

Revival 601

Chapter 601 Stagnation and Confrontation

Yang Jian had never anticipated that the ghost assault maneuver wielded by Fang Shiming would be so bizarre.

There were no signs, no warnings, and not even his triple-layer Ghost Domain could block it—it was as if suddenly he felt a weight on his back, and then Yang Jian discovered an icy corpse appeared on his back in a sinister manner, lying there still as death, without any movement.

The corpse was heavy, absurdly so, crushing not just Yang Jian's body but even suppressing the ghost within him, forcing him to awkwardly collapse onto the ground.

His breastbone shattered, his organs split open, Yang Jian felt as if he was about to be compressed into a slab of flesh.

In that moment, Yang Jian's first reaction wasn't to struggle or resist, but to activate the sixth layer of the Ghost Domain the instant his body was overwhelmed.

Counterattacking was the only right choice.

Under the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box, he wouldn't die—at least, that was the case for now—so there was no need to worry about his physical condition.

The sixth layer of the Ghost Domain activated in that instant.

The entire top floor of Ping'an Tower was covered by a dense red glow as if intending to melt and erase every person and object within it.

But, this was merely an illusion produced upon delving deep into the Ghost Domain.

After all, the Ghost Domain was just a supernatural space constructed under the influence of malevolent spirits, which could affect reality only when it reached a certain intensity.

For Yang Jian's Ghost Domain to have a direct effect on reality, it had to be opened to at least the fifth layer, hence he could make people disappear from the world, as well as eliminate ordinary malevolent spirits. However, disappearance isn't the same as death. After activating the sixth layer of the Ghost Domain, Yang Jian saw.

He saw the top floor infrastructure of Ping'an Tower that had vanished before, saw the few people who had disappeared from the conference room earlier. Their bodies were mutilated, lying motionless; most were already dead, but shockingly, a few were still alive.

The living were terrified, wandering aimlessly, as Yang Jian's Ghost Eye power had isolated them, rendering them unable to see anything in reality.

Only when this bizarre phenomenon disappeared could they return to reality.

But based on time estimates, they wouldn't live to see that moment.

At this juncture, Yang Jian could also feel that he might be able to prematurely pull back people and ghosts who had been dispatched.

"So, is this the secret of the fifth layer of the Ghost Domain? They didn't die, nor did they vanish; they were completely isolated, akin to... imprisonment. But what is the sixth layer of the Ghost Domain? What changes does it bring about?"

He observed his surroundings.

There seemed to be no change at all.

No, that was incorrect—the absence of change was the biggest change of all.

Everything here seemed to be paused.

To his shock, Yang Jian realized everything in the vicinity was in a state of stasis. Whether it was Fang Shiming in front of him, or the corpse on his back, everything had come to a standstill, even himself... he couldn't move, the only thing within the six-layer Ghost Domain that could was his Ghost Eye.

The restless Ghost Eye still swiveled around, still peering, unaffected by anything.

"So, the sixth layer of the Ghost Domain forcibly pauses everything in the vicinity... even ghosts."

Yang Jian's thoughts remained active, seemingly the only thing, besides the Ghost Eye, not restricted—perhaps because he had been eroded by the Ghost Eye once, inheriting some of its characteristics.

"No, that's not right. The curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box is still active, but the music... has slowed down."

The cursed ringing of the Eight-Tone Music Box still echoed in Yang Jian's mind, only now the ringing was slow, as if a single note played every two or three seconds, creating an intermittent sensation, failing to connect into the eerie music as before.

"Are overly formidable curses, or ghosts, unable to be paused but only delayed?"

He roughly conjectured in his heart, yet the more he pondered, the more astonished he became: "If this ability were to advance further, it might be akin to a reset."

To pause everything around, if it could be reversed, it would mean returning to a previous time segment, similar to the Hungry Ghost's reset, which additionally carries a foreknowledge of the future.

But Yang Jian knew he couldn't do that yet.

The six-layer Ghost Domain was already isolating the curse from the Eight-Tone Music Box. If he were to directly activate the seventh layer, then the curse from the music box would most likely disappear, and without the curse, Yang Jian felt that he might die, and even if he didn't die, the revival of the Ghost Eye would claim his life.

Therefore, the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box could only support Yang Jian in opening the sixth layer of the Ghost Domain.

It suspended everything around him.

"However, the suspension seems to have a flaw. Even I can't move. Indeed, Ghost Eye is just one piece of a puzzle on a ghost's body. Without having all the pieces, ghost abilities are too singular, and digging into the power of Ghost Eye equals splitting the already limited ghost power even further... But how long can this suspension last without the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box? Is it three seconds? Or ten seconds? Or possibly a minute?"

Yang Jian estimated in his mind.

Twenty seconds of the stopped time had already passed, and he showed no reaction.

But Yang Jian was aware that the limit would soon be reached, and he needed to figure out how to use the sixth layer of the Ghost Domain in the shortest amount of time.

There was nobody to teach him; it all depended on groping around.

Just as he began to think this, Yang Jian found that he could move his hand, but it was not entirely his own. It was his Ghost Hand, along with that dark-skinned arm.

However, it seemed that he was not the only one who could move; Yang Jian also saw Fang Shiming's eyes slowly blink afterward.

"Thirty seconds... A complete stop can only last thirty seconds; thereafter, the fierce ghost will gradually recover its movement," Yang Jian calculated a roughly accurate timeframe.

Whether it was him or Fang Shiming, ghosts were certain to act first. It's just that Fang Shiming was too close to the revival of the fierce ghost; having almost become a ghost himself, he would not be stopped after thirty seconds. Yang Jian's Ghost Hand was a bit special, allowing him to move first.

"But if that's the case, I don't have much of an advantage."

"No, that's not right. Although my body can't move, I can still control the Ghost Domain and change location."

Yang Jian nearly overlooked the most important point.

After realizing this, he changed his position and quickly freed himself from the pressingly heavy corpse that had been lying on top of him.

The corpse did not continue to appear on him; evidently, even the ghost's assaults were suspended within this sixth layer of the Ghost Domain, and even the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box was somewhat affected.

He went straight to Fang Shiming's side.

His first action wasn't to attack the immobile Fang Shiming but to try to take away the Ghost Scissors from him.

This object was a huge threat to him; taking it first would at least eliminate the worry of those indomitable and strange attacks from before.

However, the moment he stretched his hand towards it, Fang Shiming, who just before could only blink, suddenly turned his head to look at him.

But Fang Shiming's eyes held a mix of confusion and blankness at this moment, as if he had yet to fully regain consciousness. He certainly didn't recognize Yang Jian, who had suddenly appeared by his side. It was merely an instinctive reaction and wariness in face of the supernatural drawing near.

But this was definitely not good news.

It meant that the suspended time was almost up, and Yang Jian wouldn't even need to maintain it deliberately; the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box in his mind was already intervening, and the ringing in his head had returned to normal.

The curse blocked the further revival of the Ghost Eye while also preserving Yang Jian's life.

Otherwise, if he continued to maintain the sixth layer of the Ghost Domain, Yang Jian would surely die.

This was a confrontation between ghosts and curses.

Except at this moment, the curse had gained a slight upper hand.

"Should I take the Ghost Scissors, or seize this opportunity to finish off Fang Shiming?" The thought flashed through Yang Jian's mind.

The next moment.

Yang Jian's Ghost Hand changed direction, reaching from behind to grasp Fang Shiming's neck.

He gave up on taking the Ghost Scissors.

Eliminating Fang Shiming at this moment would naturally result in him owning the supernatural object. If he couldn't finish Fang Shiming off, taking the Ghost Scissors would be futile as he couldn't use them, and he didn't have the time to learn now.

After a brief flash of thought, Yang Jian believed he was right.

...

If the one mistake was that I didn't take action the moment my arm could move and wasted around ten seconds, I definitely could have done two things at once with some experience—both snatch the Ghost Scissors and attack Fang Shiming.

The six levels of Ghost Domain vanished, and the stagnation lifted.

In an instant,

Fang Shiming saw Yang Jian suddenly appear behind him. The place he had previously been pinned down to was now only a pool of blood, accompanied by a cold, lifeless body.

"Crack!"

The crisp sound of breaking bones rang out one after another. Fang Shiming had barely reacted when his neck was snapped, his head drooping powerlessly, though his eyes, full of bloodshot veins, were still moving, clearly indicating his consciousness lingered.

"What exactly is going on..." Fang Shiming couldn't believe it at that moment.

Just a moment ago, Yang Jian had clearly been pressed to the ground by a ghost, incapacitated. Why had Yang Jian managed to free himself from the ghost's hold and grab his neck the moment he started to notice something amiss?

"Is it a restart?"

Fang Shiming couldn't understand this phenomenon, but his first thought was a restart.

However, when his drooping head saw Yang Jian's sunken chest, he realized it wasn't a restart. The injuries from being pinned down by the ghost still remained and hadn't disappeared.

But even without a restart, something akin to its effect had taken place.

"This guy is even more special than I imagined, and he's growing quickly..." A ferocious intensity filled Fang Shiming's eyes, no longer wanting to hold back.

He had a feeling that today, due to a single mistake, he could very well die at the hands of this man.

But Yang Jian's counterattack was more fierce than expected, like a true ghost on the assault. The Ghost Hand didn't just snap Fang Shiming's neck—it used three suppression slots upon contact.

He intended to simultaneously suppress the ghosts within Fang Shiming's body and take him out.

Without the ghosts to sustain him, a ghost controller would be even more fragile than an ordinary person.

"Will it work?"

Yang Jian was uncertain, so the Ghost Shadow behind him invaded Fang Shiming's body at that moment as well.

"Think you can suppress me with just a few scraps you got from a Ghost Envoy? The Coffin Nail made by Wang Xiaoming is flawed. If it was as good as the one on the Hungry Ghost, do you think it would have come to you?"

Fang Shiming's drooping head was still moving and even speaking. A cold, eerie wind started blowing around him, and his face took on an even more vicious look.

"This guy knows an awful lot about me..." Yang Jian's face suddenly changed.

It was bad enough that information about the Coffin Nail traded with Wang Xiaoming had been leaked, but how did Fang Shiming know the details of the Ghost Envoy incident at the training facility as well?

Who let slip the events of that day?

Or rather, who was an insider?

Zhang Lei? Wang Jiang, or Huang Ziya? No, it couldn't be Huang Ziya. If she were an insider, she wouldn't have saved me before. Maybe it was Zhang Hui, who died under strange circumstances afterward.

Considering this now is pointless.

Yang Jian quickly refocused his thoughts and continued the assault and invasion.

But the strange, cold wind that had picked up was getting stronger, causing the Ghost Shadow on the ground to sway back and forth, unable to approach his body. As soon as the shadow drew near, it was blown back.

The Ghost Shadow's attack was blocked.

And the wind showed no signs of stopping.

The next moment, Yang Jian and Fang Shiming were swept up together, flying out from the high-rise building, then plummeting straight down.

"If you don't want to let go, I'll make sure you fall to your death." Seemingly resigned to a mutual demise, Fang Shiming was prepared to fall from the nearly hundred-story tall building alongside Yang Jian.

...

"Think you can kill me by throwing me down?" Yang Jian said coldly.

Ghost Hand had only suppressed one of the ghosts in Fang Shiming's body, and he was a bit surprised. What kind of ghost was Fang Shiming controlling that required three of Ghost Hand's quotas to suppress?

On the same level as Ghost Shroud?

No, it shouldn't be. He had just mentioned that the Coffin Nails made by Wang Xiaoming had flaws.

About that point, Yang Jian had indeed brought it up when he made the deal with Wang Xiaoming, but he had not pressed for more details at the time.

Had that so-called flaw shown itself now?

Fang Shiming's head, which was slightly drooped, showed no expression. "Do you think you can kill me by throwing me down?"

"Then let's bet on it, see who survives," Yang Jian said, utterly fearless, not even using Ghost Domain to teleport away.

Falling from a hundred-story building was nothing; he would not retreat now that things had come to this.

It was at this moment that Fang Shiming's expression slightly changed.

He had been bluffing Yang Jian earlier. Now, with one ghost within him suppressed, coupled with the constraints of Ghost Hand and the mutual influence of Ghost Domain, as well as the need to fend off Ghost Shadow, he would die if he fell like this before Yang Jian let go.

There was no other way.

Fang Shiming couldn't afford the gamble because he had a premonition that Yang Jian would not die from the fall. Without further hesitation, he immediately threw out a strange cloth doll from his body.

This was a life-substituting doll.

Not only could the doll transfer the attack of a ghost, but it could also withstand damage.

"Think you can use a substitute for death? Did you really think I wasn't prepared for this?"

Yang Jian's Ghost Domain was still usable, and he directly activated five layers of Ghost Domain, covering the life-substituting doll, and sent away most of its body, leaving only a small part in the air, directly destroying the cloth doll.

Five layers of Ghost Domain couldn't send away Fang Shiming, but there was no problem sending this thing away.

And he was certain that Fang Shiming had reached his limit, or he would never have used this life-substituting doll.

In using this thing, it revealed a clear signal.

I'm about to die.

In the air above a hundred-story building, two people plummeted down at an extremely fast speed.

"Why won't you just die quietly?" Fang Shiming said with anger, his gaunt face looking particularly ferocious and terrifying.

Bizarre and icy winds whipped around them, growing more intense, and carrying a thick stench of decay that made Yang Jian's ghost eyes involuntarily close several of them.

The range of the Ghost Domain was rapidly shrinking, and even three layers could no longer be maintained.

However, even two layers were difficult to sustain.

Finally, under the interference, only one layer of Ghost Domain remained.

But correspondingly, the eerie cold wind around them also calmed down.

"Even if I die, I'll take you down with me. Don't struggle, I'm not letting go," Yang Jian's Ghost Hand still clutched his neck tightly.

The suppression was still in place.

And in the clash between Ghost Domains, Yang Jian had gained a slight advantage; the wind had not carried Fang Shiming away.

And so, the two of them plummeted to the ground from the high-rise with no suspense.

Chapter 602 Falling and Not Dead

Although Yang Jian and Fang Shiming were desperately fighting on the top floor of Ping'an Tower, nobody outside was aware of it since it was happening within the third layer of the Ghost Domain.

At this moment.

Down at the base of the tower.

Li Jun, Chen Yi, Su Fan, and others had just finished dealing with Jang Shangbai's situation, and had barely taken a breath of relief when they suddenly noticed changes around them.

The street lamps around them had all lit up at once, and that mysterious red light that seemed to cover the world above had vanished. Moreover, the previously empty streets were now filled with numerous vehicles, and the sounds of car horns could be heard.

Crowded roads, bustling sidewalks, and dazzling neon lights.

Everything had returned to the familiar night scene of the downtown area.

"Has the Ghost Domain disappeared?" Li Jun was stunned for a moment.

Then he became even more puzzled. They hadn't done anything, so why had the Ghost Domain suddenly disappeared? Could it be that their friends had successfully dealt with the Ghost that was resurrecting within Yang Jian's body? Or perhaps it was a ghost master who had been accidentally dragged into the situation and had reluctantly done a good deed, successfully resolving the incident?

As Li Jun puzzled over this.

"Damn, move aside! Something else is falling down." Suddenly, Guo Fan's alert startled him.

The others also instinctively looked up, but as soon as they raised their heads, they saw a dark figure flash past their field of vision and, after a loud noise, crash to the ground with great force.

The thick ground tiles at the entrance to the tower were blown apart and even the ground shook.

Such a loud noise and change immediately attracted the attention of nearby pedestrians.

Even though it was night.

There were no shortage of people passing by the entrance to Ping'an Tower.

"Watch out, two more people have fallen down." Su Fan's eyes narrowed. He only took a quick glance at the general situation, not bothering to identify the people who had fallen, and quickly retreated to a safe distance.

His phone screen flickered with a ghostly blue light, warning of "ghost" and "imminent death" in red letters.

This sort of alert was an absolute danger to him.

Su Fan believed that getting any closer would most likely mean losing his life right there.

From another perspective, the two bodies that had suddenly fallen were much scarier than Jang Shangbai, differing little from real ghastly ghosts.

"No way, it was shocking enough when Jang Shangbai fell, and now two more? Are they from the circle of friends?" someone exclaimed in alarm.

Cao Yang's gaze flickered, "I didn't see clearly; their heads seemed to have caved in. But judging by the appearance of one of the bodies, it looked somewhat familiar... like Yang Jian."

"Yang Jian? Are you kidding me? How could his body be here, wasn't his body left in the street over there?"

"With the ghost's resurgence, it's not unusual for a body to wander. What's there to make a fuss about?"

People discussed, but even then, nobody dared to recklessly check the situation. Even Li Jun hesitated at this time because the two bodies that had fallen were very unusual, giving off a sense of extreme danger. On top of that, the Ghost Domain had just disappeared, which might be related to these two bodies.

"Nobody get close; let's just observe for now. We can't be sure that the people who fell are dead. Even for collecting the bodies, we should confirm their identities first. Chen Yi, go handle the crowd around us; don't let them get involved," Li Jun suggested.

Confirming their identities would provide a lot of information and facilitate the next steps.

After a short time for identification.

The situation of the two fallen bodies was confirmed.

One of the bodies was Yang Jian.

The other body was the president of the circle of friends, Fang Shiming.

"It really is Yang Jian? I was just saying it casually," Cao Yang was somewhat astonished, not expecting that after the checks, the identity of the body turned out to be exactly what he had speculated.

"Something's wrong; if Yang Jian's body is here, then he couldn't possibly have died in the prior supernatural incident. If he truly died, why would he appear at Ping'an Tower instead of anywhere else? Jang Shangbai was dealt with by him, right? Plus one Fang Shiming, this is obviously a targeted act," Zong Shan offered his analysis.

"The report said Yang Jian was suspected to have died in a supernatural incident, which doesn't necessarily mean he truly died. Looking at it now, the so-called supernatural incident might be man-made. Perhaps this has something to do with the circle of friends; didn't he have a conflict with Jang Shangbai at the meeting yesterday morning?"

"That's possible, so this is Yang Jian coming back for revenge."

A few people, in just a few words and combining what they had seen and heard, were able to make a rough speculation about the whole incident.

They were ghost masters who had survived several supernatural events, and their response to the situation and information was naturally keen.

However, at this time.

The body lying on the ground suddenly moved again.

It was Fang Shiming's body that moved first; the emaciated body falling from such a height did not smash apart, nor did it shatter into pieces. Instead, his body remained relatively intact, which seemed rather unbelievable.

His body struggled, rolled out, and moved away from Yang Jian's side.

In the end, Fang Shiming broke free from Yang Jian's ghastly pale, stiff hand and slowly stood up, but his neck was still twisted, and his head hung down in an odd posture, his eyes bloodshot with a mix of anger, shock, and lingering fear.

Just now, he had indeed nearly fallen to his death.

"Cough, cough!"

With a painful cough, Fang Shiming couldn't help but spit out a mouthful of clotted blood, then slowly took out another squashed, torn cloth doll from his pocket.

The cloth doll he had thrown out before was just a decoy.

Who would make such an obvious move at a critical time? It was all just to draw Yang Jian's attention.

In the end, his disturbance of Yang Jian's Ghost Domain appeared to be a struggle before death, but in truth, it was just to prevent Yang Jian from noticing the second cloth doll on his body.

"This guy, he's totally insane, really willing to die with me," Fang Shiming had never seen a newcomer like this before.

It's a pity he had become a ghost controller for too long, and he was reaching his limit; otherwise, how could he possibly suffer a loss at the hands of such a novice?

"Fang Shiming is still alive?" someone recognized him, sounding incredibly incredulous.

Li Jun, Cao Yang, Su Fan, Xu Yiping...and others all watched him.

Fang Shiming glanced indifferently with a hint of confusion, as the gatherers here seemed to exceed his expectations, and none of them were from his circle of friends.

Were they here to support Yang Jian?

Feeling uneasy, he believed he should no longer stay here and should leave temporarily.

Having used up both Substitute Dolls and having employed plenty of the ghost's capabilities, if he continued the fight, he would undoubtedly die and not survive.

The people who were originally here to support Jang Shangbai had been misunderstood by Fang Shiming, thinking they were here to support Yang Jian.

Fang Shiming, who had lost several hours of memory, did not understand the prior situation, so he prudently chose to retreat.

But he had barely taken a few steps when his face darkened.

Looking around at the bustling traffic and the converging pedestrians of Night City, he realized he was still within the Ghost Domain.

"This guy..." Fang Shiming abruptly turned his head to look at Yang Jian, lying on the ground already disfigured beyond recognition.

At that moment, Yang Jian's body also began to move.

Having suffered shattered bones and a contorted body, he was now rapidly recovering; the Headless Ghost Shadow was starting to reassemble its body.

The curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box continued.

The familiar and eerie sound of the music box still echoed in Yang Jian's consciousness, making it clear to him that he was not yet dead.

Only now, after that fall, his body had become mangled.

"No matter, I'll repair it after this is over," thought Yang Jian. Then, with one Ghost Eye fixed on Fang Shiming, his body twisted and shifted, gradually recovering to normal.

But this time his head was still intact, with no visible damage.

After the fall, he had consciously protected his head.

"Yang Jian isn't dead either? This is a one hundred-story building," Guo Fan was shocked internally.

The two of them now locked eyes again, as if back to the way they were at their first encounter.

This time, there was no contempt in Fang Shiming's eyes, but instead an indescribable gravity.

Only after truly clashing did they both realize how incredibly difficult and terrifying the other was.

Yang Jian would have been killed if not for the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box.

Fang Shiming wouldn't have been able to withstand Yang Jian's incomprehensible attacks if not for the impending revival of his powerful ghost.

One was cursed, the other on the verge of revival.

Both wielded the power of three ghosts within them.

This could be regarded as a match of equals, or in some ways, Fang Shiming was even more terrifying.

Because he blocked Yang Jian's Ghost Hand and the suppression of three quotas with just one ghost.

And the power of that ghost had not even been used.

The only slight advantage Yang Jian had was the Ghost Domain.

Chapter 603 Departure

Yang Jian really didn't die!

In front of Ping'an Tower, as Yang Jian and Fang Shiming both fell from the high-rise building and then stood up again moments later, the scene was transmitted back to headquarters.

Some were thrilled, some were dumbstruck, but even more people felt uneasy.

"He's actually still alive? How is this possible? It was clear before that his head had been..."

A team leader couldn't help but stand up abruptly, but before he could finish his sentence, he realized something and hastily sat down again, his face as unsightly as could be.

"He must have discovered the truth, that's why he appeared at Ping'an Tower. He's there to personally dismantle the entire circle of friends. Looking at the situation now, it seems that the only person left from the circle of friends is Fang Shiming."

"Those two started fighting there, it looks like they are fighting to the death."

Shen Liang glanced at the several team leaders, then reminded them, "The key isn't how he fares against Fang Shiming, but what should we do now that Yang Jian is still alive? If the situation blows up, who can bear the consequences and the impact?"

As soon as these words were spoken, everyone fell into silence.

The unease in their hearts stemmed from this very concern.

"I will deal with Yang Jian's matter, as for your mistakes, I can't handle them. But for the greater good, you all should resign, including the deputy directors," Wang Xiaoming said, without mincing words.

Everyone is suggested to resign?

"Professor Wang, this might not be appropriate. Although we did make some mistakes, given the situation at the time, what we did wasn't wrong and everyone agreed on it. Otherwise, we wouldn't have temporarily compromised with the circle of friends," a team leader tried to explain.

Wang Xiaoming said calmly, "If compromising with Yang Jian for the greater good was acceptable, then why can't you compromise for the greater good now? If you still want to argue, go talk to Yang Jian. I'm not listening."

That team leader was immediately at a loss for words, feeling uncomfortable with the words stuck in his throat, but couldn't find any reason to argue.

Reason with Yang Jian?

What a joke. The current Yang Jian was mad with killing. An ordinary person standing in front of him and shouting a few times would probably vanish from this world instantly. Who knew how much reason he had left when his anger was at its peak.

Seeing the atmosphere turn slightly awkward, Shen Liang immediately changed the subject, "Professor Wang, Yang Jian and Fang Shiming are both still alive and it looks like they will continue to fight. Should we intervene? Or should we help Yang Jian? Team leaders Li Jun and Cao Yang are both at the scene, along with many other staff members."

"Let them continue, no need to help," said Wang Xiaoming.

"If we don't stop it, no matter who dies, the impact will be substantial," the team leader who had spoken earlier hesitated before speaking again.

Wang Xiaoming looked at him and furrowed his brow slightly, "With your current IQ, there are some things that are very hard for me to explain to you."

Meanwhile.

At the entrance of Ping'an Tower.

Yang Jian's battered body had roughly healed after the Headless Ghost Shadow's reassembly, and the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box's tolling continued to resound in his mind, a state that could sustain him to keep fighting.

But Fang Shiming couldn't.

He could already tell that if Fang Shiming fought like before, he would likely experience the revival of a malevolent ghost.

However, Fang Shiming no longer intended to continue the fight against Yang Jian.

The situation was off, the context was wrong.

He had realized that Yang Jian was different from normal ghost controllers; his condition was surprisingly good after fighting for so long, seemingly without the risk of a ghost revival. Honestly, this was his first encounter with such an anomaly.

"Let's stop here for today. I don't want to fight meaninglessly with you anymore. Although there are some things I don't want to admit, it seems my circle of friends has lost this time. Your goal has been achieved; the circle of friends will likely disband after today," Fang Shiming said warily.

Yang Jian replied coldly, "Killing you is what will truly end the circle of friends. You still have one ghost left unused. Try it now and see if you can finish me off."

"Your current state is very unusual; you don't seem to fear death at all."

Fang Shiming slowly started to back away, "Although I don't know the reason, experience tells me that you can't maintain this state for long. So, I won't waste any more time on you. And you shouldn't waste your time on me either, because I won't continue this fight."

"I'm leaving, and I believe that you can't stop me. The situation just now proved that you don't have any other means to finish me off. The only way to kill me is to drag me to death."

"But I won't give you that opportunity."

Having said this, a chilling wind began to sweep around Fang Shiming, dispersing even the Ghost Domain.

This was him using the power of the malevolent ghost to prepare for his retreat.

"Use the sixth layer of the Ghost Domain once more."

Yang Jian didn't hesitate for a moment, intent on leaving Fang Shiming behind, continuing the assault to let him perish from his own ghostly resurgence. After all the struggles, there was no way he was going to let him off that easily.

But at this moment, the chime of the Eight-Tone Music Box in his mind caused a disturbance.

His Ghost Eye couldn't stack six layers or forcibly pause everything around him, including ghosts, like he had done before.

Could he only activate the six-layer Ghost Domain once in such a short time span?

Yang Jian's expression changed slightly as he realized his own limits had been reached.

The curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box could only sustain to this extent; if he continued, the degree of the ghostly resurgence would surpass the curse, and at that time, the Undying Curse of the music box would fail, and he himself would die directly from the ghostly resurgence.

In the midst of a brief hesitation,

Fang Shiming vanished, leaving the Ghost Domain and quickly disappearing from Yang Jian's sight, unwilling to continue the fight. Of course, part of it was also the fear that other people would get involved in this incident, a situation that was not in his favor.

"He left decisively."

Yang Jian didn't chase him; he knew without activating the six-layer Ghost Domain, he couldn't keep him from leaving. Besides, this guy also had a Ghost Domain, though not as powerful as his own, but certainly capable of ensuring his own retreat was without issues.

So now he just stood there, watching Fang Shiming leave with a gloomy expression.

"Fang Shiming is gone? He sneaked away?" The onlookers breathed a sigh of relief at this scene.

The consequences of two top exorcists continuing to fight were unpredictable, and an ending like this was preferable.

The friend circle was gone, Yang Jian was not dead, and although Fang Shiming ran off, it didn't matter, at least the situation was under control and hadn't deteriorated to an unsalvageable extent.

"Yang Jian probably wasn't completely confident that he could kill Fang Shiming, otherwise, he wouldn't have just watched him leave," Guo Fan spoke; "That's it for today, and that's good for us, we can go home after work. Tomorrow we still have to continue searching for the Ghost Paintings."

"If you don't want to die, shut up," Yang Jian said, turning to glance at him upon hearing his words.

"Hey, Yang Jian, I'm just telling the truth. The impact you caused this time is too big. Think about how you're going to explain it to headquarters," Guo Fan said, but before he finished, he was pulled aside by Zong Shan, who hurriedly covered his mouth.

Zong Shan whispered, "Are you insane? Yang Jian is obviously not in a right state right now. If you anger him, he might kill anyone. Do you really think the headquarters can still restrain him?"

Guo Fan looked at the others; everyone kept silent, no one daring to point out Yang Jian's wrongs. He instantly realized the gravity of the situation, his face immediately stiffening.

Indeed, a person on the verge of a ghostly resurgence was capable of anything.

Although Yang Jian's condition was unclear, he had just eliminated the entire friend circle of exorcists, and after the clash with Fang Shiming, there was no doubt his condition would be very bad.

"Fang Shiming doesn't want to fight anymore, wants to hide and save his life? Can he really hide? I'm determined to kill that guy," Yang Jian proclaimed as his Ghost Eye opened once again.

Everything was once more cloaked in red light.

The roads and streets became desolate again, and all the pedestrians and vehicles around vanished without a trace.

Yang Jian strode forward, his form gradually disappearing, his Ghost Domain covering nearly half the city was rapidly moving.

"Yang Jian, what are you going to do?" Li Jun's face changed drastically, as he urgently called out.

Yang Jian did not reply; he had already disappeared from everyone's sight, and at the same time, the Ghost Domain was also rapidly moving away from the urban area, forming a trail of red light flickering in the distant black night. In just one or two seconds, it could no longer be seen, the Ghost Domain surpassing everyone's line of sight, with no indication of where it was headed.

"Yang Jian has made up his mind to kill Fang Shiming; he won't give up. He must have thought of some method and decided to go through with it," Cao Yang analyzed calmly. "But for him to use the power of the ghost so recklessly, it's clear he no longer cares about his own condition. He wants to get this done before the resurgence of the ghost."

"At this point, not even Jesus can stop him, anyone who tries will die. We should be grateful that Yang Jian didn't lay his hands on us just now. If he were the type to lean towards destruction, this city would be completely doomed today, including us."

Li Jun then said, "Yang Jian knows the distinction between gratitude and grudges. On matters of great right and wrong, he does not make mistakes. Don't forget, he resolved the Hungry Ghost incident. My only concern is that in his rush to kill Fang Shiming, he might sacrifice himself, which would be a huge loss for headquarters. I don't want to see that outcome."

"Su Fan, can you predict where Yang Jian went?"

Finally, he asked this question.

Su Fan shook her head; "I don't know. I only know he headed south. With the range of his Ghost Domain, he could circle the Earth in a few minutes; he could be anywhere by this time."

"South? He might have gone back to Dachang City," Li Jun speculated.

Cao Yang continued, "No need to guess. He'll come back soon. How long can he live in that state? Yang Jian will act while he is alive, so this departure won't delay him for too long."

Li Jun's face was grave, focused only on sorting out the current situation.

The disappearance of the friend circle, the impact of the event, the action regarding Ghost Paintings... there was still much to do.

"I'll report this to headquarters. You handle things here," Cao Yang said, seeing Li Jun's worries, and turned to leave with a few other exorcists, ready to handle different tasks.

Chapter 604 The Sealed Area

Yang Jian had indeed left.

But he did not return to Dachang City. Although he wanted to, there were more important matters at hand.

Fang Shiming was right; killing him was going to be difficult, especially when both parties knew almost everything about each other.

So, Fang Shiming fled, choosing not to keep fighting with Yang Jian, because he realized Yang Jian was in a special state. If they continued, he was certain to lose, and this keen awareness was extraordinary. If he hadn't been so clear-headed, Yang Jian might have succeeded long ago.

Unable to kill Fang Shiming and unable to hold him, Yang Jian thought of his last resort.

A supernatural event once occurred in the city under Tong Qian's responsibility.

Yang Jian once entered the Caesar Hotel with Xiong Wenwen, Lin Luomei, and Luo Su Yi. A vengeful ghost wandered inside the hotel. They almost got trapped there, unable to escape because the ghost's killing method was very unusual; it didn't need to see or touch people, it could kill just by stepping on their footprints.

Of course, that wasn't the purpose of Yang Jian's trip. His aim was for a certain item.

The ghost seemed to possess a strange supernatural object, an old, rusted knife.

"If I could obtain that supernatural object, maybe I could have the ghost's ability to kill by stepping on footprints... But I can't be sure whether the ghost and that object are one entity, or if they exist separately."

Yang Jian didn't rest.

The curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box echoed in his mind like a death knell. Although the curse could last for a few days, there was no guarantee.

After all, there was very little data gathered, and the duration of the curse was unstable. Some people might survive for three days, others for five, but there was also a chance that the unlucky ones would only last a day.

Even headquarters couldn't fully understand it.

"We're here."

Yang Jian used Ghost Domain to travel instantly, arriving at his destination in less than a minute.

Caesar Hotel!

This was a locally famous hotel, but due to the supernatural event, it, and the surrounding area, remained sealed off. No one dared to set foot here. Even at night, there were patrols to prevent the daring and skeptical from sneaking in for an adventure and accidentally releasing the ghost.

Yang Jian took a moment to observe.

The hotel had undergone some changes since he had been there last. The walls, windows, and even some of the ventilation ducts had been completely sealed with cement, leaving no gaps. There were also many infrared alarms nearby; they would be triggered by the living as well as the dead.

Clearly, Tong Qian had upgraded the protection after Yang Jian had left.

"The ghost in the hotel doesn't have Ghost Domain, and with the hotel being completely sealed, the corpse couldn't have left on its own. So, it's very likely that it's still inside, and with my current state, I should be able to completely imprison the ghost here."

Yang Jian evaluated himself and felt quite confident.

When he first came to the hotel to address the supernatural event, he only had control over two ghosts.

Now, he controlled three ghosts, had three slots to suppress ghosts, the Undying Curse from the Eight-Tone Music Box, and enough information about the situation; otherwise, he wouldn't dare to enter this place alone.

After a cautious observation, Yang Jian used Ghost Domain to pass through the thick cement walls and directly entered Caesar Hotel.

There was no light inside the hotel. With both water and electricity shut off, even if there were lights, they would be mere decorations.

The first thing Yang Jian felt upon entering was darkness and oppression. Besides that, the murky air was faintly permeated with the stench of decaying corpses, a smell that lingered and seemed to fill the entire hotel.

"The ghost has been wandering around this hotel."

Yang Jian looked down.

The dusty floor bore many footprints of varying shades. They were all the same size, probably from the same person, no, from the same ghost. The footprints were black, a color formed by the decay of body fluids that had leaked from the ghost's body.

The hotel's floors were covered with these disordered black footprints, and Yang Jian even saw footprints on the low walls, indicating the ghost had tried to walk along them at some point.

But the footprints on the wall stopped just over a meter high and did not continue.

However, Yang Jian had taken a precaution during his previous visit: he had used Ghost Domain to remove all the tiles on the five floors of the hotel, erasing all footprints left by those who had passed through.

If he didn't do this, the ghost, after he left, would wander recklessly for some time, killing who knows how many people.

Now, although the ghost's footprints covered the hotel, it hadn't killed a single person.

Because no one had entered the place since the incident, it was impossible for the ghost to find footprints to step on, thus it couldn't trigger its murderous pattern.

Yet such a simple rule of murder had been discovered by Yang Jian only after risking his life.

"The ghost isn't on the first floor."

Yang Jian remained cautious, because there were still mysteries in the hotel he did not understand, so he only tentatively covered the first floor with the Ghost Domain.

After confirming the absence of the ghost on the first floor, he extended the Ghost Domain to the second floor.

Immediately.

No trace of the ghost was found on the second floor either; everything was arranged just as it had been before, no different whatsoever.

The Ghost Domain covered the third floor.

At this moment, Yang Jian's brow furrowed, a hint of puzzlement arising.

In one of the third floor's private rooms, he actually discovered a corpse.

Immediately.

Yang Jian went to that private room on the third floor.

He wasn't mistaken; indeed, there was a corpse curled up in the corner, already dead, emanating a foul stench.

"This is not a body left over from the last paranormal event, but one that died later, death time... not more than fifteen days, and not killed by the ghost either, the corpse shows no clear signs of being severed," Yang Jian made a rough assessment of the body's condition.

But he was puzzled.

The Caesar Hotel had already been completely closed; he had confirmed this from the outside earlier, and under the coverage of the Ghost Domain, Yang Jian discovered that even the sewers had been sealed off, making it impossible for anyone to enter without breaking through the walls.

Therefore, the likelihood of someone sneaking in was very low.

"No cellphone on the body, no identification... this is an unidentified corpse."

Yang Jian couldn't find any information on the body, only vaguely deducing it was that of an ordinary female, definitely not a ghost controller.

A ghost controller's death wouldn't look like this.

"Although strange, there's no need to waste time on this ordinary woman's body."

After confirming there was nothing wrong with the body, Yang Jian's Ghost Domain continued to cover the fourth floor of the hotel.

He was very careful while searching the fourth floor.

Because on the fourth floor of the hotel there was an additional mysterious passage which he had once explored; it was an unknown place of mystery, with only doors like those of guest rooms, and the ghost was suspected to have come out from there. Moreover, what made him weary was that the rooms were not decorated in the style of the hotel.

They resembled the style of an old inn, and some rooms were believed to be dangerous. Yang Jian hadn't dared to randomly enter any room before, only entering rooms numbered 13 and 31 due to information guiding him.

"The ghost isn't on the fourth floor... nor the fifth floor."

"Is it just like last time, disappearing into that corridor that doesn't belong inside the hotel?"

After confirming there was nothing special in other areas, Yang Jian alone came to the corridor on the fourth floor.

A red carpet stretched along the ground deep into the passageway ahead.

On both sides of the corridor were individual guest rooms, each with a room number plate hanging above, starting from 1, 2... extending onwards. The end of the corridor was not visible, unknown how many rooms were inside, nor where it stretched to.

Yang Jian was certain that everything inside was real, not an illusion created by the Ghost Domain.

"Find that ghost quickly." He did not hesitate and for the second time stepped into the somewhat familiar passageway.

Chapter 605 The Echoing Melody

If it wasn't for the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box he suffered from, Yang Jian would never have dared to venture into the Caesar Hotel alone.

The nightmare of a narrow escape from death still vividly haunted him, and most importantly, the ghosts wandering in the hotel had not been dealt with. Although Yang Jian knew the killing pattern of the ghost, he still faced certain dangers this time.

This time, he had come to retrieve the mystical object mentioned by the ghost.

This meant that Yang Jian had to face the ghost head-on, with no room for evasion or retreat.

Upon entering the red-carpeted corridor, Yang Jian's Ghost Domain faced a certain limitation; it could not pass through walls to see inside rooms number one and two. It seemed that the architecture was special, capable of blocking the probing eyes of ghosts.

This phenomenon of blocking the Ghost Domain had occurred several times before to Yang Jian. The simplest method was to hold a wooden plank smeared with gold in front of him, which would block his Ghost Domain no matter how many layers he opened.

He touched the nearby wall.

An underlying dampness lingered within its coolness, and when he drew closer, he could smell the mustiness of the walls and furniture.

"Last time I was too preoccupied with other matters to pay much attention to this place. Now I want to know exactly where this is? This architectural style and eerie environment are so unique that I'm afraid even if you searched all the hotels in the country, you wouldn't find one similar to this," he mused.

With a solemn expression, Yang Jian walked through the Ghost Domain, leaving no footprints behind, careful not to be randomly slashed by the ghost that might be roaming around.

The oppressive, slightly narrow corridor mostly consisted of walls, with only maze-like crossroads breaking it up. The surroundings were very dimly lit, the only light coming from European-style lamps hanging by each room's door.

The lamps glowed yellow, their brightness low, and not every lamp outside the doors was lit—only a few shone, most were dark.

"The carpet that should have been destroyed last time to remove the footprints has now mysteriously recovered?"

Yang Jian passed the first crossroad and arrived at the door of room number thirteen, pausing to take note.

The carpet that should have vanished was now replaced anew, filling in the previously missing section.

"Does this place revert to its original state after a certain time, or is there someone who comes here to clean up?" He wondered, forging ahead to the second crossroad.

Continuing forward would lead him to room number thirty-one, which was visited by the memory-altering ghost the last time, while deep, red-carpeted corridors stretched left and right, their ends not visible. However, rooms were still marked by the dim yellow light of door lamps, proof of their existence.

"Having not found that ghost, should I venture deeper or wait here?"

Yang Jian halted his steps, pondering.

If he went deeper, he had his reservations because this was an unknown place filled with oddities, and the dangers that lay within might not be limited to the ghost from last time. Although there was a high probability he wouldn't die, he feared becoming lost and trapped in this place.

"I'll go a bit further, and if I still can't find that ghost, then I'll have no choice but to wait. I can't get too far from the exit; if something truly goes wrong, I need to be able to retreat promptly."

Yang Jian decided to continue for two more crossroads and then he would stop at the third one.

Five crossroads were his personal limit.

Having made up his mind, Yang Jian did not hesitate to continue his journey, hoping to encounter the tall male corpse that wandered these halls.

After the third crossroad, Yang Jian detected a musty smell, tinged faintly with the stench of decay, probably seeping from one of the rooms. But in such an environment, even he could not discern the source of the odor.

"Did that scent linger after the corpse passed nearby?"

He guessed inwardly, yet there were no black footprints on the carpet. It was unclear whether this was because the carpet was periodically replaced or because it had been cleaned.

Suddenly,

Yang Jian had an idea and attempted to open the door of room thirty-one nearby.

Last time he remembered, that room had countless flayed human faces, although he had taken some away, some were left behind.

"The door won't open."

A trace of movement crossed Yang Jian's face; the wooden doorknob trembled slightly, yet the door refused to open.

He glanced at it.

The door lamp beside it was dark, signaling that the room was likely unoccupied.

Yang Jian tried to force the door open with his body, but despite the intense noise and the door's shuddering, it remained closed.

"An incomprehensible place."

He grew more perplexed.

With his strength, not to mention a door, he could even split a wall. After all, his body still harbored the Headless Ghost Shadow and was no longer ordinary.

Out of curiosity, Yang Jian had only tried to force the door, but not succeeding, he didn't insist further. Now was not the time to wrestle with a door.

Passing room thirty-one, where the memory-altering ghost had stayed, Yang Jian arrived at the fourth crossroad.

Just like the previous ones, damp walls surrounded him, the dark environment enveloped him, and narrowed passages pressured him. There was no difference, except for the varying room numbers on the doors. If you covered the numbers, you wouldn't be able to tell where you were at any of these entrances.

That's why Yang Jian was worried about the risk of getting lost if he ventured further.

"Still no sign of that ghost. I suppose walking to another crossroad won't yield anything new. Am I just unlucky this time, with the ghost having wandered off to some unknown place? Or do I need to light a White Ghost Candle to lure it out?"

Yang Jian still had one forceful measure left—that was to light a White Ghost Candle.

...

But this was a last resort because once lit, the White Ghost Candle could be extremely dangerous, especially in this incomprehensible, eerie place—its use had to be cautious.

The curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box was strong, but not omnipotent.

Just as he was preparing to delve deeper, he abruptly stopped in his tracks and looked toward a dim corridor to his right; a red carpet stretched out before him, disappearing at the end of his vision, where a faint, yellowed door light seemed to guide the way.

"There's a sound coming from over there."

Yang Jian no longer moved, faintly hearing some sound arising from the depths of the passage to the right. The sound must have been quite distant; if it weren't for the silence of the surrounding environment, he couldn't have distinguished it at all.

It was a piece of music, as if someone was playing the piano.

Yang Jian tried his best to cast aside the cursed melody of the Eight-Tone Music Box echoing in his mind, attempting to listen more clearly to the piano sounds drifting toward him.

But soon, his face dramatically changed.

The music played on the piano matched the cursed melody of the Eight-Tone Music Box reverberating inside his head.

"What kind of joke is this, did I hear wrong?" Yang Jian felt an inexplicable chill.

Why would the melody of the Eight-Tone Music Box ring out here? This melody wasn't one of those famous ones; it was a never-before-heard presence, and logically speaking, anyone who had heard the melody of the Eight-Tone Music Box should already be dead, making it highly unlikely for the tune to spread.

Even if it did, it wouldn't be in such an unfathomable and spooky place.

"Let's check it out."

Yang Jian hesitated for a moment, then immediately changed direction and headed down the corridor on the right. Before he left, he dropped a gold bullet on the ground as a marker to ensure he didn't lose his way in case something happened.

Being in the Ghost Domain, he moved swiftly, streaking by like a ghostly figure.

The reason for his eagerness was not that he had a death wish, but rather that this situation might be related to the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box.

If he could learn something about it, it might help break the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box.

Quickly,

he stopped in front of a dim door light.

This was another room, identical to the others, without any difference, except that from this room clearly emanated the sound of the piano, as though someone was playing inside.

Yang Jian was now absolutely certain; this was the cursed melody from the Eight-Tone Music Box.

Driven by curiosity, he attempted to open the room's door handle.

This time, the door was not as firmly shut as before and opened quite easily.

Accompanied by a squeak, the light from inside the room shone through the crack of the door.

Yang Jian looked in with cautious eyes, ready to confront a ghostly attack, but he believed he could withstand an assault long enough to avoid being instantly killed.

The interior decor was vintage, unmistakably that of the Republican era, yet it was very clean.

Yang Jian's focus was not on these details; his gaze veered to the piano placed in the living room.

Sitting in front of the piano was a person.

The person was facing away, their back visible; it appeared to be a woman wearing a red cheongsam, her perfect curves not something a man could fake.

"Person? Or ghost?"

This question surfaced in Yang Jian's mind, his expression growing grave.

But in such a bizarre setting, how could an ordinary person possibly appear here? So he leaned towards the latter possibility.

However, Yang Jian didn't feel the presence of a ghost on this woman in the cheongsam.

The delicate arms that fell upon the piano keys were pale and rosy, just like those of a living person, devoid of any deathly aura.

"The piano melody is becoming chaotic."

Yang Jian swiftly noticed the rhythm of the piano was off, causing the music being played to deviate from the cursed melody of the Eight-Tone Music Box in his mind.

"I must figure out what all this is about."

He had hesitated, and he had pondered, yet Yang Jian still decided to step into the room to see what exactly was playing the piano.

Before entering, he paid attention to the door plate in front of the room.

71.

Two clear numbers were etched onto the brass door plate.

"Squeak!"

The door that was ajar swung fully open, and with a calm expression, Yang Jian strode inside.