparent in her eyes as she trembled slightly; her gaze darted around as if she suspected ghosts might be lurking nearby.

This was a typical post-supernatural encounter syndrome.

Everyone has different levels of psychological endurance, and the degrees of shock they can bear vary. Yang Jian was already accustomed to it.

In contrast, Liu Zi was much calmer, having luckily escaped involvement in the recent ghost drawing incident by running out of the dormitory earlier, and she hadn't seen any ghosts either. However, her gaze still held a hint of fear.

She was afraid of Yang Jian.

"You don't need to be nervous. As of now, this dormitory building is the safest place in the school, and there won't be any ghosts appearing anymore. You can rest assured and stay here."

Yang Jian casually consoled them, then continued, "As for why you were brought here, that's entirely for Miao Xiaoshan's sake."

"She gets scared easily. Your role here is to stay and keep her company. Understood?"

"Of course, if you have a bit of sense, you should realize that staying by Miao Xiaoshan's side right now is the safest option, because if she gets in trouble, I'll show up. You'll benefit from that and survive as well, provided you're not as foolish as before, thinking I'm telling ghost stories. If someone else is in trouble, to put it bluntly, it doesn't concern me. If they die, they die."

After finishing, Yang Jian stopped paying attention, then stood up, glanced at Miao Xiaoshan, and said, "I'm leaving. Call me if something happens, but I hope you try not to call me because you're not always going to be this lucky. Sometimes I won't be able to make it in time. And keep the thing I gave you safe; it might save your life at a critical moment."

Having said that, he didn't wait for Miao Xiaoshan to speak and strode away.

"Wait, Yang Jian."

Miao Xiaoshan seemed to have something to say and quickly followed him out of the dormitory.

But the outside was already empty, only the corridor light was flickering faintly, and at some moment, the light seemed to turn into a bright red.

"He left in such a hurry?" Miao Xiaoshan felt slightly disappointed.

"Did he, leave?" Liu Zi also looked outside at the empty corridor with a hint of panic.

This kind of irrational, eerie disappearance, no matter how many times one saw it, was always terrifying.

Was this Yang Jian still human?

Miao Xiaoshan had already come to terms with Yang Jian's condition and said, "He's gone, just like before."

"Miao Xiaoshan, who exactly is your high school classmate?" Liu Zi felt an inexplicable fear towards Yang Jian but still couldn't help wanting to know more.

"I didn't lie to you guys, he really is my high school classmate," Miao Xiaoshan responded.

Liu Zi asked further, "Then how many high school classmates do you have? Surely, not all of them are like this, right?"

Miao Xiaoshan returned to her bed to tidy up the blankets, "There were only six of us in high school, now there are five, excluding Yang Jian. The others are just like us, normal people. As for Yang Jian... he's the most different and the most unfortunate. He never wanted to become like this, there was just no other way at the time."

"What? You only had five high school classmates? So besides Yang Jian who just left, doesn't that mean you only have four left? No way, what kind of high school did you go to? A class can't possibly have so few students," Liu Zi expressed her surprise.

Miao Xiaoshan paused, as she had never spoken about her past with her college classmates, keeping it buried in her heart. But today, it seemed there was no need to hide it anymore.

After a moment of silence, she said with a touch of sadness, "They're all dead, all of them. In one night, our school was left with just the few of us."

Dead? All dead?

Upon hearing this, Liu Zi felt goosebumps, an indescribable feeling creeping over her.

"Could it also be a haunting?" she ventured.

"Yeah," Miao Xiaoshan confirmed.

My God, it really is.

At this moment, Liu Zi felt as if the world had gone mad. She had never imagined that her quiet roommate had experienced such a terrifying event so early on.

If she had heard about this before today, she definitely wouldn't have believed it.

But after today, she believed it.

"Have you seen that thing too?" Sun Yujia asked with a hint of fear.

Miao Xiaoshan nodded, "I've seen it, but it shouldn't be the same as this time. It was an old man covered in liver spots who appeared out of nowhere at the classroom door. That day, our class was in the evening self-study session..."

"Don't say anymore," Liu Zi quickly covered her mouth, pleading, "I've had enough shocks for one day. I don't want to go insane."

Sun Yujia, however, turned pale.

Because the ghost she saw today was different from the one Miao Xiaoshan had seen.

She very clearly understood what this implied.

Ghosts are not just one.

Her experience isn't an exception, the world is filled with many such entities.

"Alright, I'll stop," Miao Xiaoshan freed her hand and said, "Yang Jian is right. You should be kept in the dark, better not knowing anything. Otherwise, scaring yourself everyday, you might just go insane sooner or later."

Though she was relatively quiet, her mental resilience was clearly much stronger than the others'.

During the Door Knocking Ghost incident, those students who were weak willed and too scared to move had already been eliminated from the game.

The seven who survived have all undergone a certain growth and transformation.

Chapter 567

After leaving the university, Yang Jian didn't go back to Ping'an Hotel to rest.

He checked the time, and it was already 1 a.m.

Dealing with the Ghost Painting case had indeed wasted quite a bit of time. By now, He Tianxiong, whom he hadn't killed earlier, had probably already fled far away. There was no longer an opportunity to take action against him.

However, as Yang Jian had chosen not to kill He Tianxiong at the time, this outcome was to be expected.

It's easy to kill that guy, but the ghost behind him is troublesome to deal with.

Moreover, with the Ghost Painting incident occurring right next to Miao Xiaoshan, Yang Jian had no choice but to let one side go.

While walking down a quiet pedestrian path, Yang Jian's hand, donned with golden gloves, reached into his pocket and pulled out a mobile phone.

Thanks to the gloves, the Ghost Hand didn't destroy this phone.

Yang Jian made a call.

Soon, the call connected.

"Where are you?"

Yang Jian's voice was indifferent, as if lacking any trace of emotion.

"You're calling me this late? I thought you weren't going to contact me," Li Yao's voice came through the phone.

"Cut the chatter. Where are you right now? I need to see you," Yang Jian said.

Li Yao replied irritably, "Whenever it's something important, you remember to look for me. When there's nothing, you just toss me aside. You have zero gentlemanly charm. I'm out shopping and was about to grab some late-night food before going to sleep. It's so cold at night, I'm not in the mood to keep you company and freeze outdoors."

"Meet me somewhere nearby where there aren't many people," Yang Jian said and then hung up the phone.

"Hey, hey, I'm going back to sleep now, not waiting for you." On a commercial street, Li Yao yelled into the phone, but the other side had already disconnected, which annoyed her greatly.

Enough had happened today, and she was in a terrible mood, only for Yang Jian to trouble her just when she was about to go home.

"This is utterly unreasonable. Calling me at this hour, with no consideration at all."

"Really, how did I come to fall for such a person? I see nothing but flaws when I look at him, not a single redeeming quality. It's a miracle that his personality and temperament have gotten him this far."

While grumbling to herself, Li Yao left the commercial street and went to a nearby empty space with fewer people to wait.

But what she didn't know was that Yang Jian wasn't the type to interact much with people. He mostly dealt with ghosts, so no matter how annoying he was, it didn't affect his growth and progress.

After waiting for a good half hour,

Li Yao felt like she was almost frozen from the cold when she finally saw Yang Jian stepping out of a taxi nearby.

"No wonder it took so long, you actually took a taxi here." Seeing this scene, she gritted her teeth in frustration.

As soon as Yang Jian saw Li Yao, he headed straight towards her.

"What's the matter with you today? You actually let He Tianxiong go. Do you realize that when I went to check, I ran into him? I almost got killed by him, and even to the very end, you never showed up. Do you truly not care whether I live or die?" As soon as they met, Li Yao couldn't hold back her anger and burst out.

"Now you've made a mess of things. I'd like to see how you'll clean this up tomorrow."

Yang Jian remained unmoved, as if he hadn't heard her, and simply said calmly, "The WeChat moment's issue is no longer your concern. No, I misspoke. My affairs are no longer your concern."

Li Yao was stunned. "What do you mean by that?"

"I mean exactly what I said," Yang Jian replied, "As of now, I no longer need you."

Li Yao thought it was a joke, but seeing Yang Jian's indifferent demeanor, it didn't seem like he was joking.

"So, after using me, you want to cast me aside? Are you planning a hit-and-run? Like putting on your pants and pretending not to recognize me?" Li Yao suddenly became furious.

Yang Jian was still unaffected. "Don't say it so crudely. Haven't you ever wondered why you would fall for me at all?"

"What do you mean?" asked Li Yao.

"We've only met once before, with no prior acquaintance, and this is my first time coming to this city... And you, as an assistant to the WeChat group at Ping'an Tower, why would you suddenly fall for a ghost controller from out of town? And this affection emerged without any warning," Yang Jian spoke coolly and indifferently.

"You're a mature and intelligent person, well beyond the age of naively yearning for love. What are the chances of falling for a stranger out of the blue, especially an enemy?"

Hearing this, Li Yao's face suddenly changed.

Because Yang Jian's words subtly revealed a very terrifying fact.

So horrific that she herself didn't even dare to imagine.

Yet, there was one thing Yang Jian said that she absolutely agreed with, why had she developed feelings for Yang Jian out of the blue?

This man was nothing like the ideal boyfriend she had in mind. Not even close.

Uncultured, arrogant, and rude, he was every woman's worst nightmare, and before becoming a ghost controller, a pure and absolute loser.

That sort of person, if it had been in the past, she would have felt sick just looking at him, feeling as though her eyes were polluted.

"I, I learned about you from your files, and from that time I felt for you...." Li Yao's expression became a bit uneasy as she started to try to recall her memories about Yang Jian.

She realized that everything had started when she was organizing files in the past.

Yang Jian then said, "Files? Are you sure you saw my files? Can you find the current location of those files?"

"Your file is located at..." Li Yao suddenly froze.

She had a good memory, but she couldn't remember where Yang Jian's file was, the exact location. She only knew there was such a file, that she had seen it, but beyond that, she couldn't find a single clue about it. It was as if the memory of that file had appeared out of nowhere in her mind.

Could it be...

Li Yao's face immediately changed; she gradually realized something was not quite right.

"Have you noticed it yet?"

A hint of a cold smile appeared on Yang Jian's lips, "Such an obvious hint, it's normal for someone as smart as you to spot the issue. After all, I didn't plan to use you for too long because, given enough time without any reminder from me, you would start to notice on your own, and then the troublesome one would be me. After all, I can't be watching your status all the time, so it's better to just spell it out."

"You, you, what have you done to me?"

Li Yao looked up again, her eyes now filled with fear and unease.

"You already have the answer in your mind," said Yang Jian.

"I, I've been influenced by Ghost Shadow..." Li Yao's voice trembled slightly as she clutched her arms, feeling exceptionally cold.

Yang Jian didn't respond; he simply asked a very strange question, "Li Yao, what is one plus one?"

It was a code.

When he had rewritten Li Yao's memory, he had specifically left this code. As long as he personally asked this question, Li Yao would regain all her memories.

This method had never been tested before, he had decided out of curiosity to try it on her the last time.

As soon as the question was asked, Li Yao immediately froze in place.

A surge of familiar memories eerily emerged in her mind, memories that were hers all along, but for some reason, she had always forgotten them, as if she had suffered from amnesia, but now she remembered them all.

She remembered.

She remembered everything.

The first time she met Yang Jian was at Ping'an Tower.

She had never reviewed Yang Jian's file, never met him, and certainly never liked him.

That day, after work, as she was driving home, she suddenly noticed that there were fewer and fewer cars on the road, fewer and fewer, until she was the only one left.

At that time, she was very scared, thinking she had encountered a supernatural event and wanted to flee.

But when she turned around, she encountered Yang Jian.

Yang Jian sat under the streetlight reading a newspaper.

The newspaper was smeared with blood, old and eerie, and before losing her memory, Yang Jian even told her he would... alter her memories.

After that... she was found in Ping'an Hotel, in bed with Yang Jian, and from then on, she somehow started liking Yang Jian, whom she had originally despised.

Then, she helped him against her circle of friends without hesitation, betrayed their secrets to him, and led him to kill members of her friend circle.

"Ah!"

After understanding all the things that had happened, Li Yao felt like she was going to collapse. Overwhelmed with emotion and unable to control herself, she clutched her head and couldn't help but scream.

People nearby heard the scream and turned to look.

But it was only out of curiosity; no one meddled too much. Most people just gave a few glances before walking away, while those with a stronger curiosity stopped to see what was going on.

"Remembered everything?" Yang Jian asked.

Chapter 568 Choices and Regrets

Li Yao indeed remembered. She clearly recalled how she had met Yang Jian and the events that unfolded during the time they were together.

The only thing she couldn't remember was what exactly had happened between the time she met Yang Jian and when she woke up at the Ping'an Hotel.

Her memory told her that she and Yang Jian had spent a night together.

But Li Yao knew that memory was false, that nothing had happened between her and Yang Jian. That night, her memory had been altered by the abilities of a ghost he had utilized.

A memory-altering ghost?

Since when did Yang Jian possess such an ability? It was never recorded in his file.

Was it that he had only controlled three ghosts?

Or did one of the ghosts he harbored have this ability and it just wasn't disclosed?

But now, none of this was important.

Li Yao's psyche was greatly traumatized, and she was on the verge of a breakdown because she had been unknowingly helping an enemy against her circle of friends. What was worse, she had been loyally devoted to a person she deeply despised, without the slightest thought of resistance.

Screaming, agony, a humiliation that toyed with both body and soul.

These emotions shattered the pride and confidence she had maintained, leaving Li Yao devoid of her earlier haughty demeanor. Now she seemed like a fragile, helpless woman who had been hurt.

In this moment, Li Yao collapsed to the ground and cried. The coldness of the floor was nothing compared to the blow she had just suffered.

In her crying, despair and breakdown were evident; there was nothing left to support her spirit. Everything had been crushed under the weight of Yang Jian's oppression, not even a scrap to cover her shame.

Face to face with Li Yao's sobs, Yang Jian's expression remained unchanged, unmoved, still that indifferent demeanor.

He was already a man who had died once, and he didn't know how much emotion he had left. It didn't matter if it was Li Yao before him or even a relative dying; he wouldn't necessarily feel sorrow.

This was the curse of the Evil Ghost.

Those who control fierce ghosts are bound to be eroded by them, assimilated, and eventually turn into fierce ghosts themselves.

"Yang Jian, you beast, how dare you treat me like this. I will not let you off; I will use every method to take my revenge... You will not die a good death," Li Yao shouted with venom in her voice, her emotional collapse driving her to curse him bitterly, as if venting all her anger.

Yang Jian paid no attention to her hysterical curses. Instead, he took out a golden pistol that looked like a piece of art.

The bright metallic sheen was striking, even in the night.

He hadn't used this object for a long time because, most of the time, it was just a piece of scrap metal, useful only for intimidation. Yet, he had chosen to carry it with him, as it was still a deadly weapon against ordinary people.

The cold metal was pressed against Li Yao's forehead.

In this moment.

Li Yao's tirade of curses came to an abrupt halt. She suddenly looked up, and upon seeing the pistol, a sense of deathly threat seemed to suppress all other emotions, silencing her. Only her trembling eyes revealed profound fear.

It was then that Li Yao regained some semblance of rationality.

Ranting angrily in front of Yang Jian was pointless.

Nothing could change the fact that the gun was already pressed against her forehead.

Was Yang Jian going to kill her?

At that moment, Li Yao felt her blood turn to ice, her body numb with an indescribable chill. Her life seemed once again to be in Yang Jian's hands, leaving no room for resistance, even without altering her memory.

Yang Jian gazed at her coldly while Li Yao, rigid and motionless, could only widen her eyes in terror as shivers ran through her body and tears streamed down involuntarily.

The scene seemed to freeze for a few seconds.

It appeared as if Yang Jian was contemplating whether to kill her or perhaps was giving her a few more seconds to taste the flavor of fear.

"Don't, don't kill me..." Li Yao's lips quivered as she pleaded for mercy.

She was truly scared.

She was no match for Yang Jian, and nothing mattered—status, value, academic credentials—none could save her life in that moment. The only way to live was to beg.

To wait for mercy and charity from the man before her.

But did Yang Jian even have any mercy or charity left?

Those eyes, cold as if devoid of any emotion, struck a chilling fear into her.

It was as if she wasn't begging a person at all.

"You have a choice, carry the truth to your grave or live falsely with a memory of a stranger?" Yang Jian said and then added, "Consider it a paycheck for these past few days."

"You have nine seconds to decide, or I'll choose for you."

Upon hearing these words, Li Yao was once again struck dumb.

This was a terrifying choice for her because she knew that if she chose to live, by tomorrow she would willingly do anything for Yang Jian again, just like before. Would she still be herself at that time?

Nothing more than a puppet controlled by the Evil Ghost beside Yang Jian, whose memories could be modified at any moment, with no guarantee of preserving her own personality.

And the feeling of succumbing to this enemy was even more unbearable than killing herself.

But if she didn't agree, Yang Jian would definitely kill her immediately. He wouldn't let her survive the night, as she knew some of his secrets and everything he had been doing recently.

Li Yao's lips moved, but she couldn't speak anymore.

Her inner pride and dignity had previously not allowed her to submit, especially to the person she least wanted to yield to, but the threat of death told her that she would be killed immediately if she didn't agree.

There was no option to agree temporarily and seek revenge later.

With her memory altered by the ghost, Li Yao understood the terrifying extent of this ability; once one's memory was tampered with, it meant their personality had been completely changed.

Yang Jian still had the gun pressed against her forehead, his eyes slightly narrowed as he stared at her.

He thought that if Li Yao chose to have her memory altered without hesitating, he would erase all her memories after the age of twenty, leaving her to live in the era when she attended school, disconnected from her circle of friends, not knowing him, and remembering nothing that happened afterward. That period of her memories should be when Li Yao was most confident and radiant.

Afterward, she would survive.

Yang Jian considered this to be an act of mercy.

Though he didn't know what mercy felt like.

"Hesitating?" Yang Jian's gaze shifted slightly.

Li Yao hadn't immediately agreed to the condition of living; her fearful, struggling appearance seemed as though she was trying to make a choice.

"Hey, buddy, you can argue all you want, but is it really okay to make such a beautiful woman sit on the ground in this cold weather? Come on, call it off. If it doesn't work out, just break up. It's not a big deal."

At that moment, two young men passing by saw the scene from a distance, seemingly unable to stand idly by, and quickly walked over and patted Yang Jian on the shoulder.

Yang Jian looked coldly at the two men, and then at the several strangers watching from around, said nothing, retracted the gun from Li Yao's forehead, and immediately turned to leave.

"Since you can't make up your mind, I'll make the choice for you."

With those words dropped, he didn't look back.

Li Yao panicked at that moment. She wanted to follow him, but her body was cold and stiff, and she nearly stumbled and fell to the ground.

"Miss, are you okay? Cheer up a bit, it's not worth it for such a man," the young man who had tried to mediate urged as he steadied her.

However, his companion whispered, "Something seems off with that guy. Did you see that? He seemed to have a gun in his hand, and he put it away when he saw us coming."

"Yang Jian, don't go, I agree to your terms. Let me survive..." Li Yao cried out.

In the face of survival, her inner pride and firmness were not as strong as she had imagined.

However, Yang Jian had given her a chance to choose, but not a chance to hesitate.

By now, Yang Jian had already walked far away, his figure no longer visible.

"Miss, are you okay? Do you want me to take you home?" the stranger who was steadying Li Yao asked with concern.

Seeing Yang Jian disappear, Li Yao was utterly desperate.

She knew her moment of hesitation had cost her the only chance to live.

"I'm about to die, help me make a phone call..." Li Yao said to the stranger beside her, sounding slightly deranged. But before she could finish, her voice abruptly stopped.

She felt an icy hand clamping over her throat, silencing her voice from inside her mouth.

The ghost had come!

Li Yao's body stiffened.

"A phone call? No problem, give me the number and I'll make the call for you right away," the man hurriedly took out his mobile phone.

But in the few seconds it took to reach for his phone, Li Yao's neck involuntarily twisted to the side in a sluggish movement, as if she was desperately resisting, her eyes filled with despair and helplessness.

"Miss, what's the phone number?" the man was ready to dial.

His companion commented, "Buddy, this lady looks a bit off."

But before he could continue, he was startled.

As a series of bone-breaking sounds ensued, Li Yao's head was forcibly twisted a full one hundred and eighty degrees around, and it didn't stop there, turning back again. Her arms and legs were contorted in an unnatural way, and her gaze had already gone blank, devoid of any spirit.

"What's happening?"

The man prepared to make the phone call was so scared that he almost jumped, but he lost his balance and fell backward onto the ground.

What horrified him even more was that he saw a ghostly half palm eerily stretching out from the woman's mouth.

The five bluish, stiff fingers were clamped against her face leaving several deep bruises.

"Ghost..." He trembled all over, frantically got up, then scrambled away in terror.

Chapter 569 Realization

"Ding-a-ling!"

A phone rang.

In an upscale apartment complex within the city.

Jang Shangbai had only just returned to his residence after a busy day and thought he could finally relax. He had been nonstop today dealing with the Ghost Painting incident, involving himself, the three city heads, some headquarters staff, and all the ghost handlers in training.

Fortunately, the vast majority of the complications were suppressed and, so far, everything had been resolved without extreme danger.

Although there were some casualties, they were within an acceptable range.

After all, which supernatural event doesn't result in deaths?

"Hello."

Jang Shangbai picked up the phone, and his brow immediately furrowed in displeasure upon seeing the caller: "What's wrong with you? It's late. Whatever it is, we can talk about it tomorrow. I need to rest."

"Director Jang, there's been an incident," the voice on the other end of the line said. "Just a few hours ago, President Fei suddenly jumped off a building and committed suicide, and his bodyguard, Zhang Jian, has also lost contact."

"What?" Jang Shangbai's expression changed abruptly. "How could this suddenly happen? Have you figured out the specific reason?"

President Fei committing suicide by jumping off a building?

He was the first to disbelieve it, and with Zhang Jian also missing, it was clear that something was seriously wrong.

"We're still unclear on the details, we're investigating it," came the reply from the other end of the line.

"Please, find out as soon as possible," Jang Shangbai said gravely.

"Understood."

After hanging up, Jang Shangbai glanced out the window, an unsettling feeling of anxiety quickly rising within him.

At this critical juncture, with Zhang Jian missing and President Fei's suicide, it's definitely not a good sign. Maybe it's a long-planned move by some power to target his circle of friends.

But on second thought, it seemed unlikely.

Which power would be crazy enough to target his friends' circle here?

"Ye Zhen, the administrator of that supernatural forum in Dahai City, seems to have members here too," Jang Shangbai thought immediately of the chuunibyou.

That guy was unreasonable when mad.

"Or is it several foreign companies taking advantage of the Ghost Painting incident?" Jang Shangbai recalled several large companies with foreign backgrounds.

Although those companies looked legitimate to outsiders, they were merely a cover, with evidence of ghost handler activities behind the scenes, just keeping a low profile to avoid attracting attention.

After some thought.

Jang Shangbai picked up his phone to call He Tianxiong, planning to have him handle the situation, as he himself needed to attend to other matters at headquarters.

"Sorry, the number you have dialed..."

Moments later, Jang Shangbai's face darkened.

He Tianxiong's phone was switched off.

He tried He Tianxiong's private number as well, but it was the same outcome—it was also switched off and unreachable.

That's when Jang Shangbai realized the problem was likely more serious.

He tried the company phone.

The company phone went through, and there were still staff on duty at Ping'an Tower.

But they said President He had left work early.

"It can't be such a coincidence that President Fei commits suicide, Zhang Jian goes missing, and He Tianxiong is out of reach. That guy has two ghosts under his control, one of which is a rare kind, and he also has life-saving dolls in his possession... If something really happened to him, then the situation is probably worse than I thought," Jang Shangbai said as he slowly put down his phone, his face exceptionally grim.

If He Tianxiong was indeed dead, Jang Shangbai wouldn't find it strange, although he truly was extraordinary. But after all, he was also at risk of confronting revived malicious ghosts.

What he found astonishing was that if He Tianxiong encountered danger, he didn't even leave behind a message asking for help.

If He Tianxiong was killed, it must have been done instantaneously.

If that was the case, then it was truly terrifying.

"I need to go check on this."

With no mood to sleep, Jang Shangbai immediately left, deciding to clarify the situation before the headquarters meeting started the next day.

And staying at home was no longer safe—he could become the next target.

Fast.

He drove out of the complex, meanwhile making several phone calls. Apart from Li Yao's, which he couldn't get through, he could reach all other assistants and managers.

Jang Shangbai immediately instructed them to rush to various incident sites to investigate.

About half an hour later.

Jang Shangbai reached the location of President Fei's fall. By then, only a pool of blood remained on the ground; the body was gone. He surmised that someone had reported the incident and then authorities had come to take care of it.

After surveying the area briefly, he couldn't find any other suspicious signs.

So, he hurried to He Tianxiong's suburban villa to see if He Tianxiong had actually died at home.

"There are signs he packed up and left. He's more likely to be alive," Jang Shangbai concluded.

Jang Shangbai arrived at this resplendent villa and saw heaps of gold bars in the living room, as well as some property deeds, contracts, and the like.

"And he left all his assets before he took off? What does this mean? Is he trying to buy his life with money? But these items weren't taken, which shows that the person who acted today wasn't after money... So they didn't take the money, but they didn't manage to kill He Tianxiong either? Now it looks like He Tianxiong has been scared off and has gone into hiding."

"He Tianxiong should know what our circle is capable of. Is he going into hiding because he thinks we can't compete with the enemy?"

He picked up a hefty gold bar, squeezed it, and a few fingerprints appeared on it – it was undoubtedly real.

At this moment, he received another call. It was from a manager who said there was a new lead at Zhang Jian's bar.

Jang Shangbai immediately dropped the gold bar and drove to the bar opposite Ping'an Tower.

When he arrived, a manager was already waiting for him.

"Director Jang, this is the surveillance footage from the bar today. Through facial recognition, we discovered a stranger at the bar today, and upon comparing it to our database, we found that this stranger is... Ghost Eye, Yang Jian," said the manager, with a trickle of cold sweat on his forehead.

"What?"

Jang Shangbai immediately took the tablet from the manager, played back the footage, and indeed spotted a familiar face on the screen.

It was indeed Yang Jian.

This guy was young, with the look of a pretty boy, not very noticeable on the outside, but within our circles, he was quite memorable because spirit manipulators of his age were exceedingly rare.

"Was he the one behind today's event?"

Jang Shangbai's eyes flickered. He remembered running into Yang Jian earlier that evening, an incidental meeting when they were dealing with the Ghost Painting.

At the time, Li Yao seemed to be with Yang Jian as well.

Wait, Li Yao?

It seemed that only now Jang Shangbai realized what was happening, his face darkened, and his gaze became especially ominous.

A traitor emerged within our circle.

It must have been Li Yao who told Yang Jian about the circle's plan to deal with him. Now Yang Jian was going to strike first.

"So it wasn't an accident that I bumped into Yang Jian earlier? He was waiting for me there, intending to take action against me," Jang Shangbai said coldly. "If Chen Yi and Zhang Lei hadn't been there, I'm guessing he would have made his move."

"This guy is ruthless enough..."

Reflecting on the previous encounter, he even felt a sense of fear now that he understood what could have happened.

Yang Jian had come prepared. If he had attempted a sneak attack, Jang Shangbai would not have had any time to react and would have been taken down instantly.

"Give me this information. Don't talk about today's incident to anyone else," Jang Shangbai said as he grabbed the tablet and left in haste.

If Yang Jian was still in action, then he might be attacked by him at any moment.

That's why he couldn't stay here long.

What Jang Shangbai didn't realize was that Yang Jian never intended to kill him in the first place.

Headquarters would likely turn a blind eye when it comes to dealing with the circle, but they couldn't ignore the targeting of Jang Shangbai.

So Jang Shangbai was mistaken. Also, Yang Jian had already ceased his activities.

The window for action had passed, and his Ghost Eye had reached its limit in a short span; he couldn't make a spirit manipulator vanish instantly.

Unable to do this meant that after taking down a spirit manipulator, Yang Jian would have to deal with the resuscitated ghost, which was too risky of a move.

So for today, he could only back off.

But this was just the beginning.

"Not using the power of the Ghost Eye for a while allows its own balance to slowly settle down, right?"

The suite in Ping'an Hotel was engulfed in darkness, with no lights on, as Yang Jian sat on the couch, his figure shrouded in the shadows.

He touched the back of his hand.

The throbbing of the revival was being calmed.

The ability to suppress the three ghosts was taking effect.

His body felt as if it was self-healing.

"But if I surpass my limits at some point, the ability to suppress the three ghosts could fail," Yang Jian assessed his condition, gaining a clearer understanding of his limits.

The Ghost Eye could use the fifth layer of the Ghost Domain twice in a short period, and exceeding that would render it unstable to maintain.

The Headless Ghost Shadow was in a state of 'crash,' safe from the risk of ghosts reviving, as it could be used without fear, but maintaining it required using a suppression slot which could be released when necessary to free up a slot.

The Ghost Hand was now the quietest of the spirits.

Possibly because it was being suppressed by one slot and then controlled by the Headless Ghost Shadow, it wasn't out of control nor at risk of revival, and it was even more useful than his own hand.

"Perhaps this is the potential of the Headless Ghost Shadow. I control the Ghost Shadow, and then through it, I control the Ghost Hand. As long as my Headless Ghost Shadow doesn't lose control, everything is negotiable," Yang Jian thought to himself.

He now realized that the key ghost within his body was not the Ghost Eye, but the Headless Ghost Shadow.

With the Headless Ghost Shadow, he discovered the unlimited possibilities of survival, and this seemingly unformidable but crucial ghost had been 'crashed' by Yang Jian early on, eliminating any risk of revival. The only concern was to ensure the Headless Ghost Shadow didn't recover from its crashed state.

The method to prevent the Headless Ghost Shadow from waking up was simple; Yang Jian's body had to remain healthy.

If it began to rot, release foul odors, and form corpse spots like before, then the instinct of the Ghost Shadow would emerge, replacing his body on its own.

"Tomorrow will likely be troubled," Yang Jian murmured, staring out at the gleaming city lights outside the window.

Chapter 570 Halfway to Success Plan

The second day.

The headquarters meeting began.

This meeting followed the previous Ghost Envoy meeting in quick succession, which was unusual for meetings of this level, indicating the recent string of incidents left no other choice.

Indeed, the Ghost Envoy issue had been resolved, bringing relief to all ghost controllers.

Otherwise, if the ghost targeting ghost controllers had been left to roam free, countless lives would have been lost, especially since this Ghost Envoy could not be detained and had the ability to restart within the Ghost Domain.

Who could withstand that?

The headquarters' first collective action almost resulted in annihilation, and although they survived, it came at a considerable cost, leaving them severely weakened.

Then, there was the second action.

Since victory could not be achieved with numbers alone, Wang Xiaoming planned to lure the ghost painting to suppress the Ghost Envoy.

The plan was a reluctant measure, as the headquarters could not afford the decimation of a top-notch ghost controller team to deal with the Ghost Envoy, so they had to resort to this last-ditch strategy.

The plan was only half successful.

It was deemed only a partial success because Li Jun and the others failed to find and detain the Ghost Envoy within a short time frame, rendering the operation a failure, but thankfully with minimal losses. Thanks to the meticulous planning, not only did they survive, they even managed to extract Wei Jing, who had long been dead.

An aberration who had died once and come back to life.

However, the final ghost-luring plan failed.

The problem lay with Guo Fan, whose oversight led to the failure of the plan to lead away the ghost painting, from which five ghosts had emerged and two had vanished.

Soon after, ghost painting incidents started occurring in the city...

The only success was that the Ghost Envoy had disappeared.

But this kind of disappearance was not a success for Wang Xiaoming, but a complete failure.

Because without detention, the ghost might reappear.

After learning all the details of the operation, Wang Xiaoming was very quiet, even having spent the entire previous night without sleep. As he was not a ghost controller, sleep was important to him, so he arrived at the meeting with dark circles under his eyes, bloodshot eyes, looking tired and dispirited.

"This plan's failure is not your fault, you did very well, Wei Jing's survival is incredibly important to us," said Cao Yanhua, comforting Wang Xiaoming, who sat silently at the conference table ahead of time.

Despite his distraught demeanor, Wang Xiaoming's mind was still clear, "You don't need to comfort me, I know my plan was not wrong. The operations to detain the Ghost Envoy by Li Jun, Su Fan, Leuk San, Ah Hong, Xu Yiping, and the ghost-luring operations by Guo Fan, Zong Shan, Chen Yi were all based on my judgment. Li Jun leading, Su Fan predicting danger, Leuk San scouting... Guo Fan guiding, Chen Yi responding. That was the best lineup I could come up with."

"The retreat plan for the Ghost Gate and the support during the ghost-luring phase of changing the Ghost Candle all played a role in reducing mistakes."

"But I overlooked one thing, that their own abilities were insufficient. Even the best plan needs people to execute it."

Wang Xiaoming slightly raised his head, his bloodshot eyes meeting Cao Yanhua's, "Some people are simply not cut out for dealing with supernatural incidents, especially those that allow no room for error, because plans are fixed, but people are flexible. In critical moments, they must adapt, and I only planned a rough direction."

"Li Jun is too rigid, he wasted too much time in that village, and in the end, he didn't even find the Ghost Envoy, not to mention the timing of the first door opening was off."

He couldn't be at the scene himself, so many things couldn't be improvised, something the ghost controllers had to handle on the spot.

Li Jun's bravery and determination were beyond doubt, but these were both his strengths and weaknesses.

Wang Xiaoming could plan many things, and if everyone executed according to his plans, success was assured, but humans are prone to errors, a mistake in one link could spell failure for the entire plan.

Cao Yanhua's face showed a slight discomfort upon hearing this.

He wasn't angry, but Wang Xiaoming's words were too blunt to be said outright, lest they be overheard by others and cause dissent.

After all, some of them had just risked their lives.

"It seems I've arrived a bit early, the others haven't even arrived yet?" just then, the door to the meeting room opened.

Liu Xiaoyu walked in with Yang Jian.

"Vice Minister, Yang Jian has arrived," Liu Xiaoyu reported.

Wang Xiaoming glanced at Yang Jian, his gaze flickering briefly as he was reminded of the Hungry Ghost incident in Dachang City.

Back then, he had advised Yang Jian to detain the Hungry Ghost while suggesting Zhang Han to distract the ghost, ensuring a foolproof operation.

However, Yang Jian had refused.

If it were Li Jun, he would have never refused.

Yet, as it turned out, Wang Xiaoming's method was wrong and Yang Jian was right.

Wang Xiaoming's mistake wasn't due to carelessness, but because he wasn't on the scene and couldn't assess the situation, so he had chosen the most secure and conservative approach to minimize errors.

...

Afterward, the Hungry Ghost event was restarted, and I proposed a long-distance sniping solution.

Yang Jian quickly understood and successfully implemented it.

After that the Hungry Ghost incident ended.

"The disparities between people?" Wang Xiaoming's gaze slightly dropped.

Yang Jian felt Wang Xiaoming's gaze and was a bit taken aback.

How had this guy changed his tune so drastically after not seeing him for a few days? Why so dejected all of a sudden?

And that look just now—didn't it carry some sort of intention toward me?

Yang Jian was very cautious of Wang Xiaoming, who knew whether this guy would suddenly seek revenge for his brother and find an opportunity to take Yang Jian out.

In fact, Yang Jian himself wouldn't mind seeing Wang Xiaoming disappear from this world.

But Professor Wang's status and position were too significant; if Yang Jian made a move against him, he would probably be hunted down by the headquarters. So, he had to temporarily set aside such immature thoughts.

"Bang!"

As expected, Cao Yanhua slammed the table and bellowed, "Yang Jian, you have the nerve to come so early when I heard you hit someone again last night? Your slap nearly killed the man; did you need to be that harsh?"

"Did he snitch?" Yang Jian narrowed his eyes, indifferent to Cao Yanhua's fury.

"No, it was mentioned in Wang Quan's report." Cao Yanhua said, "While it's true he did some things poorly, you can't just hit people at will."

"He should be thankful he's still alive."

Yang Jian said, "You should know that by gathering everyone who had any contact with the Ghost Painting, he could have killed everyone, even dragging me back into the Ghost Painting incident. Doesn't such a person deserve to be hit? What would Professor Wang have done if he had been there?"

Having said this, he glanced at Wang Xiaoming.

He knew Wang Xiaoming was an even more ruthless person than himself, for whom anything could be sacrificed for a greater cause.

"Kill," Wang Xiaoming said without hesitation, his head bowed casually.

Cao Yanhua's face went dark.

He was trying to suppress Yang Jian's arrogance and make him tone it down so he would rein it in in the future. What was Wang Xiaoming meddling for?

Is it that all smart people have low EQ?

"See, I was being quite restrained. Also, how about the overtime pay for this extra work?" Yang Jian asked seriously.

Cao Yanhua replied, "We'll talk about the travel expenses later. Today, we have more important issues to discuss. Sit down and rest for now, wait until everyone else arrives."

Cao Yanhua found Yang Jian to be quite a headache.

On one hand, it was because Yang Jian was difficult to manage; on the other hand, his way of doing things was extreme. If used well, like last time, you could rescue someone from the Ghost Envoy's Ghost Domain, but if not handled correctly, it could cause a lot of trouble, like the near fight in the meeting room last time.

However, Cao Yanhua felt that these shortcomings were still tolerable.

After all, Yang Jian truly was capable and, in some aspects, rather easy to communicate with.

"By the look on your face, I can tell you're thinking of reneging," Yang Jian said unabashedly as he sat down.

"Don't worry, I won't renege. We'll discuss it after this is all over," Cao Yanhua said with a dark face.

If Yang Jian didn't get his overtime pay, Cao reckoned he might decline involvement in the next incident.

Yang Jian turned and said, "Liu Xiaoyu, take note of this. Remind me if I forget that day, or if you have time, urge the deputy minister."

Liu Xiaoyu glanced between Cao Yanhua and Yang Jian, not sure whether to agree or not.

"Do as he says, take note," Cao Yanhua said through gritted teeth.

Liu Xiaoyu felt extremely awkward but proceeded to jot it down in her notebook.

Yang Jian's expression shifted, "I wasn't actually counting on this overtime pay, and since you agreed so readily, you'll definitely have some task for me later. Let's talk about it now before the meeting starts, so I don't have to decline and make you look bad."

"Yang Jian, you're talking too much."

At that moment, Jang Shangbai and several other Ghost Tamers pushed open the conference room door and entered, with him looking particularly sullen—as if he wasn't pleased.

"Dead men don't talk," Yang Jian retorted without reservation.

Seeing Jang Shangbai like that, he knew that the man already knew about last night's incident, otherwise, he wouldn't have come so early.