

Revival 626

Chapter 626 The Man Who Lives on Fawningly

Yang Jian halted his steps, his gaze shifting toward a shop on the neighboring street.

The sensation of being watched had come from there.

He was highly perceptive, especially after entering this place, constantly vigilant and always attentive to his surroundings.

"Let's go have a look."

Yang Jian was now both skilled and bold, daring to casually investigate nearby anomalies despite being within the Ghost Paintings, which he would normally avoid at all costs.

He moved toward the shop.

But before Yang Jian could get close, he saw a figure appear inside the shop.

It wasn't a ghost from the Ghost Paintings; it was a person. Yang Jian saw clearly—it was a golden-haired Western woman. The woman, with a terrified expression, rushed out and quickly ran deeper into the city, soon disappearing around a corner up ahead.

"A foreigner?"

Yang Jian's eyes flickered, and without trying to stop her, he hesitated for a moment before following.

"Is she a survivor trapped within the Ghost Paintings? The Ghost Painting incidents first broke out abroad, leading to many deaths, but the circumstances of those deaths were never confirmed. Most likely, they were swept into the Ghost Domain within the paintings and then mysteriously disappeared. Could it be that some of those who vanished managed to survive in this piece of the Ghost Domain?"

He speculated as such.

But he then felt that this was highly illogical.

After all, the last Ghost Painting incident took place over half a year ago. An ordinary person trapped in such a place would starve to death. How could they possibly still be alive?

"If there was enough food and water, surviving here wouldn't be impossible."

Yang Jian, following the woman, saw her enter a dimly lit building, with various items scattered along the path.

Yang Jian saw a bottle of mineral water left on the ground.

This was an item from within the Ghost Paintings.

His expression shifted slightly, and he picked up the bottle, opening the cap to pour it out.

The cool mineral water flowed through his fingers, not a hallucination created by the Ghost Domain, but real water.

"The Ghost Domain of the Ghost Paintings can now alter reality?" Yang Jian saw the water stain on the ground and showed a hint of surprise in his eyes.

He thought of the ghost in Huang Ziya's possession, code-named Ghost Conman.

It was also a ghost that could affect reality, even capable of restoring living bodies and changing things around it.

"This is truly unbelievable. Even if my Ghost Domain reached the sixth layer, I couldn't make things from the Ghost Domain real," Yang Jian thought to himself; "However, I suspect these things can only exist within the Ghost Paintings. Once they leave the Ghost Paintings, they'd probably disappear immediately. This is a world that exists by the power of the supernatural."

"To some extent, it's both real and illusory."

"If the world within the Ghost Paintings is real, then it's not impossible for survivors to live on."

Although it was difficult to survive in this dangerous place, it was still a possibility. After all, although the likelihood of encountering ghosts within the Ghost Paintings was high, one could survive by avoiding the ghosts' killing patterns.

Furthermore, with sufficient water and food available, the conditions for survival were in place.

"If my deduction is correct, then this Ghost Painting is even more special than I had imagined. It is an enigmatic object that can allow the living to reside within."

Yang Jian looked at the building not far away and followed the trail.

He felt that if anyone could survive here, they would have a very good understanding of this place.

Yet, as he got closer to the surrounding buildings, he noticed that the style of the neighboring architecture had changed.

The familiar streets of the city had become foreign in appearance, with billboards and signs all in English. He recognized some, but most were beyond his comprehension, as he was known for being a slacker in his class, his command of foreign languages limited to some basic common vocabulary, even less proficient than Zhang Wei's self-taught Japanese.

"I've entered the background puzzle of another Ghost Painting. At the last headquarters meeting, Wang Xiaoming's speculations about the Ghost Paintings were correct, the backgrounds within the paintings connect," Yang Jian looked behind him.

The two city puzzles joined seamlessly; on one side was Big J City and on the other, a foreign city.

However, the layout of both cities was almost identical, so much so that from a distance, it was hard to tell them apart; one might think it was just one city.

"But each Ghost Painting contains an exit and also contains a ghost. It's just a matter of where the exit is hidden, and where the ghost is."

Yang Jian remained vigilant as he entered the building.

Under normal circumstances, he would have completely lost track of the woman he was following, but upon entering, he found that the building was marked with a lot of fluorescent material. These fluorescent substances formed arrow signs, clearly guiding in a certain direction.

"Ghosts don't look for directional signs, only living people do, so these arrow markers are for the living to see."

Yang Jian immediately understood the meaning of these signs.

They were for seeking help and facilitating survivors to move in and out without getting lost.

He followed these arrows around the building.

Eventually, he stopped on a certain floor, as the arrow signs ended there.

"Who are you?" an inquiring voice came from the empty floor, but it was in English.

Yang Jian understood the simple question and replied, "I'm just passing through. Does nobody here speak Chinese?"

Soon, he heard some familiar words around him.

"Fuck, another unlucky soul."

"Relax, it's not an evil spirit."

"How much longer do we have to stay in this damn place?"

Suddenly.

An Asian-faced man stepped out from a door across the way. He looked haggard, his gaze unfocused and his body emaciated, appearing to be in a poor mental state.

"You need to leave; your presence will bring danger to us," the man warned, staring at Yang Jian.

"So there really are survivors of the supernatural incident," Yang Jian's eyes flickered as he spoke, "How many of you are left here?"

The man showed surprise, as he found the newcomer's composure to be rather excessive. Not only was there no fear, but he also initiated conversation about their situation.

After a moment of hesitation, the man answered, "Not many, just over a dozen left. There were more than thirty of us two days ago, but ghosts found us by accident, and many died... How do you know about the supernatural incidents?"

"It seems you're still lucid and haven't lost your sanity," Yang Jian surveyed him. "How long have you been living here?"

"Not sure, it's been a long time. I was traveling abroad with my girlfriend and then somehow ended up here. At that time, there were a lot of other unlucky people like me, but later on, the number of survivors dwindled." The man was dispirited, silent, and depressed.

"You haven't found an exit?" Yang Jian asked again.

"Do you know where the exit is?" the man suddenly became a bit agitated.

Yang Jian said, "I guess you could say that. After all, the place where I came in is where the exit is. That's the rule. It seems the things you know are also very limited. It makes sense since you're ordinary people. Surviving here is already quite good. I assume you know nothing about the ghosts. Since that's the case, I won't disturb you any longer."

After saying that, he prepared to turn and leave.

"Wait, don't go. Tell me where the exit is; I want to leave this place," the man's emotions overwhelmed him as he began crying, grabbing Yang Jian's arm and refusing to let go.

Yang Jian looked at him. "I can only tell you after I finish what I came here to do. For now, it's not possible. And since you've already been here for so long, you probably don't mind waiting a bit longer."

With that, he shrugged off the man's grasp.

But the man became even more agitated, shouting, "Guys, this man knows how to get out of here! Quick, think of a way to keep him!"

The words had barely left his mouth.

Several nearby doors burst open as six or seven people came rushing out. All with Caucasian features, they looked frantic with excitement plastered across their faces.

"Thank God."

"You unlucky bastard, hurry up and get me out of this ghost place. I've been here long enough."

"Stop right there, asshole. Don't even think about sneaking off on your own."

In a matter of moments, Yang Jian was surrounded by the six or seven burly men. Besides them, he saw several women who also seemed to have heard the commotion and came out from another room.

Yang Jian took a glance.

The man was right—there indeed were a dozen or so survivors, ordinary people who had managed to avoid the ghosts' attacks, eking out an existence like ants in this supernatural city.

It was undoubtedly a miracle.

Chapter 627 Threat

"Such a pitiful group of people,"

Yang Jian understood the situation of these foreigners through the translation provided by the man named Li Yang.

Half a year ago, the ghost painting incident erupted abroad.

The Ghost Domain enveloped almost an entire city, and many people were accidentally swept into the supernatural event. They were just like the residents of Dachang City during the Hungry Ghost incident, who suffered ghost attacks in utter confusion.

There were many ordinary people in the ghost painting at the time, but the constant killing by the ghosts over the past half year had sharply reduced the number of survivors, leaving only a handful of people alive to this day.

That is to say, they had been living inside the ghost painting all this time.

"The foreign ghost painting incident concealed this information; they didn't mention a thing about the survivors in their files, not even the death toll," Yang Jian's gaze shifted slightly as he recalled the file on the ghost painting.

He believed that the foreign ghost handlers must have discovered that there were still many people alive after their action.

But their mission failed, and the foreign country chose to block the news to minimize the impact.

As for these survivors, they naturally became the sacrifices in the ghost painting incident.

"If these people were to leave the Ghost Domain alive and tell the outside world about the situation here, I believe it would be quite an interesting turn of events," Yang Jian thought to himself.

"Enough, we've talked enough. I'm warning you, take us out of here immediately, or I'll send you to meet God myself,"

Perhaps because the earlier questioning had wasted much time, a tall white man could no longer restrain himself. He stepped forward, grabbed Yang Jian by the collar, and pressed a cold handgun to his forehead, threatening him fiercely.

"Damn it, David, stop it, what are you doing? He's the only one who knows how to get out of here; if you send him to meet God, you're going to get us all killed,"

Several people around them were startled by this scene and quickly grabbed him and started to persuade him.

"Shut up, we don't have time. That ghost thing is still wandering around this place, we could die at any moment, and I don't want to stay here for a second longer," said the foreigner named David, with a trace of madness in his eyes.

Living in this terrifying city for a long time had caused him some mental problems.

Yang Jian couldn't hear what these people were saying, but he could still figure out the situation.

He was being threatened.

Probably because he hadn't immediately taken them out of here.

"Really wordy, I thought I could get some useful information from these people, but it turned out to be just a nuisance and a waste of my time," Yang Jian's eyes turned slightly cooler as he stared at the foreigner named David.

Regardless if this guy was mentally unstable or resorted to pointing a gun at his forehead in desperation to survive,

this action was a threat.

And Yang Jian only had one way to deal with threats.

"You have three seconds to let go of my clothes and drop the gun, or I'll kill you right away," Yang Jian said, whether or not the man understood him.

Li Yang, who was next to him, understood the meaning and hastily translated, "David, let go immediately. What you're doing won't solve any problems; it will only bring more trouble. He's not like us; he's not ordinary."

Those who had survived up to now had some discernment.

This foreigner's mind might not be right, but Li Yang was still sane, and he knew very well that the person in front of him dared to wander so carelessly in this dreadful place, so he must be out of the ordinary,

"Unless this guy obediently takes me out of here, I'm not letting go. There's nothing more effective than threatening with a gun, you idiots wouldn't understand," David, the man, stubbornly believed that Yang Jian would surely submit to his threat and compliantly lead him out.

Yang Jian saw that these people were arguing fiercely and understood that the conversation had failed.

This person wasn't the kind that could be persuaded with just a few words.

Without any hesitation, he reached out and grabbed the man's wrist, exerting so much force that he twisted the bones, then kicked out.

The fully-grown man, weighing over a hundred kilograms, was sent flying backward.

"Bang!"

The gun also went off unexpectedly during the retaliation.

But David, who had been holding the gun, had already been sent flying, crashing heavily into the wall behind him, his wrist twisted and he passed out in pain.

Such a sudden change.

The other people nearby were immediately dumbfounded; they looked at Yang Jian, who was unharmed, and then at David, who had been sent flying several meters away, and for a moment, they all froze in place, and the scene fell silent.

"Times have changed; these things are no longer of use to our kind."

Yang Jian's face was icy as he slowly removed a deformed bullet from his forehead.

The gun had not even penetrated his skin.

A layer of black shadow had blocked the bullet; this was the ability of Ghost Shadow.

Even without the ability to use Ghost Domain here, he could still defend against most ordinary attacks with Ghost Shadow.

"My God," someone exclaimed, covering their mouth in surprise as if they had witnessed a miracle.

Li Yang, standing beside him, also widened his eyes, staring blankly at Yang Jian.

He knew the person before him was special, but he hadn't expected this level of peculiarity. This couldn't be considered human anymore, right? After all, this was someone a gun couldn't kill.

"God, what am I seeing?"

"An evil spirit; he must be possessed by an evil spirit. My heavens, we're doomed this time."

Yang Jian glanced at them; fear appeared in their eyes as they instinctively began to distance themselves from him, seemingly treating him as some ghost, evil spirit, or devil.

"What are they saying?"

Li Yang hesitated before replying, "They think you're possessed by an evil spirit and are praying."

"Praying?"

Yang Jian chuckled lightly, "Having faith is a good thing; at least there is something to cling to. Unfortunately, this world is terrifying and cruel. No use praying now; I could take down Jesus Himself if He came at me."

"Insulting someone's faith is not an honorable thing to do," Li Yang said tensely, his teeth clenched.

"You believe in this too?"

Yang Jian gave him a look: "So holding a gun to someone's head is an honorable thing to do? Your double standards are too severe. If faith should not be insulted, then don't do things that contradict your faith. I remember that killing someone means going to hell, right?"

Li Yang didn't know how to respond, and just stubbornly said, "We're just trying to survive; there's no shame in that."

"So to survive, it's okay for others to die?"

"That's not what I mean. The incident just now was indeed David's fault, and we did try to stop him," said Li Yang.

Yang Jian's gaze shifted slightly: "Forget it, I've never been good at arguing with people. If you want to survive, that's fine, do me a favor. I need two qualified guides here; I need to find that ghost. You have lived here long enough; I believe you've seen many things."

He did not blame others for what had just happened.

One thing at a time, Yang Jian had a clear understanding in his heart.

"Really?" Li Yang became somewhat excited, although hesitant.

"You have no choice. How much longer can you live like this, hiding here? The next attack will wipe you out. Ghosts won't give you a chance to choose like I do," Yang Jian glanced briefly to the side.

Aside from the men, there were also women and even a few gaunt-faced children.

"Decide for yourselves before I leave this building."

Not giving them time to think or hesitate, as his own time was also precious, Yang Jian promptly turned and retraced his steps, intending to delve deeper into the eerie painting.

However, as he left the building,

two sets of footsteps followed behind him.

Li Yang and a dark-skinned foreign man, both panting, had decided to take up the dangerous task as guides for the others' chance to survive.

"What's your name? Jimmy and I are willing to be your guides," he said.

Yang Jian stopped, turned, and replied, "Yang Jian from Dachang City, code name: Ghost Eye."

Chapter 628 Noise on the Stairs

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Dachang City, ghost-eyed Yang Jian?

Upon hearing such a sentence, Li Yang was stunned, because these few words revealed far too much information. It not only indicated that many people outside were aware of the paranormal events, but also that there were organizations, and specifically special individuals, dealing with such matters.

No wonder Yang Jian had said earlier that times had changed.

"To be honest, I didn't expect you guys to be able to give me any useful information," Yang Jian looked at them and said, "I was just trying to give you a chance to survive."

"If you can seize this opportunity, you should be able to leave here alive with me. If you hadn't followed just now, then you would have given up the chance to save yourselves. Now it seems you haven't been foolish to that extent, knowing to grab the opportunity."

"Perhaps the reason you are still alive and haven't been killed by ghosts is this very reason."

As Li Yang listened to this, his haggard face slightly shifted. He had encountered many people in his life, but never someone as special and unusual as the one before him.

It was a unique charisma.

Even though most of the time it was easy to feel repulsed, those who felt the repulsion didn't realize that this man named Yang Jian was no longer on the same level as them.

"Are you looking for ghosts? Are you here to deal with that thing?" Li Yang's gaze flickered uneasily.

"We'll talk about the ghosts in this area first, maybe it's the Source Ghost," Yang Jian said.

The initial outbreak of the Ghost Painting incident started here.

Therefore, this city could very likely be where the source of the Ghost Painting was located.

"I will try my best to help you," Li Yang finished speaking and started communicating with the foreigner named Jimmy in English.

"Listen, Jimmy, this Mister Yang here is here to deal with that thing. We need to help him find it, it's our way to survive. You encountered that thing last time, so you should know its approximate location. Now you have to recall it."

Jimmy looked terrified, speaking and gesticulating rapidly and in a disordered manner.

Yang Jian, who was quite poor in academics, could understand a few simple words, but most of the sentences were incomprehensible to him.

Li Yang, who often traveled abroad, obviously had a high level of proficiency in foreign languages. After listening, he nodded and then said, "Mister Yang, over there. Jimmy says he saw the ghost there last time he was out, but it's very dangerous. We usually avoid that area."

"Then lead the way," Yang Jian said, "The scenery here can change, so just pointing in a direction isn't very helpful."

Li Yang nodded, agreeing to take the risky lead.

Immediately, the three of them advanced deeper into the deathly silent city.

All around them, the silence was terrifying, and only the echo of their footsteps reverberated through the empty streets. Apart from Yang Jian, who remained very calm, Li Yang and the Jimmy beside him were glancing around with frightened, wary eyes, alert to any movement in their vicinity.

This cautious and suspicious demeanor had almost become an instinctual part of surviving.

Among the many survivors, to live meant either to withstand the pressure and grow, or to be killed by ghosts. It was a cruel selection.

"This puzzle is huge."

Yang Jian observed the architectural style surrounding him, which still had not changed, indicating that he was still within a different Ghost Painting, and the background of this painting was even more intact than the previous one.

The more intact it was, the larger the Ghost Domain.

Similarly, the higher the level of danger it represented.

"It's just you guys alive here? There are no other survivors?" Yang Jian inquired.

Li Yang was startled by Yang Jian's sudden question. He immediately said, "We used to see other people, don't know if it was a month ago, or two, but afterwards we lost track. We don't dare to wander, because as soon as we encounter a ghost, we're doomed, so we rarely have contact with others. But I'm certain, there's no one else within these several streets nearby."

"The Ghost Painting's killing efficiency isn't very high; the rules for murder are quite harsh and not so easily triggered," Yang Jian's expression shifted slightly.

If it followed the efficiency of the Hungry Ghost, it wouldn't be possible for people to still be alive in this city, let alone living here for half a year.

The truly terrifying aspect of the Ghost Painting lay in its wide-ranging Ghost Domain.

And the Ghost Domain can keep expanding.

As long as the background puzzle of the Ghost Painting becomes more complete, the range affected by the Ghost Shadow grows larger.

In terms of the degree of harm, the Ghost Painting has far exceeded the Hungry Ghost, yet it isn't as difficult to deal with, which is good news for exorcists.

"Haven't we arrived yet?"

After walking for a while, Yang Jian asked.

Li Yang asked Jimmy again, who pointed in terrified urgency at a building ahead.

"He says he saw the ghost standing there at the entrance of that building last time, a woman dressed in red."

"And then?" Yang Jian pushed on.

Li Yang replied, "He chose to run away at that time."

Yang Jian arrived at the front of that building, an overseas residential building with a narrow entrance leading to a gloomy corridor stretching into the house. One could faintly make out the dim stairwell spiraling and connecting the floors above and below.

"Definitely not a good place."

He glanced around, his eyes shifting. The building's complicated environment could possibly hide anything.

He checked the time.

Two and a half days left until the curse, so there was still time to act.

"I need to find that ghost, and you guys have to come with me," Yang Jian said in a harsh tone.

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He was unable to open his ghost eye, facing significant restrictions, and needed several pairs of eyes to search within this complex environment.

"This..." Li Yang hesitated, as he was scared.

During the time he had been trapped here, he had witnessed too many horrifying scenes. The fact that he was still alive was mostly due to luck. If he were to enter this house now, there was a high probability that he would die here.

"I haven't threatened or forced you. This is a fair trade. If you want to leave this place, you have to risk your life. Even I am the same. Don't think I'm not worried about dying here," Yang Jian stated earnestly.

To some extent, he was not much stronger than an ordinary person here—the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box and the abilities of a ghost controller were not all-powerful.

What could happen after real contact with a ghost was anyone's guess.

Li Yang's face changed, and he discussed the current situation with the black youth, Jimmy, standing beside him.

Jimmy shook his head like a pellet drum and rapidly shouted "NO," vehemently refusing the task with palpable fright.

"Make up your mind," Yang Jian said without further questioning, and walked straight into the building.

The narrow corridor was dim and oppressive.

A cold, damp breath hit his face.

Yang Jian's expression remained unchanged as he looked from side to side, following the corridor to an old wooden staircase.

It was evident that the house had some years on it and hadn't been renovated, looking particularly rundown. In foreign countries, such a place was definitely rented to families with poor conditions or to

working-class individuals. People with slightly better conditions wouldn't choose to live in such a place, as it would be hard for the average person to endure.

The world of the Ghost Domain was not real; it was replicated according to reality.

However, the painting by ghosts was quite unique. The Ghost Domain could influence reality, so everything here seemed extremely real. No, in this place, this was the reality.

"Creak."

Yang Jian stepped on the staircase, and the wooden stairs emitted a grating sound that echoed up and down the floors, eerily and ominously.

"The ghost within this puzzle is the Source Ghost. As long as I find that ghost, it's enough. There's no need for a frontal confrontation or to restrict and detain it, which makes it much easier for me."

He confirmed his plan ahead of time to avoid losing perspective later.

"Yang Jian, wait up. I agree to take the risk with you, and I hope you'll keep your promise when the time comes."

As Yang Jian reached the second floor, Li Yang's voice came from downstairs. He seemed to have persuaded himself and the black youth named Jimmy, rushing over with a particularly uneasy expression.

"Are you doubting my trustworthiness? I have never broken a deal," Yang Jian rarely praised one of his own virtues.

But this was no joke; he indeed was a man of his word.

Regardless of which paranormal event he dealt with, whatever he promised, he fulfilled. That was one of the reasons Cao Yanhua would always pull him into action at critical moments.

It was already rare for an ordinary person to be trustworthy, let alone a ghost controller.

"I have no choice but to trust you, and so does Jimmy. This isn't just about the lives of the two of us; it's also about whether others can survive," Li Yang said through clenched teeth.

By his side, Jimmy walked over, closing his eyes and making signs over his chest—not sketching a Guo Fucheng, but praying.

The two of them ascended the wooden staircase, and the creaking sound resonated in the cramped environment.

"Stop for a moment," Yang Jian suddenly changed his expression and signaled them to halt.

Li Yang was taken aback and hurriedly pulled Jimmy to stop against the wall.

At that moment, the creaking sound came from above their heads, as if someone was walking down the wooden staircase. But soon, the sound ceased, as if footsteps had stopped at some spot upstairs.

"It's not an echo," Yang Jian narrowed his eyes and looked up.

From this angle, nothing was clear, shrouded in darkness, and it was even uncertain on which floor the footsteps had been.

Li Yang also realized something was amiss and his face turned pale, realizing that there could be a real ghost in the building.

Because he had confirmed it sometime before.

There was no one around.

"Don't move; I need to assess the situation," Yang Jian's gaze flickered as he deliberately stepped on a stair tread.

The wooden floor made a creaking noise.

But then, a creak also came from above, as if responding, or as though a ghost was descending the stairs.

"Something is off with these stairs," Yang Jian's heart chilled.

It couldn't possibly be a person upstairs, because people don't walk in sync with their own footsteps—only a ghost could.

An unknown ghost was lingering on the old, wooden staircase, moving with those who navigated the stairs.

In other words, the moment Yang Jian stepped on the staircase, he had already alarmed the ghost above.

The ghost was coming downstairs.

And they needed to go up.

Under these circumstances, there was certain to be a moment when the ghost and the humans would meet on the stairs.

Chapter 629 Anomaly on the 3rd Floor

Yang Jian had only just finished climbing the first set of stairs and arrived on the second floor of the building when he had already startled an unknown ghost.

This ghost was most likely a lingering hazard left behind by a necromancer who had been wiped out here in the past, now trapped in a ghost painting and having become a part of it, thereby indirectly increasing the danger of this place.

"If this is a ghost left behind by a necromancer after death, then there must be a ghost painting in this building. Whether it's the source or not is uncertain, but at least it can be confirmed that the information from that guy named Jimmy was not wrong."

Although Yang Jian was aware there were ghosts upstairs, he was still calmly thinking.

"However, I have the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box on me, so the ghost on the stairs may not necessarily be able to kill me, but those two might not be so lucky."

He looked back at Li Yang and the foreigner named Jimmy.

Once targeted by a ghost, they would undoubtedly die.

"Right now, none of us are making any noises, and the ghost upstairs has stopped moving. This means footsteps are the key." Yang Jian stepped back down from the stairs above.

He arrived on the second floor.

The second floor had a concrete road surface, and footsteps were very faint, almost inaudible.

As expected.

Just as he had surmised, there were no sounds coming from the wooden stairs above—all was eerily quiet.

"Come on up, get to the second floor. The ghost is still a bit away from us. If you walk over here, there shouldn't be immediate danger, and if you watch your step after you reach me, you should be safe," Yang Jian called out to them.

If they were to leave this place, it would be a bit safer to jump down directly from the second floor.

Although he said so, Li Yang's legs were trembling, and looking back, he truly wanted to abandon the mission and leave this terrifying place now.

The Jimmy beside him was even more cowardly, closing his eyes and not daring to look.

But despite their fear, they were still somewhat clear-headed. At this moment, gritting their teeth, they braved themselves and continued walking up the staircase.

Creak, creak.

The two stepped on the worn wooden stairs, and the noise began to sound again, as careful as they were, the inevitable creaks were still produced when their weight pressed down on the steps.

The sound echoed in the silent building.

Soon, that eerie set of footsteps from above also started to resonate.

Creak, creak... The footsteps were moving down the stairs.

Yang Jian seized the moment to stare intently upstairs, trying to gauge on which floor the ghost was.

This building wasn't particularly tall, with only seven floors in total, so he could roughly judge from the sound that the ghost's location was probably on the fourth or fifth set of stairs.

This distance was relatively safe.

"Is this okay now?" Li Yang asked breathlessly, having reached the second floor and stepped onto the solid concrete floor.

The creaking from the wooden floorboards ceased, and so did the noise above.

"That's fine. Follow me to check out this floor, and be alert to the left, right, and behind," Yang Jian prompted.

Yang Jian began to move, adding, "After you find that ghost, your task is completed. But before that, if we encounter danger, you might very well die here. I won't go out of my way to protect you, but as long as you stick close to me, I'll take the brunt when the ghost attacks."

"Thank—Thank you."

Li Yang said, then muttered a few words to the Jimmy beside him, informing him that this Mister Yang could fend off that terrifying entity.

Jimmy opened his eyes, looking at Yang Jian while mumbling something under his breath, seemingly thanking God again.

Yang Jian didn't speak; he started searching this floor.

Lacking the vision of a 'ghost eye' and the support of the Ghost Domain, his actions were slow; having these two encumbrances was an act of necessity. Alone, he could easily miss something in his surroundings; sometimes a ghost could pass behind him unnoticed, for after all, one pair of eyes is limited in observation.

There were quite a few rooms within the floor.

Yang Jian would not overlook any corner; he directly opened the door to a room, entered, and began to search.

He watched the front and the sides; Jimmy was responsible for the rear, while Li Yang took care of supplying supplemental observations of the left and right, which might not be immediately visible.

"There's nothing wrong with this room." After a complete round, Yang Jian led them out again.

Within the silent building, everything was very quiet. The ghost on the stairs had become still, its movements ceased.

Fortunately, Yang Jian had made the discovery early. If they had found out later and continued up the stairs, it would be too late by the time they met the ghost on the staircase.

"Let's take a look around the room by the front door; we can't overlook any corners. I don't want to have to search again," Yang Jian said seriously.

He aimed to finish searching the building within an hour and find the location of the ghost in the ghost painting.

Yang Jian's actions were quick and meticulous, and he soon had a thorough understanding of this floor.

But his luck was somewhat poor.

He couldn't find the ghost on this level.

In other words, he would have to search on the third floor.

"Take the external staircase outside to go up, this way you can avoid those wooden stairs and also bypass the ghost that's on them." Even though Yang Jian didn't find anything on the second floor, he discovered another route upstairs.

Li Yang, despite being covered in cold sweat, found his fear slightly reduced, and his legs stopped trembling.

Maybe it was due to Yang Jian's excessively calm demeanor, or perhaps it was because he had started to get used to it.

In any case, this was good news, at least he wasn't so paralyzed with fear that he couldn't move.

Jimmy was the same, scared as he was, his actions didn't fall behind; he always kept up, without straying.

Yang Jian, though confident enough to confront the ghost on the stairs head-on, didn't want to get targeted by another ghost without reason. He would definitely circumvent if he could and wouldn't do anything foolish.

The external staircase was made of iron.

The paint had flaked off, leaving behind dark red rust, but fortunately, it was still sturdy. Walking on it with deliberately slowed steps, he made no sound.

He listened intently.

The creaking noise from the wooden stairs inside didn't arise.

"The ghost is still there, not moving." Yang Jian's expression shifted as he confirmed the situation.

This approach of using the external staircase was good; it didn't alert the ghost.

"Same as before, follow me and keep searching. Keep an eye on what's behind us." What Yang Jian was most worried about was what was behind him, since it was out of his line of sight.

"Don't worry, we'll be careful. We're afraid of dying too, and won't joke with our lives," Li Yang said in a suppressed voice.

Yang Jian nodded, "It's good to have this awareness."

He climbed through a window and entered one of the households.

But no sooner had he entered the room than Yang Jian involuntarily frowned; he saw a completely rotted corpse in the living room of this house. The body had been dead for quite some time, at least a few months; whether it was a death by despairing suicide or killed by a ghost in this building wasn't clear.

In any case, this person did not manage to leave the building alive.

Yang Jian's Ghost Shadow covered the past.

The corpse showed no anomalies.

"No need to mind it; it's just an ordinary corpse, unrelated to ghosts," Yang Jian withdrew his gaze, showing no fear.

After a quick search, he left the household and came to the corridor on the third floor.

However, it didn't take long for Yang Jian to notice something was off.

The corridor on the third floor was littered with numerous bodies, an initial sweep revealed at least a dozen; they varied in size and were in different stages of decay, sending chills down one's spine.

"Something's not right. There are no bodies on the second or first floors, they're all on the third floor," Yang Jian's eyes narrowed.

The concentrated locations of these deaths could only mean one thing: these people were trapped to death on the third floor. It wasn't that they didn't want to leave; they couldn't escape.

If it had been other ghosts killing, the bodies would likely be scattered across different floors.

"The only thing here that could trap people to death in one spot is the Ghost Domain, and we are already inside a ghost painting. Other Ghost Domains would be completely suppressed... so there's only one possible reason for these deaths: the ghost painting is on this floor."

Yang Jian quickly pieced things together, but immediately turned around to look.

At that moment, Li Yang cried out in horror, "Yang Jian, Jimmy said the window we just climbed through has disappeared, turned into a wall."

Before he could finish, Yang Jian had already seen for himself that the route they had taken had changed.

The window was gone.

The external staircase outside was no longer visible.

The ghost painting had altered some of the layout of this floor.

The exits were blocked.

"Looks like we're in luck," Yang Jian's gaze grew heavy.

The target he was searching for was here.

But accordingly, so was the danger.

Chapter 630 The Person on the Sofa

The Ghost Domain changed the layout of the third floor, and the exit disappeared.

Based on Yang Jian's prior experience, there could only be one possibility.

The hidden ghost painting was here.

This alteration of the environment was not intentional; rather, it was a change produced by the ghost painting to hide itself, with the aim of not allowing Yang Jian to find it easily.

Because once it was found, the ghost painting faced the risk of being imprisoned.

Unlike the ghosts in other supernatural events, the ghost painting itself could not move.

This was the biggest weakness of the ghost painting.

"So, these bodies on the ground could very well be more than ordinary people... Maybe most of these bodies were spiritual practitioners before they died," Yang Jian speculated as he stared at a dozen plus bodies on the floor.

At some point, a group of foreign spiritual practitioners arrived in the Ghost Domain of the ghost painting and roughly pinpointed its location. They came to this building, trying to find the source of the ghost painting, but got trapped on the third floor. In the meantime, something terrible happened, and the whole group was annihilated.

That also explained why there existed an unknown ghost on the wooden stairs of the fourth and fifth floors.

The ghosts on the stairs were produced after the death of the spiritual practitioners, lingering in the building without leaving for some reason.

"Yang Jian, what should we do now? Let's quickly find a way out of here, I don't want to die in this place," Li Yang panicked, feeling the danger of their situation.

Yang Jian remained calm, "What's there to panic about? It's just one or two ghosts nearby, right? Do you think there will be fewer ghosts outside this building? If you want to survive, you've got to fight for it. Without me leading you, you wouldn't even have the courage to explore this place. Now I can tell you the truth—the exit is on this floor."

"Find it, and you can leave early."

There was an exit in the background puzzle of a ghost painting, so he was sure that the exit from this city was here on the third floor of this building.

"Now keep quiet and calm down. I need to check the bodies on the floor. You are responsible for watching our surroundings."

He sternly assigned the tasks, giving them no choice but to proceed, even if there were confirmed ghosts present.

Then, Yang Jian did not rush, but instead began to examine a corpse on the ground.

The body was almost completely decomposed, leaving only a layer of disgusting hair and blackened bones.

Yang Jian roughly confirmed the identity of the deceased by examining the clothes on the body.

Although the dead bodies of spiritual practitioners looked the same as ordinary people, since they chose to enter this place, they would certainly carry a full set of equipment, and their identities could be confirmed by these items.

"There's nothing on this body."

Yang Jian lowered his head and searched the body next to it.

Soon, he found a special model of a handgun in the hand of an adjacent corpse.

After a cursory inspection, Yang Jian's expression darkened. The handgun still had some unspent bullets, made of gold, and he could not affect them with Ghost Shadow.

"This was a foreign spiritual practitioner."

The equipment made it almost certain the person's identity before death.

He continued to check the other bodies.

Yang Jian found it strange; some bodies didn't have weapons, appeared normal, and were probably ordinary people. However, occasionally, a few bodies were left with special equipment and weapons for use by spiritual practitioners.

"Five people carrying equipment, likely spiritual practitioners, twelve ordinary bodies. Seventeen bodies in total, no, that's not right, there are still rooms unexplored, and maybe there are other bodies inside."

"But regardless, the number of bodies that match the characteristics can indeed form a spiritual practitioner team."

"Prevailing speculation is likely correct; this is where those foreigners were annihilated. There are no signs of struggle near the bodies, so they were not trapped to death but killed by a ghost."

When Yang Jian thought of this, his gaze turned sharp.

As for why the bodies were at different stages of decomposition, that was easy to understand.

When a spiritual practitioner died, if a ghost remained within the body, it would be preserved for a considerable length of time.

"How could so many people not escape? Or were they disoriented by the continuous resets of the ghost drawing?" Yang Jian wondered, not thinking highly of the terror level of the ghost drawing.

To kill such a team, the ghost drawing must have reset several times.

Half a year ago, when supernatural events were not so severe, encountering a ghost that could reset was indeed a nightmare.

Now, with the sharing of information about supernatural events like the Hungry Ghost and the Ghost Coffin, the headquarters of various countries must have known that ghosts could reset, and they would have made precautions against it.

Last time, in Miao Xiaoshan's school dormitory, if Yang Jian hadn't had the experience, he wouldn't have been able to easily imprison a drawing.

"It's such a pity, a group of people were annihilated in such a ghostly place. If they had better information, or had experienced more supernatural events, they definitely wouldn't have died in such a frustrating way."

Yang Jian collected some usable items and made sure there was nothing unusual about the bodies before withdrawing his gaze.

"Yang Jian, something's not right."

At that moment, Li Yang suddenly spoke with a trembling voice, "I just saw a dark shadow flickering a few times at the door of that room over there. I must not have been mistaken, the door of that room wasn't closed, and there definitely was a dark shadow moving inside."

Although they were in a building, the world created by the ghost drawing was not pitch-dark. Even without a light source, the surroundings were still visible, dim and gray, yet with high discernibility.

Yang Jian immediately looked up in the direction Li Yang mentioned.

There, the door of a room was slightly ajar.

But he did not see the flickering shadow, although Li Yang was certain, as he had been watching that direction all along, observing the situation there.

"In the room?"

Yang Jian's expression shifted slightly as he glanced up along the old wooden staircase.

A ghost might very well be on the stairs of the upper floor.

He conjectured that the ghost would probably not come down until there had been footstep sounds.

"Let's go take a look," Yang Jian said straightforwardly.

The room was within the scope of his investigation to begin with, and he wouldn't overlook such a suspicious place.

Thereupon, he walked directly toward the room with the unlocked door.

"It might be a ghost from 'The World of Ghost Drawing,' or possibly a lingering, unknown fierce ghost on this floor—after all, quite a few spirit controllers have died here," Yang Jian thought to himself.

He arrived at the room's doorway and opened the door immediately.

A faint light seeped through from inside.

Yang Jian looked up into the room and saw a window beside the living room. Beyond the window was a hazy view that connected to the outside of the building, which somehow made the interior of the room seem even clearer in comparison.

"There's a window, we can leave this damned place through it," came Jimmy's excited voice from behind.

Li Yang grabbed him at once, "Jimmy, calm down. We need to follow Mister Yang's lead; he's the professional. Any rash actions could mean death for us here."

"What's he so excited about?" Yang Jian asked without turning his head.

"He said we can leave through that window," Li Yang replied.

Leave?

A cold smile appeared on the corners of Yang Jian's mouth, "Have you not considered why all the other windows have disappeared, yet that one remains?"

Li Yang's eyes widened at this reminder.

"Two reasons, one is that the house is being disturbed by another ghost, and 'The World of Ghost Drawing' couldn't change that part. The other is... a trap."

Yang Jian analyzed, furthermore adding, "You two stay here; I'll go in and take a look."

Whether it was a trap or not, he had to investigate and clarify.

Once he crossed the threshold, Yang Jian could clearly feel that the atmosphere inside the room was different from the outside.

There was an indescribable, peculiar sensation.

It was confirmed there was something amiss in this room, so Yang Jian was very cautious.

However, his actions were not slow; he began to search quickly upon entering the room, looking for both any unknown ghosts and any possible ghost drawings.

Yang Jian was not particularly worried about being attacked by ghosts, so his movements were bold, and he even dared to make some noise intentionally.

Very quickly.

After a sweep around, his gaze fell on a single-seat sofa in front of the television in the innermost part of the living room.

Yang Jian saw someone sitting eerily on the shadowed sofa.

The person's body was obscured by the sofa; only one arm could be seen resting on the armrest, motionless, as if they had been sitting there for a very long time.

His gaze sharpening, he moved a few steps to the side, trying to get a clearer view from a different angle.

Although he changed his position, he still couldn't discern who was sitting on the sofa; he could only vaguely see the rotting, pockmarked arm on the armrest in the dim light from the window, suggesting the person on the sofa had been dead for quite some time.

"Another unknown ghost?"

Yang Jian did not approach, certain that whatever was in this room had nothing to do with 'The World of Ghost Drawing.'

Given that, there was no need for him to get any closer.

So he chose to retreat, to leave the room without alerting the ghost, sparing himself a good deal of trouble.

After backing away several steps, Yang Jian quickly turned to leave.

But just as he turned, he thought he saw a shadow flit by out of the corner of his eye, passing through the living room and briefly blocking the light from the window, plunging the surroundings into darkness.

"Hm?"

Yang Jian's expression transformed abruptly. Because he was without ghost eyes, he had lost sight of what was behind him and had to look back again.

At that moment, he realized with a shock that the person who had been sitting on the living room sofa had vanished.

The old single-seat sofa was empty, the corpse no longer seated upon it, as if the shadow that had moved past the window was that very body.

"The ghost is moving around in this house," Yang Jian thought.

But before he could ponder any further, a chill wind came from behind him, carrying with it the faint smell of decaying flesh.

"Bang!"

The door that had been open slammed shut behind a fleeting figure.

Yang Jian turned back to the door but saw nothing; he could not see the walking corpse that had been in the room, nor the ghost that might have appeared behind him earlier, but the door had indeed been closed by a ghost.

"Not willing to let me go?"