

Revival 711

Chapter 711 The Phone Call Home

"How long do you plan on holding me like this?"

After quite some time, Yang Jian, with his head still buried in Jiang Yan's embrace, couldn't help but ask. His emotions remained as calm as before, seemingly unchanged.

"No, I want to hold you for as long as I want," Jiang Yan murmured with her head tucked away, then tightened her grip around Yang Jian's neck, as if all her long-suppressed feelings had burst forth at that moment.

Even though Yang Jian was influenced by the malevolent spirit and had been through a lot, his feelings were quite indifferent, but that wasn't the case for Jiang Yan.

She was an ordinary person, a very healthy ordinary woman at that, so her feelings for Yang Jian were incredibly ardent. It was only due to various reasons that she couldn't stay by his side for long durations.

"Then can you not wipe your nose on my clothes?" Yang Jian said.

"It's your fault for ignoring me," Jiang Yan huffed softly, wiping her nose deliberately once again.

"..." Yang Jian.

At that moment, Jiang Yan whispered, "Hey, Yang Jian, there's a safe house next to the office, right?"

"Yes, the previous president named Paul left it," Yang Jian replied; "Why do you ask?"

"I, I don't want to work today, I'm tired, I want you to accompany me to rest for a while," Jiang Yan said somewhat shyly: "And not just today, from now on, I can stay with you. I believe I'll be much better than that Elder Sister Qin, with me by your side, you won't need her anymore."

Yang Jian fell silent for a moment, as if he wanted to say something, then suddenly looked towards the office's main entrance upon hearing a noise.

At this time, Zhang Liqin, as usual, walked in pushing the breakfast cart with a smile on her face, a bit embarrassed, and slightly downcast, as if lost in thought.

"President Zhang, your breakfast has arrived."

Immediately, Jiang Yan lifted her head, staring at her as if eyeing an enemy. Although the two got along very well on normal days, shared rides to and from work, and even experienced supernatural events together,

when it came to matters of the heart, Jiang Yan would not make any concessions.

"You've been standing outside the door for a while," Yang Jian said clearly: "You heard what was just said."

"No, I didn't hear anything, I've just come out of the elevator," Zhang Liqin hurriedly shook her head, appearing rather nervous.

Jiang Yan eyed Zhang Liqin for a while but, in the end, didn't say anything. She knew Zhang Liqin also had a tough life and wanted to rely on Yang Jian, especially since they both survived the supernatural events. She could understand those feelings and had received a lot of care from Zhang Liqin in normal times.

And now, causing such a fuss, she felt as though she might have wronged her in some way.

With a helpless sigh, Jiang Yan stopped thinking about Elder Sister Qin's issue. She decided to leave it to Yang Jian to handle; she just needed to take care of herself.

"Then you should take Jiang Yan for a bath and change of clothes first. She's been out in the cold wind all morning and scared into a cold sweat, I reckon she might catch a cold this time," Yang Jian instructed.

"Okay," Zhang Liqin nodded and then looked at Jiang Yan.

Just now, she vaguely saw that Jiang Yan had really jumped down from the building. She was so scared that she didn't know what to do if Jiang Yan hadn't suddenly returned to the office a few seconds later. She couldn't handle that responsibility and wouldn't know how to face Yang Jian afterward.

"I don't want to go, you have to accompany me," Jiang Yan said at that moment, acting like a spoiled girl.

Yang Jian gazed at her: "Then you're not being obedient? Or do you want me to repeat what I said, one act of recklessness is enough."

"I get it, can't I just listen to you?"

Jiang Yan kissed Yang Jian on the face and then stood up with a giggly smile, ready to take a bath and change her clothes.

At that time Zhang Liqin said, "By the way, President Yang, your mother called earlier, and I answered. She asked you to call her back as soon as possible."

"My mom called me?" Yang Jian's expression changed: "Did she mention what it's about?"

"No," Zhang Liqin shook her head slightly.

"Alright, I got it. You go ahead with your work," Yang Jian waved his hand, then picked up his phone and redialed the number.

His mother wasn't aware of his mobile number, considering some special circumstances. There weren't many people who could reach him, and his number was also protected by the headquarters, usually not even getting a spam message.

Yang Jian talked on the phone for about half an hour and had a rough idea of what it was all about.

It wasn't anything important. It was just that with the upcoming New Year, he was asked to make a trip back home, which wouldn't take many days. Besides that, there was an explicit order for him to bring a girlfriend home.

On the phone, his mother Zhang Fen seemed to favor Zhang Liqin, suggesting that it would be good if he could bring her home, then praising her for being hard-working and conscientious, and advising him to seize the opportunity.

"Okay, Mom, I'll drop by this afternoon," Yang Jian agreed and then ended the call, sinking into contemplation.

He didn't really want to waste time on the trip, not because he felt little for his relatives but because his current situation didn't allow him to pay attention to these things. He agreed so quickly because he was concerned about something Old Qin had said before.

His father was suspected to be involved with supernatural incidents.

If that were true, then was the blood-stained newspaper ghost that appeared in his house related to his father?

And if his father was indeed killed by a spirit-possessed bus, it meant his father had encountered supernatural incidents long ago. What had he experienced during that time, and what had he discovered?

Everything was a puzzle.

Of course.

All of this might be Yang Jian overthinking, his father was just an ordinary person, and the car accident was a normal mishap, nothing so complicated.

As for whether it was true, Yang Jian would need to visit his hometown to see if he could find any special evidence.

While he was contemplating, Zhang Liqin and Jiang Yan returned to the office again.

Yang Jian thought it over and stood up, "Jiang Yan, do you have anything scheduled for these few days, or any plans?"

"Not at all, what could I possibly have? Everyone has moved into the residential complex, I just go to work every day, and there's not much to do at work either," said Jiang Yan.

"Join me on a business trip at noon, we might be gone for a few days," Yang Jian said.

Jiang Yan's eyes suddenly lit up, "A business trip? Where to, are we going together?"

"It's not too far away, just a trip back to my hometown," said Yang Jian.

Going back to his hometown?

Jiang Yan's mind began to wander. Was Yang Jian taking her back to celebrate the new year? Or was he planning to introduce her to his relatives? If that was the case, then her status as his official girlfriend was practically confirmed.

Heh, hehe.

A smug chuckle echoed in her heart.

"Okay, then I will certainly join you."

Jiang Yan smiled with narrowed eyes, looking extremely happy.

"Good, it's settled then. After lunch, I'll wait for you in the car downstairs," Yang Jian said before leaving the office.

Jiang Yan hurried after him, "Where are you going now?"

"I'll just walk around the company, you don't need to follow me. You can go ahead and pack your things. Since we're staying for several days, there are some things you can prepare in advance," said Yang Jian.

"Alright, I'll call you after I've packed," said Jiang Yan.

Yang Jian responded and did not refuse.

He went down to the first floor, met with Zang Hua, and listened to his report.

"President Yang, you've come at the right time. That item from yesterday has been securely stored away, in a bank vault. I believe there won't be any issues," Zang Hua said in a hushed tone before informing him of the specific location.

"When I arrived just now, I saw Zhang Wei downstairs. This means you succeeded last time; Zhang Wei was rescued, but what about Sun Ren?" Yang Jian asked.

Zang Hua's expression turned somber, "He ran away; we didn't even see him. Though we tracked him, some incomprehensible, bizarre phenomena occurred, leading to our operation's failure, and he took the trade item you mentioned... Previously, your guess was accurate, Sun Ren has very likely become a ghost controller."

"Such a person is not easy to kill, but as per previous methods, we have already started issuing a warrant for him. I'm really sorry, this was a lapse in my professional duties, otherwise this wouldn't have happened."

Yang Jian's expression remained calm, "It has nothing to do with you, I was just trying to see if I could deal with Sun Ren. If he has escaped, then so be it. It's good that Zhang Wei is safe."

"Besides, have you started to investigate the address I gave you yesterday?"

"We've already started on it, but due to the short amount of time and the location being out of town, it will take some time."

"No worries, just report back to me after I return. There's no need to push the investigation; if something feels off, give it up. I will personally make the trip when the time comes," Yang Jian stated.

"Understood, President Yang, are you heading out on a business trip?" asked Zang Hua.

Yang Jian shook his head, "No, I am going to visit my hometown. It's not far, just thirty miles from Dachang City. If anything happens, you can contact me."

Such a short distance didn't really count as a business trip; he could come back immediately through the Ghost Domain in case of an emergency.

"That's true, with the new year approaching, it's normal to visit your hometown," Zang Hua commented.

Yang Jian chatted with him for a while, took care of some matters, and then left.

He went to meet the company's manager, Wang Bin, to ask about Wang Shanshan.

Wang Shanshan was as before, staying at home, never going out, rarely contacting the outside world. Though not a major problem, her condition was indeed a cause for concern.

"She'll be fine. Uncle Wang, there's no need to worry too much. Although it's harsh to say, Wang Shanshan is lucky to be like this," Yang Jian remarked.

Having experienced the Ghost Door Knocker and been targeted by the Hungry Ghost, it was fortunate that Wang Shanshan survived. It was hard to ask for more.

"I understand," Wang Bin sighed, smoking and looking rather troubled.

Yang Jian also talked to him about some work-related matters, understanding the general state of the company. He didn't ask too much or interfere further. After all, he wasn't knowledgeable in these areas.

And he had full confidence in Wang Bin's management.

Chapter 712 The Troublesome Cousin

Noon time.

A luxury SUV drove out of Dachang City towards a nearby small town.

Behind the wheel, Yang Jian supported his head with one hand on the steering wheel, watching the familiar road fly past while also pondering some matters.

Next to him in the passenger seat, Jiang Yan wore light makeup, dressed youthfully and beautifully with a faint smile on her lips, a stark contrast to her desperate, suicidal demeanor that morning. Although they hadn't spoken much on the road, her gaze kept stealing glances at Yang Jian now and then.

She felt that after today, her relationship with Yang Jian had taken a step closer, a milestone leap.

Soon.

Yang Jian arrived in the county town.

The car slowed down due to the number of vehicles and pedestrians on the roads of the county town.

"Are we home yet?" Jiang Yan asked eagerly.

"Not yet, there's a village past the county town, that's my hometown. It's just that I rarely go back there, only during the New Year, so you don't need to worry too much, it's just a formality," said Yang Jian.

Jiang Yan giggled, "I know, but I still take this visit very seriously. What do you think about my look today? I went for a very young and cute style, do you like it?"

After speaking, she threw him a coquettish glance, pretending to be cute and obedient.

Yang Jian was unmoved, "What look of yours haven't I seen? It's good enough as it is; there's no important person to meet after all. My father passed away early, and you've already met my mother many times."

"Then what does Auntie think of me? Is she satisfied?" Jiang Yan's expression changed, asking expectantly.

"Not good at all, her impression of you is terrible, saying you're lazy, eat a lot, and often show up late for work. So, my mom has a better impression of Zhang Liqin, this time she wanted me to bring Zhang Liqin over," Yang Jian said.

"What?"

Jiang Yan's complexion collapsed instantly.

She had not expected her impression in her aunt's eyes to be so terrible. No wonder her aunt didn't talk much to her on regular days and often sat in front of the TV chatting with Zhang Liqin instead.

"Then why didn't you bring Elder Sister Qin?" Jiang Yan pouted.

"You're more suitable," Yang Jian said, and without warning, he pressed the brake and brought the car to a halt.

Jiang Yan jolted, hastily asking, "What's wrong, there isn't any car ahead, why did you brake suddenly?"

"I saw someone," Yang Jian's gaze shifted as he looked out the car window towards the nearby street.

Down the street, a group of very young lads were chasing after two girls around fifteen or sixteen years old, running towards them, seemingly involved in some conflict or dispute. Yang Jian didn't recognize these spirited young men; he didn't have acquaintances around here.

The only slightly familiar figure was the girl in the lead.

Not very tall, a bit dark-skinned, not particularly fair, but cute. At the moment, she was running and letting out a somewhat neurotic giggle, seemingly not afraid at all of the group of guys chasing her.

"Damn it, you hit someone and you think you can run? Don't think I won't hit you just because you're a girl. If you don't compensate and apologize, we're not letting this go today," said one of the young lads furiously.

"Her?" Yang Jian paused for a while before remembering in his mind.

No wonder she looked a bit familiar.

"Who? A relative?" Jiang Yan curiously peered out, but she didn't know whom Yang Jian was referring to.

"It's my cousin. Although we rarely meet, if I'm not mistaken, her name is... Liang Yuan. But I used to call her Xiao Yuan. You park the car. I'm going to check it out." As Yang Jian spoke, he had already gotten out of the car and started walking briskly towards them.

"I'm so tired, I can't run anymore, I'm going to die from exhaustion," breathed Xiao Yuan's companion, also a girl, who was at her physical limit and couldn't run away anymore.

"Really, how can you give up so soon? I can still run for quite a distance. Since you can't run anymore, then I won't run either." Xiao Yuan laughed as she stopped and waited for her friend to catch her breath and rest.

As they stopped, the group of lads chasing after them closed in.

"Riding a bike without looking where you're going, ramming straight into our group, are you blind? Now that I've caught you, how are you going to settle this?" The young lad who was hit pointed to his foot where a clear tire mark was visible.

It was still faintly painful.

Xiao Yuan continued to smile, "Then I apologize."

"Just an apology and that's it? Without compensating us for the mental anguish, don't even think about leaving," the lad gripped her wrist tightly, not letting go.

"But I have no money, and when I was riding my bike earlier, I did it with my eyes closed. I wanted to see if I could hit you with my eyes closed... and you guys are really dumb, not knowing to dodge. If I'd been driving a car, all of you would've been dead by now," Xiaoyuan still giggled as she spoke, but her words carried a frightening earnestness.

It gave off a chilling feeling, as if she really would have driven into them with her eyes closed if she had been in a car.

Is this girl crazy?

Or perhaps a bit neurotic?

The lad was stunned for a moment, clearly not expecting her to say something like that, and he immediately got annoyed.

"I don't care, you have to pay today, I don't believe you don't have any money on you," he said as he prepared to frisk her.

Xiao Yuan still giggled and said, "My mom told me a girl's body shouldn't be casually touched by boys. When going out, I have to learn to protect myself. If you do that, I won't be polite to you,"

As she spoke, she somehow produced a sharp scalpel from nowhere and, without any hesitation, plunged it directly at the boy in front of her.

Swift and precise, as if she had practised repeatedly.

"Xiao Yuan, what are you doing?" A cold voice suddenly echoed around, suggesting they hadn't noticed someone had approached suddenly.

A gloved hand swiftly grabbed the wrist holding the knife, halting Xiao Yuan's crazed act.

Xiao Yuan paused, then looked at Yang Jian, becoming very excited and happy; "Cousin, is that you? When did you come back?"

As she spoke, the scalpel carelessly fell to the ground.

At the same time, that neurotic smile on her face also disappeared, replaced by a normal girl's sweet smile.

"She... something isn't right about her," Yang Jian watched Xiao Yuan intently.

This cousin he hadn't seen for a year hadn't changed in personality, but just then, it was as if she was a completely different person—extremely unfamiliar, and that aggressive stance from before was incredibly fierce, resembling a cold-blooded assassin eliminating a target right before her eyes.

This was unbelievable for an ordinary girl.

"Xiao Yuan, have you had any troubles lately?" Yang Jian asked directly.

"No, I came to town today to go shopping with friends and had a great time, no problems," Xiao Yuan said, puzzled; "Why, cousin, why are you asking this?"

She seemed oblivious to what she had just done.

"Then why did you just try to stab someone with a knife?" asked Yang Jian.

"Isn't that normal? If they bully me, I'll fight back. That's what you taught me, right? A girl can't be bullied when she's out," Xiao Yuan replied.

"..."

Yang Jian swore he had never taught her such a thing.

"Let's put that aside for now," he said, then turned to look at the young man before him.

He had understood a bit of what just happened—it seemed that Xiao Yuan was at fault. She had closed her eyes and deliberately ran into someone on her bike, though it was unclear whether she had gone crazy or was under some influence.

"Sorry, I'm her cousin. I will take responsibility for this matter. Xiao Yuan was at fault just now, how would you like to settle this?" Yang Jian said.

"Settle this? Of course, you've got to pay," the young man said, looking at Yang Jian and for some reason feeling a bit guilty.

Even though the man before him seemed quite polite and amiable, why was he feeling nervous?

Yang Jian nodded and said, "Of course, then tell me how much."

"A thousand yuan."

"Okay, no problem, take out your phone, I'll transfer it to you," Yang Jian said, agreeing to the amount without any fuss.

"Next time tell your cousin to be more careful. If it happens again, we won't let you off so easily," the young man, seeing Yang Jian's straightforward attitude, didn't linger, took the money, and walked away, planning to treat his friends to a good time with it.

However, he hadn't gone far.

Suddenly, Xiao Yuan giggled again, "He's really unlucky, he's about to die."

"What did you say?" Yang Jian turned to look at her again.

"Nothing, cousin, my bike is broken, you have to take me home, but before that, I'd like to eat something, you're treating, how about it?" Xiao Yuan smiled again, pulling at Yang Jian's arm.

Yang Jian said, "Sure, is this your friend? Come join us."

"I'm a bit embarrassed," the girl said, seeming very shy and hesitant.

"No worries, consider this my apology on behalf of Xiao Yuan for her recklessness just now," Yang Jian said, openly acknowledging her mistake.

"Well, then, thank you," the girl replied.

"Let's go."

Xiao Yuan, still cheerful, tugged at Yang Jian and her friend and headed towards a nearby street.

At that moment, Yang Jian glanced down.

He noticed that Xiao Yuan's originally fair and delicate arms now had patches of bruising, similar to cadaveric spots, as if they had been pinched by something.

"Definitely a problem," Yang Jian's heart sank slightly.

This was no illusion; through these details and changes, he was certain of it.

Could it be that near his old home, there existed some incomprehensible, eerie presence? Or had Xiao Yuan encountered a so-called supernatural event at some point and was thus influenced by it?

Regardless, he had to investigate thoroughly.

Chapter 713 The Old Home

"Hello, cousin Xiao Yuan, my name is Jiang Yan, and I am Yang Jian's girlfriend,"

Jiang Yan greeted her warmly, polite yet adorable.

Liang Yuan just blinked her big eyes and looked at her, seemingly pondering something or sizing up Jiang Yan. After a while, she smiled and said, "Hello, auntie. Auntie, you are so beautiful, my cousin must like you a lot."

Auntie?

Hearing this, Jiang Yan's smile instantly froze, her heart grew cold.

It was one thing for Yang Jian to call her auntie, but she hadn't expected his cousin to do the same.

The most infuriating part was that she couldn't refute it, since Yang Jian's little cousin seemed to be about fifteen or sixteen years old, almost ten years younger than her, and calling her auntie seemed quite reasonable.

"I can't get angry now, I absolutely can't get angry. I'm about to meet Yang Jian's relatives, and if I embarrass myself this time, he won't bring me over again next time."

Jiang Yan reassured herself silently, trying to maintain a good image.

"Auntie, your skin is so white. Are you sick?" Liang Yuan asked again.

"No, my skin is naturally very white," Jiang Yan said with a smile.

Liang Yuan nodded and said, "If your skin is that white, ghosts might target you at night, and you would die very quickly, cousin. Maybe you should find another girlfriend."

"Wha, what..." Jiang Yan's mouth twitched.

Who talks like this?

"Alright, Xiao Yuan, where do you want to go shopping? I'll accompany you," Yang Jian said.

Liang Yuan smiled and said, "I want to buy a raincoat over there. It's been raining a lot lately, and I don't want to get wet every day."

"Okay," Yang Jian nodded.

On the way there, Jiang Yan followed behind. Taking advantage of when Liang Yuan was picking a raincoat, she tugged on Yang Jian's arm and whispered to him, "Yang Jian, don't get mad at what I'm going to say, but I think your cousin is a bit off... She seems strange."

As she spoke, she pointed to her head.

"Nothing's wrong with her head, her thinking is very clear. Her reaction just now showed that she's been influenced by something, I noticed it long ago," Yang Jian whispered, "No matter what Xiao Yuan says, don't take it to heart. Just think of her as a sick person."

"I'm not that petty to hold a grudge against a child. I'm just worried about your cousin. If there's something wrong, we can take her to Dachang City for a check-up," Jiang Yan said.

Yang Jian nodded slightly, "I'll arrange that."

Jiang Yan acknowledged and didn't gossip about the matter anymore. She trusted that Yang Jian could handle it; it was an instinctive trust.

While accompanying his cousin and her companion shopping, Yang Jian noticed she bought many odd things: a raincoat, yellow joss paper, some candles, and even several sharp fruit knives, which unnerved him the most. Her companion didn't seem to find it odd; it seemed normal to them.

"What are you buying these for?" Yang Jian asked.

Liang Yuan smiled, squinting her eyes, "I need them. These things get used up quickly, and the ones I bought three days ago were already gone. The scalpel I used just now didn't feel right to me, it's too thin and hard to hold."

"..." Yang Jian didn't know what to say.

"Where do you usually use these things?"

Liang Yuan frowned as if trying to remember, then seemed unable to recall, "I don't know, I don't know where they get used, but I always feel like I need them."

Having memory problems?" Yang Jian pondered.

If that were the case, he couldn't glean much information from her. But the more he thought about it, the more he felt that something was not right in his hometown, and it wasn't as peaceful and harmonious as he had imagined.

After a round of shopping and acquiring all the strange items, Yang Jian finally drove the three of them toward the village where his family lived.

The roads were good despite the rural setting, making the drive quite convenient. However, as they were on their way, he saw several unusual vehicles driving from the opposite direction. As Yang Jian rolled down the window, he smelled a very familiar scent.

It was the faint smell of corpse.

The vehicles were hearses, carrying bodies inside.

Through the rearview mirror, he glanced at the vehicles that had passed and saw a dead body covered with a white cloth. Out of curiosity, he opened his ghost eye, ignoring the barrier to take a peek at the body beneath the cloth.

It was stiff and ice-cold, wet all over like it had been drenched in rain. The most sinister aspect was one of its hands tightly clutching its own neck, the fingers dug deep into the flesh as if they had pierced its own carotid artery, the blood had literally drained out.

As a result, the corpse looked pale and stiff.

What struck Yang Jian most was the expression on the dead man's face.

It wasn't fear or despair, but a kind of fierce and vicious look, as if he had been fighting desperately with something.

But in this condition, could it be that he was fighting against himself before death?

"An abnormal death. But that person probably wasn't from my home village, more likely someone from a nearby village," Yang Jian thought to himself, as his previous unease grew stronger.

Something definitely happened here,

but the area was under the administration of Dachang City.

That meant Yang Jian was responsible. If there had been a supernatural event, he would have been notified. So why hadn't he heard any similar reports from Zang Hua?

Was it because there were so many incidents that this one, being less serious, had been overlooked?

Or was there another reason?

With various doubts in his mind, Yang Jian drove to a village located about five or six kilometers from Yang Town.

Meishan Village.

The name of the village was strange, as there were neither plum trees nor mountains here. It was unclear why it had been given such a name; perhaps changes over hundreds of years had altered the landscape.

The village was very quiet.

Like most villages across the country, the young people had all gone out, and some of the villagers had followed suit, leaving not too many people behind. However, with the year-end approaching, some people who had moved away were returning to their hometown, albeit still seeming somewhat deserted. It seemed that young people were getting busier with work.

"Xiao Yuan, is your friend also from our village? If not, I can take her home first," Yang Jian asked.

"Of course, she is now living with me, she's my best friend," Liang Yuan said with a smile.

Yang Jian felt a bit odd but didn't ask further, and immediately drove into the village before finding an open space to park.

"Cousin, we'll go on ahead then, see you tonight."

The moment Liang Yuan and her friend got out of the car, they waved cheerfully, then quickly ran into the village with their belongings and swiftly disappeared around the corner.

"Alright," Yang Jian nodded.

His cousin's house wasn't far from his ancestral home, they were all in the same village, after all.

"Your ancestral home feels so peaceful. Can I come to stay here often with you in the future?" Jiang Yan stretched lazily, feeling the air was fresh and the ambiance quiet and serene, very comfortable.

Moreover, it was only after arriving here that she really felt like she had become Yang Jian's woman.

Yang Jian didn't speak, but went straight to his old house.

His family's ancestral home had seen some years, built during his father's lifetime. Its style was somewhat outdated, though back then it was one of the finer homes in the village. Now, however, it was completely behind the times.

Quickly.

A two-story concrete house came into view.

Long-standing disuse had left the house with some moss, and various signs of aging and abandonment gave it a slightly sinister feel.

But inside, the house was clean. There was hardly any clutter as no one lived there, and since Yang Jian's mother, Zhang Fen, had come back several days earlier and aired out the place, there were no strange smells either. It was fairly refreshing and tidy, fit for a brief stay.

But what Yang Jian cared about was not this. He went straight up to the second floor.

There was a seldom-used room on the second floor, long kept closed. It used to store miscellaneous items, but ever since his father's death, it had become the place for his portrait.

Jiang Yan followed behind, curiously surveying the surroundings.

She felt an inexplicable panic, uncomfortable with the old house, as if she had previously experienced some paranormal event. She didn't dare fall behind, fearful that if something unexpected occurred and she was a step late, Yang Jian wouldn't be able to protect her.

"Could my own father have been a man who dealt with paranormal events?"

Driven by curiosity, Yang Jian went straight to the room where his father's portrait was placed.

Since his father had passed away so long ago, and with his current state of mind, he felt no sense of grief, everything was very calm.

Upon opening the door.

A fairly ordinary old wooden table was before him with a black-and-white portrait on it, next to which were some incense burners for offerings.

The man in the portrait was a youthful twenty-something—not a photo taken at the time of his father's death, but from an older picture produced posthumously, which is why it felt somewhat incongruent.

The young man bore a high resemblance to Yang Jian.

With a smile and radiant charm.

Give it a few more years, once Yang Jian matured a bit, worked out more, and acquired a bit more of a sunny disposition, he might bear an even closer resemblance to the person in the picture.

Therefore, if someone thought the person in the photo wasn't Yang Jian's father, probably no one would believe them.

When Jiang Yan saw the portrait, she hastily bowed in respect, then prepared to light some incense.

Yang Jian watched silently, observing not with the eye of a worshipper but through the lens of the Ghost-Eye Yang Jian.

"Nothing abnormal."

He felt somewhat disappointed yet somewhat reassured.

There was nothing in the room worthy of his attention, nothing peculiar at all.

"However, I can't be so hasty. Old Qin's words piqued my interest; a person of his stature wouldn't utter such irrelevant words without a reason. If he spoke, there must be a cause. This portrait room was set up later—I should search for places my father frequented or spent time in before his death."

Yang Jian pondered.

He felt he had been looking in the wrong direction.

"Yang Jian, aren't you going to pay your respects?" Jiang Yan handed him some incense sticks, then said.

Yang Jian fell silent for a moment, took the incense sticks, bowed to the portrait of this stranger who was his father, and then left the room.

But when he turned to leave and closed the door behind him.

It was either a trick of the light or some incomprehensible occurrence.

The man's face in the portrait was shrouded in darkness, casting an enigmatic presence, as if someone hidden in the shadows was watching everything here.

The lit incense gave off a subtle red glow, flickering unsteadily, slowly extinguishing.

"Our room is right here. My mom has already cleaned it up. If you're tired, you can rest first, and you can also bring things from the car, as we might stay here for several days," Yang Jian said as he walked into the next room.

It was a plain and clean bedroom.

"Um, Yang Jian, next door is... your father's portrait. Isn't it a bit scary to stay here? I don't mean any disrespect, my courage is just a little small, you know that," Jiang Yan said, a bit nervous.

Yang Jian replied, "I've checked just now, there's no problem, and besides, if anything happens, aren't I here? What are you afraid of?"

"Then I want to be with you at night, you can't sneak off on your own," Jiang Yan said.

"Okay," Yang Jian didn't refuse but nodded.

Chapter 714 Three Weird Things

In the afternoon, Yang Jian took a brief stroll around the village without any particular purpose; he just wanted to survey the place, to see if there were any odd or eerie aspects to it.

After all, it involved the safety of his own village, which Yang Jian took quite seriously.

It was different from when he entered Huanggang Village before.

Now, Yang Jian could brazenly use his Ghost Eye, with no need to be overly cautious about employing its abilities, since his Ghost Eye was still in a state of balance.

"I haven't discovered anything," Yang Jian thought to himself.

This was an utterly ordinary village, without any mysterious or inexplicable occurrences.

"Are you looking for something?" Jiang Yan, who had been following him, asked curiously.

"Not looking for anything specific, just wandering around," said Yang Jian.

Having confirmed that there were no issues with the placement of the memorial portraits or anywhere else in the village, he felt that the only remaining place of suspicion was where his father frequently visited before his death, but this was something he didn't know and would have to ask his mother about.

"Let's go back."

He didn't dawdle, and turned to head back to the ancestral home.

Upon returning, he happened to run into his mother and a few relatives chatting in the courtyard about ordinary family matters.

"Zhang Fen, what's Yang Jian doing nowadays? I heard that after some issue at school, he hasn't gone back to his studies. That won't do, he needs to attend school. Although he missed a year, he could retake it, and who knows, he might be lucky and get into college next year."

"But getting into college is tough, and the fees for a year are tens of thousands, not easy to come by. My kid just started high school and it already costs at least sixty or seventy thousand a year."

Zhang Fen was a middle-aged woman who appeared honest and straightforward, yet she harbored her own little schemes. She smiled and said, "Yang Jian has been quite busy recently, no time to review or study. Anyway, his grades weren't great, he wasn't cut out for academics, so he and his classmate Zhang Wei started a company, and it's doing quite well."

"That Zhang Wei is something else, the son of a billionaire real estate mogul. Yang Jian is lucky to ride his coattails, and now he seems rather successful himself. He even made enough to buy a five-story villa in Dachang City for me to live in."

"Look, now when I have free time, I just garden in the courtyard."

As she spoke, she took out her phone to show off to the relatives.

Seeing that grand villa and the garden full of vegetables, several relatives suddenly looked a bit embarrassed.

Could it be that the poorest family had turned their fortunes around in just over half a year?

However, as far as Zhang Fen was concerned, it was thanks to Zhang Wei that Yang Jian had become successful; she was completely unaware that Yang Jian had become the richest man in Dachang City, with another title to add: The Big Boss of Dachang City.

An influential city leader, a status that most common people could only dream of.

Yet, the cost of it all was immensely heavy; if possible, Yang Jian would rather be without it all, as the experiences involved were unbearable for anyone.

"Is this for real, Yang Jian is that successful? It's hard to tell, really. Well, I really should visit your villa one day," a relative said, envious but with an edge in their tone.

Zhang Fen smiled confidently, "Of course, I'll welcome you properly when the time comes."

As they spoke, Yang Jian came over, "Mom, I'm here. I've been thinking about something and wanted to ask you about it."

"Hello Auntie," said Jiang Yan, shyly smiling as she followed behind.

Zhang Fen glanced over, a little disappointed not seeing Zhang Liqin, whom she favored, but seeing Jiang Yan instead; she regarded her as lazy and gluttonous. However, noticing Jiang Yan was dressed nicely and looked youthful and beautiful, her displeasure vanished.

She didn't expect Jiang Yan to look so attractive when dressed up, almost like a celebrity.

Her skin seemed so delicate, as if one could squeeze water out of it.

Standing next to Yang Jian, she almost made it seem like Yang Jian didn't match up to her.

Yang Jian and Jiang Yan's arrival immediately sparked the curiosity of the relatives. They sized them up, inquired, and were especially relentless when it came to questioning Jiang Yan.

Jiang Yan's social skills had improved considerably. She responded with smiles, polite and never without a smile, and when her identity was questioned, she confidently affirmed that she was Yang Jian's girlfriend. Their relationship was very strong, and she even said that they could get married anytime, as long as Yang Jian was willing.

Yang Jian was disinterested in these exchanges. He asked, "Mom, I just want to ask about Dad's stuff. Did he leave anything behind when he was still here? Like some farmland, a fish pond or something? I want to know their exact locations."

Zhang Fen was about to speak when one of the relatives quickly interjected, "Look, Yang Jian, that's all in the past. Nowadays, there's no such thing as farmland or fish ponds left—everything has been leased to private individuals. They're no longer yours. Besides, you've made a fortune outside, why care about these trifles?"

Yang Jian looked at this person, who seemed to be his aunt, then said, "I'm not interested in these things, not trying to take them back. I just want to have a look, that's all."

"What's so interesting about some mud and water?" the aunt flatly refused.

"I just want to take a look, that shouldn't be a problem," Yang Jian said. "Aunt, you're stopping me from checking them out—is it because those things are now under my uncle's name? But I'm not here to settle the old scores today, I've lost interest in that."

"If you're not interested, then why bring it up? There really is truth in the saying—the richer you are, the stingier you get. Young and utterly heartless. When your dad was here, our family helped yours a lot," the aunt spoke quickly, as if deeply suspicious of Yang Jian's intentions.

Yang Jian was not angry, just found it somewhat amusing.

This aunt didn't consider what use he would have for those things. Did she think he would go back to his hometown to raise fish?

The previous disputes were merely about not being able to swallow his pride.

Now that his perspectives had broadened, he no longer cared about such matters. Thus, both he and his mother preferred not to bring it up anymore, out of consideration for family ties.

"Let's drop it, I won't discuss it with you, aunt. Mom, please tell me in detail, I'll go have a look after dinner," Yang Jian shook his head, feeling it shameful to be arguing about such matters while being a person with the "Ghost Eye."

Zhang Fen said, "I don't remember very clearly, but there seems to be a fish pond to the south of the village. He used to raise fish there, or something like that, I can't recall. It's been quite a while since I last checked, and I'm not sure if it's still there. Behind it, there was a piece of land that your dad voluntarily offered to the village to build a small temple on..."

"No, not just that. Aside from these, there's also a grove to the west that used to belong to your dad. I remember your dad raised something there too. Yes, now I remember, he raised dogs, a whole pack of them. To tend to these animals, he even built a small wooden hut there. Later, the dogs were sold off overnight, and your dad never spent time in that grove again."

Another relative, a bit kinder, detailed some old stories.

A fish pond, a small temple, and a grove.

He had once raised something in the fish pond, the small temple was built by him, and he also raised dogs in the grove for a while, before they mysteriously vanished overnight...

Yang Jian paid attention to this key information.

Each activity seemed ordinary on the surface, but upon closer thought, they were not so normal.

A grown man engaging in these activities appeared to be shirking his responsibilities, as none yielded direct economic value, meaning they were all losing propositions.

A typical man under the pressure of providing for his family wouldn't engage in unprofitable activities, lest he allow his family to starve.

"As I suspected, was my father, while he was still alive, not a normal person?"

Although it was a speculation, there was already a degree of certainty in his heart.

Old Qin's words were evidently true.

He had met Yang Jian's father, and there was a part of the story that Yang Jian could not comprehend. His father's unexpected death meant that many details remained undisclosed.

If everything was as speculated,

Then the ghost that appeared in his rental room might not have been an accident.

For some reason, Yang Jian felt an inexplicable chill at that moment.

He may have been in contact with ghosts a long time ago without even knowing it.

Chapter 715 The Real Dream

The fish pond to the south of the village, the small temple behind the village, a stretch of woods to the west of the village.

These were the three specific locations Yang Jian had inherited, also the properties left by his late father. If there was anything strange, it certainly lay within one of these three places.

However, by the afternoon, it was already getting late.

Yang Jian decided to check them out tomorrow morning because relatives had invited them for a meal, so it was difficult to refuse. He had to accompany his mother.

He wasn't interested in such feasts, not because he was deliberately putting on airs, but because he seldom attended banquets to begin with, and even more so with these unfamiliar relatives—it was truly an obligatory social discomfort.

Village feasts always ended very late.

After leaving, Jiang Yan was once again drunkenly stumbling, though she fared much better than last time, clinging to Yang Jian's arm, giggling all the way, incredibly happy.

She felt that after showing up this time, her chances of being with Yang Jian were very high.

So this time, she absolutely couldn't embarrass Yang Jian.

"I'll take you back to sleep, you rest first, I'll go out for a walk later," Yang Jian said as he accompanied her back to the old house's second floor, to the room next to the one holding his father's portrait.

"No, I don't want to sleep, I want you to stay with me."

Jiang Yan, holding onto Yang Jian's neck, cooed; her cheeks were flush, perhaps because she had been drinking, and her bright eyes were slightly narrowed, shrouded in a hazy mist.

"I deliberately got drunk today, you know."

Then, she whispered into Yang Jian's ear: "You're not planning to sneak away again, are you? I remember everything between you and Elder Sister Qin. I'm going to make sure you stay with me tonight, no matter what. If you lie to me like last time, I'll tell your mom."

"Tell my mom what? She doesn't mind me being with her," Yang Jian replied calmly, unmoved by Jiang Yan's slightly reddened face.

"No, what I want to tell Auntie isn't that. It's about us," Jiang Yan said softly, biting her lip, a look both serious and pitying.

Yang Jian said: "Nothing has happened between us, the only thing that might have is when you once spat in my face. If you're going to bring that up, I don't mind."

"Pah, that's not it at all. What I mean is, I'm pregnant," said Jiang Yan.

Yang Jian replied, his expression unchanged: "Really? Whose child is it? Definitely not mine, I've never touched you. What we have is very pure, as clean as a blank sheet of paper."

"You're just deliberately irritating me. You know I'm yours, yet you still say such things."

Jiang Yan buried her head in his chest and said, "I was thinking of making up a lie to tell Auntie so that you couldn't get rid of me."

"That's not very fair, is it? Then what will you do when you have to explain yourself?" Yang Jian said.

"Simple," Jiang Yan replied, her face and her nervous smile tinged with a shade of bashfulness. "Just work a little harder, and turn a lie into truth. As long as the timing is about right, I am fully prepared."

Yang Jian stared at her as if in surprise and seemed to be assessing her.

While he maintained a cold demeanor, Jiang Yan was different. At that moment, she seemed anxious, her eyebrows trembling, her breathing quickened, as if she was very much looking forward to what might happen next.

"No," Yang Jian bluntly refused after a moment's pause.

"Ah, why?" Jiang Yan's face immediately fell, and she felt an overwhelming sense of disappointment.

She had dressed with so much care today.

"This village is not quite right," Yang Jian said. "I always feel something might happen in this village at night. You must've seen my cousin today—Xiao Yuan was clearly not normal. Do you remember what she said to me just before she entered the village?"

"I think the cousin mentioned she would come to see you tonight," Jiang Yan said softly, her tension rising.

Yang Jian nodded: "Yes, she said it casually, but I took it to heart. I feel like she will definitely come to find me tonight."

"So you're going to wait for her?" Jiang Yan looked at him and said.

"It's not really waiting, more like observing, paying attention to some of the things happening here. I've always been worried that some of the people or things here are involved with supernatural events, but on the surface everything seems too calm, and I can't find any evidence," Yang Jian said, casually lying down on the bed, frowning in thought.

Jiang Yan propped her head up and leaned against him, "That's fine. Then I'll wait with you. Anyway, you can ask me to do anything, just don't leave me behind."

Yang Jian looked down at her and stayed silent.

At that moment, Jiang Yan wasn't causing any trouble either. She seemed to have settled down because Yang Jian hadn't rejected her presence. So, she was happy, even feeling a bit of sweetness.

With that thought, the intoxicated her soon fell asleep, sleeping very soundly.

Yang Jian also closed his eyes, but he didn't sleep because he had slept the day before, and with his physical condition, he wouldn't feel tired.

However, as time slowly passed.

The night in the village deepened... At this time, the darkness was pervasive, and the dim streetlights newly installed in the countryside still tried hard to spread their light, making the darkness seem less oppressive. It was just that the surroundings were eerily quiet, as if winter had come and even the insects were silent.

The guard dogs of the households also hid away, curling up in their little nests to doze off.

Some of the villagers had gone to bed early.

Early to bed and early to rise had always been the lifestyle of the rural people.

In such a quiet and peaceful village, Yang Jian gradually relaxed as well. He seemed to doze off for a bit during the late night, or perhaps he just took a short rest. It was a blur for a while, but his consciousness was clear and he could maintain his thoughts.

This state seemed very brief, but in reality, a long time might have passed.

Until a voice woke him up.

"Cousin, are you there? Come down quickly," the voice of his cousin Xiao Yuan suddenly came from the yard outside the building.

The voice echoed in the quiet black night, exceptionally clear, snapping the somewhat groggy Yang Jian to full alertness. His body jolted and all sleepiness vanished, leaving him inexplicably alert.

Is she here?

He immediately got up and walked out to the balcony.

Looking down.

A cute girl wearing a raincoat and looking up at him with a sweet smile was there. Indeed, it was raining in the village that night. Raindrops fell, sparse and not dense, but they seemed somewhat cold and chilling, making it feel quite uncomfortable.

"Cousin, do you see Xiao Yuan? I'm here, come down quickly," Xiao Yuan waved her hand, shouting loudly.

Yang Jian's expression shifted slightly, and he immediately went downstairs, "Why are you running out so late? Shouldn't you be sleeping?"

"Cousin, I do this every day. And it's not the first time, come on, let's go," Xiao Yuan said, waving at another side, "Come out."

The previously timid girl came out. She was also wearing a raincoat, but absurdly, she was holding a knife in her hand.

A fruit knife bought during the day in town.

"What are you doing in the dead of night with a knife? Where are you going?" Yang Jian immediately furrowed his brow, finding Xiao Yuan very strange tonight.

But Xiao Yuan just said cheerfully, "Of course, we're going to play hide-and-seek."

Hide-and-seek?

The more Yang Jian heard, the more confused he became. He was starting to lose track of his cousin's train of thought.

"Right, what's your friend's name? I forgot to ask during the day," Yang Jian suddenly turned to look at the other, timid girl.

"My name is Lin Xiaoxi." The girl greeted him.

Liang Yuan grabbed Yang Jian's arm and urged, "Let's hurry, if we wait a bit longer, that thing will find its way to the village. When that happens, many people will be in danger. I don't want to be targeted by that thing, so we must quickly head out of the village."

Before Yang Jian could even respond, Liang Yuan was already pulling him along.

The three of them walked along the road that led into the village during daylight, and despite it being night, the streetlights along the path kept them from total darkness. After all, society has developed quickly. If it were back when Yang Jian was a child, without moonlight or starlight, one would be practically walking in pitch-black darkness.

"Something's off." As they gradually moved toward the outskirts of the village, Yang Jian felt his unease magnifying.

A vague sense of danger was closing in.

This danger, unknown in origin, seemed to be everywhere.

Just as Yang Jian stepped out of the village, in the old residence he had been in, on the second floor—

The door of the room next door creaked open.

That room, where Yang Jian's father's portrait was placed, was usually uninhabited and always kept shut. However, at night, the door opened as if someone inside had opened it.

Indeed, that was the case.

A young man wearing an old-fashioned jacket emerged from the room and stepped out onto the balcony.

He looked downstairs, seemingly at Liang Yuan who had been shouting earlier, then toward the direction of the village entrance.

The moment he slightly lifted his head, a clean, sunny yet somewhat eerie face became visible—resembling Yang Jian, but more akin to... the portrait placed on the table in the room.

But at that moment—

There was no longer a portrait in the room, nor a wooden table.

Just a very simple single bed.

As if this person had been sleeping there all along, only to be woken up by someone just now.

Meanwhile—

Yang Jian, pulled along by his cousin and the girl named Lin Xiaoxi, had already left the village and were following the road out, continuing to walk forward.

The road was lengthy and had no visible end, winding and twisting, with a faint light ahead that seemed bright yet also deep and dark.

"This is not the road outside the village during the day," Yang Jian's face changed dramatically as he suddenly came to a realization.

Had he entered the Ghost Domain without realizing it?

When had his alertness become so poor that he was unknowingly wandering in the ghosts' realm?

However, when Yang Jian almost subconsciously tried to open his Ghost Eye, he was shocked to discover that he could no longer feel it... Not only that, he found that his Ghost Shadow was gone, and even his Ghost Hand—no, it was not just the Ghost Hand, he discovered that he didn't have hands at all.

The palm of his left hand had vanished, as if he was now an amputee.

And what terrified him the most was that he felt eerily accustomed to not having the hand, not finding it odd at all.

As if it was normal for this hand to be missing.

At that moment, there was still light rain falling from the sky, the surroundings were gloomy, damp, and chilly.

Yang Jian continued following his cousin and the girl named Lin Xiaoxi, walking on as if he was an ordinary person whose soul had been snatched away by a Ghost Envoy, somewhat dazed and even lacking the will to resist. Everything seemed so natural.

The scenery around him was different from the familiar daylight hours.

There were some inexplicable and bizarre things.

"What on earth is happening... Are the cousin in front of me and that girl named Lin Xiaoxi really alive?"

For some reason, Yang Jian felt a chill in his heart.

He seemed unable to control what was happening around him, merely drifting with the current. Not only had the ghost within him disappeared, but his condition had also severely deteriorated. He felt like an ordinary student who hadn't experienced any supernatural events, still attending school, as if all his accumulated experience and growth had been erased.

Before he could resolve his confusion—

A strange person appeared by the side of the road ahead.

The person, dressed in white and standing beside the road, was shockingly wearing a black hood and stood motionless, like a cold, lifeless corpse.

But who would leave a corpse in such a place?

"Xiao Yuan, should we detour?" Lin Xiaoxi asked nervously.

Xiao Yuan didn't respond to her, just giggled, and somehow now had a fruit knife in her hand. Then she ran straight toward the roadside body, gripping the knife handle with both hands, and stabbed viciously and swiftly towards the heart of that body.

Instantly—

The blade of the knife sunk in entirely into the heart of the body, leaving only the hilt visible.

This action was repeated three times.

The heart, the neck, and the chest.

After stabbing, Xiao Yuan quickly retreated, holding the knife in front of her as if bracing for retaliation.

No fresh blood spurted from the wounds on the person in the black hood; instead, a foul-smelling, thick liquid leaked out, akin to that of a dead body.

"Thump!"

The body immediately fell to the side of the road, motionless, as if it had died once again.

"All right, cousin, let's go," Xiao Yuan giggled as if nothing had happened and continued to walk forward.

Yang Jian was slightly dazed.

Had Xiao Yuan practiced her knife stabbing skills so proficiently throughout the day?

The body was obviously extremely strange.

Possibly even a ghost.

Would there be no problems with simply killing it like that?

Doubt.

Doubts still lingered in his heart.

But Yang Jian was gradually forming a guess about his current situation.

He must not be in the real world... This place was like a dream.

An incredibly realistic dream.

Chapter 716 One's Own Nightmare

After regaining his composure, Yang Jian began to contemplate his current situation. He had confirmed that the ghost he controlled had disappeared and after recognizing the special and eerie environment around him, he was able to make a rather bold conclusion.

That was, he was dreaming.

Only in dreams could he explain everything that was happening before his eyes.

Given his current state, even if the Hungry Ghost were released again, or the Ghost Envoy were still around, he would dare to face them head-on.

But if it were in a dream, then everything would be different.

It seemed that the powers of ghosts could not operate in dreams, or perhaps the ghosts controlled by Yang Jian were unable to intervene in the dreamscape.

"This is a supernatural dream, only when it involves the supernatural can I feel so clearly how real it is, while also knowing that I'm dreaming," Yang Jian pondered.

So how should he wake up?

Or rather, how should his consciousness return?

He dared not linger in this supernatural dream for too long, God knows what might happen, especially now that he had lost the identity of a ghost controller and was even disabled, missing one hand.

"Xiao Yuan, where are you going? It's not good to leave the village too far under these circumstances," Yang Jian said.

"It's okay, no matter where we are, we can always come back, and the further away we are, the safer it is. There are many unclean things around here," Xiao Yuan giggled.

Yang Jian said, "So you wanted to buy a knife during the day?"

"Yeah," Xiao Yuan quickly nodded.

"Can real objects be brought into the dream?" Yang Jian thought: "So Xiao Yuan and that girl named Lin Xiaoxi were both wearing the raincoats they bought earlier, holding fruit knives, whereas I didn't bring anything, my hands are empty, I only have the clothes on my body."

"Moreover, the disappearance of my left hand is not really gone, maybe the Ghost Hand is still there; it just can't appear in the dream."

"The ghosts in the dream can't pull the ghost inside my body into it, which means that once you enter the dream, no matter who it is, everyone becomes ordinary, even the top ghost controllers are no exception."

At this moment, Yang Jian thought of a supernatural incident code-named Nightmare that he had seen on a website before.

Could it be that he had encountered this supernatural event?

After briefly confirming the situation, Yang Jian pulled himself together and calmed down.

The most urgent task now was to not let anything happen to him in the dream, or to die because according to the archives of Nightmare, if a person dies in their dream, they will also die in reality.

And once Yang Jian's consciousness died, his body would soon resurrect as a fierce ghost.

At that time, the entire Meishan Village, no, even the nearby towns and even large cities, would be enveloped by his fierce ghost.

"I have to survive cautiously until the dream ends at dawn," Yang Jian formulated a simple plan in his heart.

It depended on his cousin.

At the same time, he did not hesitate to start clinging to her.

From before, it could be seen that his cousin Xiao Yuan must have lived in this peculiar dream for more than a day, seemingly experienced, stabbing at that weird corpse without hesitation, and acting like a female assassin, what he found most notable was that Xiao Yuan was still giggling when she stabbed the corpse.

But speaking of that corpse...

At this moment, Yang Jian turned his head to look again, and his heart chilled.

The corpse that Xiao Yuan had stabbed three times and had fallen to the side, had somehow stood up and was now looming at the entrance of the village on the nearby road, the white clothing stained with fresh blood, the black head cover still on the head, but judging by the orientation of the body, it seemed to be facing this way.

"What in the world is that thing? Is it a ghost, or a Ghost Slave?"

At this moment, he was somewhat shocked.

Because Yang Jian couldn't understand the existence of that thing.

If it were a ghost, Xiao Yuan would not have been able to succeed so easily, probably dying just by getting close, but if it were a person, there was no way it could be standing up now.

Yet, bizarrely, the corpse stood up.

Yang Jian continued to follow Xiao Yuan and move forward.

The dreamscape was absurd and bizarre, and soon, Yang Jian saw many corpses in the fields beside the road, all in a stiff posture standing there, and without exception, all were headless, their necks empty, all their heads had moved elsewhere.

A wilderness of headless corpses.

"There weren't these things here yesterday, right?" Lin Xiaoxi feeling surprised, saw the headless corpses.

It seemed that in her memory, these things shouldn't exist.

Xiao Yuan giggled, "Don't be afraid, I will protect you. Besides, we have our cousin here, everything will be alright."

...

As they spoke, they continued to walk forward.

"These headless bodies seem like the work of the Headless Ghost Shadow," Yang Jian thought to himself. "Could my arrival have caused some unpredictable changes in the dreamscape?"

However, as the three of them passed through this wasteland,

those headless bodies eerily began to twist and turn their torsos in their direction, as if they had set their sights on them, instantly causing one's hair to stand on end.

Even knowing this was all a dreamscape made no difference.

"Not good, these things are moving," suddenly, Lin Xiaoxi shouted.

A headless body began to move towards them, its heavy feet pulling free from the ground of the wasteland and stepping onto the hard, slightly pale concrete path.

It wasn't just one headless body.

The other bodies also showed signs of activity.

"We can't handle this many," Lin Xiaoxi said, fear creeping into her voice.

"Yeah, we can't kill them all, there are too many," Xiao Yuan added, tilting her head slightly and frowning in thought.

At that moment, Yang Jian, who had been silent, said, "Try not to turn your backs to these bodies and see if we can avoid being attacked."

"Will that work? You better not be deceiving us, you can die," Lin Xiaoxi said.

Yang Jian replied, "It wouldn't hurt to try, right? There are too many headless bodies. They stretch on from here and we'll definitely not make it out if we get surrounded."

"Then let's listen to cousin and try turning around," Xiao Yuan said with a giggle.

Thankfully, the headless bodies only occupied a patch of the wasteland on the right and hadn't encircled them. When the three of them turned around simultaneously, unbelievably, all the headless bodies stopped moving and began to slowly retreat to their original positions.

The incomprehensible aberration was halted.

"This actually worked?" Lin Xiaoxi exclaimed, her excitement palpable.

Xiao Yuan, still giggling, squinted her eyes and said, "As expected of cousin, the method really worked."

Yang Jian remained silent.

He was certain that this absurd dreamscape was definitely influenced by the Headless Ghost Shadow. Even though real ghosts wouldn't appear here, a corresponding realm of horror would manifest.

It seemed that the survival difficulty in this dreamscape would increase for a ghost controller.

If it were normal, such scenes wouldn't occur.

"Let's go, let's head to the town," Xiao Yuan waved her hands enthusiastically, eager as if going on an outing, without a single sign of wanting to turn back to the village.

Left with no choice, Yang Jian had to follow her and continue onward.

As they moved forward, Yang Jian noticed.

Though the world of the dreamscape was vast and filled with many inexplicable things, there were hardly any living people.

The road was quiet, with no one else in sight but the three of them.

And although they hadn't walked far, the scenery of the county town had already appeared before their eyes.

The distance in between seemed to have been snatched away out of thin air.

"It's definitely not just the three of us who were pulled into this dreamscape," Yang Jian thought as he looked toward the town and saw some car headlights turning on and heard the sound of car horns.

After taking only a few steps as though only seconds had passed, the three of them had already arrived in the small town.

Hanging high above the town were many dead bodies.

The nooses around the necks of these corpses were made of old, worn ropes, similar to the Ghost Ropes that Yang Jian had handled before.

These corpses, suspended in midair, appeared to have been there for some time, with clothes all tattered and torn, yet without any signs of decay, still looking fresh as if they had just recently died.

"This nightmare, it might be mine."

Yang Jian had this thought in his mind because all the strangeness was related to himself.

If that was the case, then was Xiao Yuan, who had called him out earlier, the real Xiao Yuan?

Or a ghost from the dreamscape?

Had he been summoned into the dream by a ghost?

Realizing this, he subconsciously began to distance himself from the two people ahead.

Chapter 717 Other People

If all this is indeed a dream, then this dream is very likely targeted at Yang Jian alone. Of course, this is just a guess; it's also possible that the dream targets everyone.

But no matter what.

Within this dream, none can be completely trusted, not even Yang Jian's cousin Xiao Yuan, nor Xiao Yuan's companion Lin Xiaoxi.

Because they might not have entered the dream from reality, instead they might be characters that already exist within the dream.

In other words, besides oneself, anyone else in the dream could potentially be a ghost.

As for how to discern that... Yang Jian felt it was impossible, at least with his current situation he could not do it, he could only heighten his own vigilance and be cautious of everyone around him, lest he perish in the dream without understanding how.

After all, regardless of whether this dream is connected to reality, dying within a supernatural incident is certainly not going to be of any benefit.

"This is Yang Town during the day time from before... now it seems to be influenced by me, signs of the Ghost Rope's attack manifesting in the dream, just like the headless corpse in the wilderness, as if the ghosts in the dream can read people's life experiences," he muttered.

After realizing this, Yang Jian, for some reason, suddenly thought of a particular supernatural item he possessed.

The blood-stained old newspaper.

The old newspaper stained with blood had the ability to change other people's memories. If combined with this dream-entering ghost... could it be possible to alter someone's memories right within the dream?

Of course, this was just a speculation and not necessarily true.

"Xiao Yuan, you seem quite familiar with this place, do you come here often?" Yang Jian asked expressionlessly. Although he was wary of Xiao Yuan, suspecting she might be a ghost, he did not leave, for everything thus far was merely his own conjecture.

If his cousin was indeed real, he still had to take care of her, he couldn't just stand by and watch her face danger.

Xiao Yuan chewed on her finger and thought for a moment: "I don't know, it feels like I've been here for a long time, yet it also feels like I've never been here before."

She seemed unable to clearly remember her experiences within the dream, forgetting many things, but some instincts remained.

Yang Jian looked at the town hanging with many corpses, his gaze cautious: "This place isn't safe, perhaps we should avoid this town and go somewhere else."

If this dream is really influenced by him, then upon entering this town the three of them were very likely to encounter strange attacks.

Now, knowing he was in a dream without a way to exit, resisting the attack of fierce ghosts was extremely difficult.

"We can't do that, if we don't find that thing and kill it, we have no way of leaving this place," Xiao Yuan said somewhat troubled: "So we have to actively find that thing."

"By 'that thing,' do you mean the ghost in the dream?" Yang Jian's heart grew cold before he added, "That thing won't be easy to find, will it?"

Lin Xiaoxi, who was somewhat timid, said: "Not at all, that thing is easy to find because it will come to us. This time won't be an exception; we just don't know when it will appear, but we must encounter it first so that we have enough time to kill it."

"And what if we don't have enough time?" Yang Jian was surprised.

There was even a time limit within the dream.

Lin Xiaoxi said, "The later that thing appears, the more dangerous it becomes. If it's too late, we won't be able to deal with it and will only get killed."

At this point, she looked very scared.

Yang Jian didn't understand the situation very well but grasped Lin Xiaoxi's meaning.

The ghost here would approach one's side at some point to attack, but there was a time limit; the later you are attacked by the ghost, the more dangerous it becomes. Conversely, it should be the same logic; the earlier the ghost attacks, the weaker it is because the dream has only just begun.

That's why there's a need to proactively search, to approach the ghost on one's initiative, so that the ghost attacks you first, then you use the opportunity to kill the ghost in the dream.

...

Of course, ghosts can't be killed to death, otherwise, this nightmare wouldn't keep going on and on.

Therefore, Yang Jian was certain that successfully killing a ghost in the dream must be a way to break free and wake up from the nightmare.

"That's why we have to leave the village, to keep moving. The three of us are like sitting ducks, ready to attract any nearby ghosts. Those headless bodies just now probably didn't contain a real ghost, or they wouldn't have let us off so easily," Yang Jian gradually deduced some so-called patterns.

"Where are you, where are you? Come out, we're here." Xiao Yuan hummed a cute tune, wandering through the streets of the county town.

She completely ignored all the eeriness, actually taking the initiative to look for malevolent spirits.

As if she were the master of this dreamscape.

Yang Jian remained silent, having no choice but to follow, but, wary, he didn't dare get too close. If Xiao Yuan turned out to be a ghost, a mere backhanded strike could end him in this dream.

Was she a lifesaving presence or a deadly malevolent spirit?

It all depended on his ability to discern.

Unconsciously, he found himself at the very back as the three of them entered the county town together.

The environment of the county town was dark and oppressive. The buildings and streets nearby were in ruins, as if they hadn't been inhabited for over a decade. Some areas were different from the real county town, like an ancient-looking bluestone path, winding far into the distance. This path didn't exist in the daytime reality. There were also some old houses that seemed to have appeared out of nowhere.

Yet these newfound places didn't seem abrupt at all. On the contrary, they blended perfectly, as if they were meant to have been there all along.

The desolate county town was deathly silent, with only the corpses hanging from grass ropes overhead impossible to ignore.

The bodies, dangling in midair, swayed slightly, deterring any glances directed upward. Some of the bodies were so low that their toes could touch the scalp of someone walking beneath.

The chill, stiff touch of them felt unnervingly real, indistinguishable from actual corpses, except that strangely, all the bodies' faces were identical. Whether male or female, the faces were androgynous, numb, and deathly still.

"The Ghost Rope, after its resurrection, attacks all people indiscriminately. But there must be some pattern to its killings beforehand. However, the previous owner of the Ghost Rope, Wang Yue, is already dead and he didn't share this information. So, if I get targeted by the strangeness here, it's very likely unavoidable," Yang Jian frowned.

"Excuse me, where is this place?"

Suddenly, after walking forward for a while, a middle-aged woman appeared on the street of the county town. She was full of nervousness and unease, looking around anxiously, shivering with fear due to the hanging corpses over the county town.

Upon seeing Xiao Yuan, the middle-aged woman hurried over with some excitement.

Xiao Yuan stopped in her tracks and grinned at the middle-aged woman, tightly gripping the fruit knife in her hand.

The woman seemed oblivious as she continued to approach quickly.

When the woman got dangerously close, the grinning Xiao Yuan suddenly made her move. She flicked her arm and the fruit knife flew straight out, burying itself into the woman's neck with terrifying accuracy, blood spraying everywhere.

The middle-aged woman was instantly stunned, her hands reflexively clutching her throat.

Xiao Yuan didn't stop there; she immediately grabbed another fruit knife hidden on her body and rushed forward. With both hands, she thrust the knife into the woman's heart, stabbing repeatedly.

The middle-aged woman collapsed to the ground, body convulsing, making gurgling noises with blood pooling around her, looking as if she was about to draw her last breath.

Indeed.

After struggling for about twenty seconds, the middle-aged woman could no longer move and became another cold corpse on the ground.

And just after this woman was killed.

In the real world, within a house in the county town at night, a woman lying on her bed suddenly raised her hand and stabbed at herself.

She had no weapon in her hand, yet her strength was astonishing. She managed to wreak havoc on her heart and neck with bare hands until she took her final breath. During it all, there were no screams or groans; everything seemed to happen as if it were meant to occur.

Chapter 718 The 885th Chapter: The Lost Marketplace

"Oh no, this isn't the one I was looking for," Xiao Yuan said regretfully as she stared at the corpse on the ground.

Yang Jian looked at the body, then back at Xiao Yuan, "Killed the wrong person? Seems like what I thought before. Besides the three of us, there have been others who entered this dream. But what would happen to a person if you killed them here?"

"Of course, they would be dead," Xiao Yuan replied.

"So they would die even if they weren't killed directly by ghosts?" Yang Jian's heart turned cold.

Lin Xiaoxi, who was standing beside them, said timidly, "I advised Xiao Yuan not to do this, but we can't clearly distinguish who to trust. We can only trust people who come from our village, like Brother Yang Jian."

"That's indeed dangerous. But since this is a dream, if something really happens, it doesn't concern reality. Killing someone in a dream is just that, killing. If there's anyone to blame, it's not us—it's the inexplicable supernatural occurrences here."

Yang Jian's face was impassive, not feeling that anything was amiss. "And considering that woman's level of alertness just now, she probably would have died quickly if she ran into a ghost. Her chances of survival were almost none."

"Hehe, cousin thinks just like me," Xiao Yuan said happily.

Yang Jian said, "At a time like this, being naïve just makes you die faster. The things that should be forsaken should not be hesitated over. However, this seems to be just the beginning."

As he spoke, he suddenly looked up.

The death of that woman appeared to be a catalyst.

The hanging bodies, as if disturbed, suddenly began to rotate in midair, facing the direction of the three of them.

The same eerie face, the same expression, and the same ashen gaze made one's hair stand on end instantly.

In the dream, there were not only real ghosts but also these unexplainable supernatural phenomena.

"Plop."

At that moment, a corpse, for some unknown reason, suddenly dropped from an old straw rope and landed heavily on the ground.

No, not just one corpse.

After the first precedent, the bodies began falling like dumplings without stopping.

At this moment, the rain in the sky seemed to pour down even harder, no longer the gentle drizzle from before, as if this change signified that time within the dream had moved into the next phase.

Cold corpses thudded onto the pavement, each lying face down, back turned upward.

While this prevented one from seeing their ghastly dead faces, it only made the scene even more unsettling.

"Huh?"

Xiao Yuan voiced her question, clearly having never witnessed a situation like this before, similar to the previous headless corpse.

These changes were caused by Yang Jian, a ghost manipulator, as the ghosts in the dream seemingly sought to replay the Ghost Rope incident.

"Be careful."

Suddenly, Lin Xiaoxi cried out in alarm.

A corpse had abruptly stood upright without any warning, right next to Xiao Yuan. The body was stiff and expressionless, showing no change of emotion, but its hands were grasping an old straw rope, which was quickly slung around Xiao Yuan's neck.

The rigid hands seemed to have gained immense strength in an instant.

The dirty old rope tightened fiercely, as if it could snap Xiao Yuan's slender neck in a moment.

Xiao Yuan's method of killing was very aggressive, but she hadn't anticipated that the prone corpse could stand again and attack her. So, when she raised her fruit knife, it was already slightly too late.

"Bang!"

However, in the next moment, the corpse with the straw rope was knocked flying.

Yang Jian rushed over, "Don't stay here, run, it's all these things, if we can't get away, we'll die here."

He had been watching the movements of the bodies all along.

In a supernatural event, both motionless and moving bodies are extremely dangerous. Only Xiao Yuan, who had never encountered such events, would not take it to heart.

"Even though they're dead already, why can they still stand up?" Xiao Yuan was puzzled. But before she could study the bodies on the ground, Yang Jian had already grabbed her arm and quickly made their escape.

Despite concerns that Xiao Yuan might be a ghost, one couldn't simply refrain from helping because of suspicion.

"This way, there aren't many people here," Lin Xiaoxi waved her hand, pointing to an empty street.

There were not many corpses on the ground there.

Yang Jian looked around. The bodies were closing in, each holding a straw rope, looking ready to attack them.

Seeing this, the three of them didn't dare stay any longer and immediately ran.

It was no longer about whether ghosts appeared or not; the situation was starting to get out of control.

Fortunately, the corpses behind them didn't walk fast. The sheer number alone was the concern earlier. Although they encountered some dangers while fleeing, they still managed to escape the encirclement of the bodies from before.

Although they were vaguely being pursued from behind, the three of them moved faster and eventually threw off those things.

However, just after they left that area, all the corpses that had been chasing them began to gradually disappear, and in the end, only one corpse remained. That corpse was well concealed and did not hold an old rope like the others—it was completely different.

No, that's not right; that wasn't a corpse, it was a person.

This person stood alone, and after watching for a while, he eventually went straight in the direction where Yang Jian and the others had just left. Strangely, even though this person's pace wasn't fast, he quickly caught up with them. It was just for some reason, Yang Jian, Xiao Yuan, and Lin Xiaoxi in front didn't realize it.

Because this place wasn't within Yang Jian's Ghost Domain.

He couldn't detect any anomalies and could only observe a few things within his immediate surroundings.

"This is a market..."

When they finally stopped, they found themselves inside a market in the town above.

The desolate market had no one selling anything.

"What was that just now? It seems like we have never encountered such a situation before." Xiao Yuan was still puzzled and pondered about what had happened just now.

Yang Jian said with a serious expression, "It's probably because of me. Those inexplicable occurrences appeared under my influence. I have a ghost inside me, and right now, we've been drawn into this nightmare. The ghost inside will react, and although the impact is very slight, it's fatal within a dream because many things in dreams seem to be unconstrained."

This dream feels like it can greatly amplify danger.

Lin Xiaoxi then reminded them, "If that's the case, we'll miss our chance and waste a lot of time. Look, Xiao Yuan, the rain has gotten heavier. If it gets light, we're done for."

"It's fine, we still have a chance," Xiao Yuan chuckled, without a hint of worry.

But during this short exchange, the surroundings began to change again.

The once-empty market was now mysteriously populated with people, not just one or two, but many.

These people gathered within the market, seemingly purchasing goods, with street vendors selling various items. The place was bustling with activity. This was a stark contrast to the bodies that had been everywhere before.

The crowd surged, moving all around them.

It looked exactly like a noisy market. The people at the market seemed very normal, without any hint of strangeness, and they didn't attack even when passed by.

Cousin Xiao Yuan picked up a fruit knife in her hand and instinctively wanted to stab a person nearby.

Yang Jian grabbed her hand to stop her, "With so many people, we won't finish killing them all before daylight even if we start now. I can feel the ghost is in this market, no, it has already set its sights on us, it's nearby, because there are too many changes happening around us, which are obviously not normal. So now we need a plan, a feasible plan to find and kill the ghost, to end today's nightmare. Carrying on chaotically will cause the situation to spin out of control."

Although he had no experience with this place, he had started to adapt after the recent events and calmed down to prepare for dealing with the situation.

Even if he wasn't a ghost controller, as long as the nightmare wasn't insoluble, Yang Jian was confident he could survive.

"Big brother, what do you intend to do?" Xiao Yuan asked curiously.

She was a brute and didn't think too much; she would just kill on sight, using knives, hammers, driving cars to ram... she had tried every method, and one way or another, it always ended eventually.

"We need to reduce the number of people around us, can't stay outside, must go indoors, a spacious room is best, but we can't block our retreat, we need a place where we can evacuate urgently. This market is not a good place... I remember there's a primary school in this town, let's head there," said Yang Jian immediately, not willing to continue in the same reckless way as his cousin anymore.

"Ah."

Suddenly, Lin Xiaoxi screamed. Her body uncontrollably retreated as if something in the crowd had grabbed her and was holding on tightly, with so much strength that she couldn't resist.

Before Yang Jian could go to her rescue, her figure had already disappeared into the throng of the market.

"Too slow?" Yang Jian reached out to grab but caught nothing, as his vision was blocked by a tall figure.

When he touched the tall man, he felt icy stiffness and was hit by the putrid stench of decay.

A shadow buried deep in his heart seemed to be triggered.

Yang Jian, as if electrocuted, swiftly withdrew his hand.

It was that ghost...

However, when he realized it was just a dream, he looked again, only to find that the tall man had vanished into the crowd without attacking him as he had imagined.

"Damn it." Yang Jian felt he had been played by the ghost in the dream and was slightly ashamed.

Even though it had been too late to catch Lin Xiaoxi, the fact was he had been frightened off by that tall man.

Was there still fear and dread in his dream self?

"Don't go, I'm going to kill you." At that moment, Xiao Yuan's voice came from behind, tittering with a pathological glee.

She seemed to have found something and had already charged into the crowd with her fruit knife in hand.

"Don't go," Yang Jian shouted.

But he didn't stop Xiao Yuan's movement; she was too decisive, hardly hesitating. By the time his shout was out, Xiao Yuan had also vanished from sight.

Chapter 719 Continuation of the Nightmare

Yang Jian looked on helplessly as his cousin Xiao Yuan and the girl named Lin Xiaoxi disappeared into the crowd at the market, so sudden that he didn't even have time to stop them. The reason he couldn't stop them was not that he was slow to react but because of his wariness.

He dreaded that one of the two people was a ghost, which is why no one dared to get close, leading to that situation.

The ghost seemed to know its own situation very well.

The more rational one is, the easier it is to fall into a trap.

On the contrary, someone like Xiao Yuan, with her naturally airheaded and intermittently forgetful nature, would be less likely to be targeted. Perhaps her decision to rush out just now was the correct one.

Yang Jian couldn't be sure.

His unease intensified as the rain in the sky grew heavier; what had started as a light drizzle had now turned into a steady downpour, making the surroundings increasingly gloomy and oppressive.

Because he wasn't wearing a raincoat, Yang Jian was completely soaked, yet he didn't feel cold or at risk of catching a cold or fever. It seemed that quite a bit of time had already passed.

The ghost had appeared, but had yet to be found.

If he couldn't manage to kill the ghost once in the dream before daybreak, he might indeed be finished.

Due to the heavy rain, the number of people at the market had started to dwindle.

But there were still many, just not as crowded as before.

"I must find my cousin," Yang Jian took a deep breath, the moist air filled his lungs, refreshing him somewhat.

This was no dream, but a world as real as any, even to the touch.

After spotting the direction his cousin had disappeared in just moments before, Yang Jian quickly followed suit. He avoided the passersby around him while searching for Xiao Yuan's whereabouts, and if he happened to find Lin Xiaoxi along the way, that would be even better.

He delved deeper into the market, which was lined with many stalls.

Yang Jian glanced at one and saw various old-fashioned knives on display, including firewood knives, sickles, and scissors. He thought for a moment and, without hesitation, picked up a knife for self-defense.

"You haven't paid yet," said the merchant, wearing a conical hat and sitting there, slightly bowed, his voice barely above a murmur.

Hm?

Yang Jian's eyes narrowed; he hadn't expected the vendors in this dream to actually speak. Weren't they supposed to be illusions conjured by the ghost?

"If you have no money, I can't give you the goods," the merchant said, seeing that Yang Jian wasn't keen on paying. He reached out and grabbed Yang Jian's wrist firmly.

Yang Jian resisted, feeling that he should probably be more violent, to stab and kill the ghostly figure in this dream, to be fierce for once.

Of course, attacking was secondary; what he really wanted was to force the sale.

But when he saw the hand that had grabbed his wrist, his whole body shuddered with a chill. It was the wrinkled palm of an old man, covered with terrifying livor mortis spots that extended densely into the sleeve.

And that sleeve was of an old-fashioned long gown.

Before the merchant could even lift his head, Yang Jian already knew what sort of ghostly entity was selling knives here.

Door Knocking Ghost.

He had just contained that entity in Kobe City not too long ago, so he was already all too familiar with it. He didn't expect it to appear in his dream as well.

His gaze shifted slightly.

Yang Jian didn't know if he should take up the knife and stab the old man, but if this Door Knocking Ghost were to undergo some bizarre transformation, then wouldn't he die here?

"I can't worry about that, if it dares to chase after me, I'll stab it to death."

Apprehensions aside,

Yang Jian resolutely picked up the blade and hacked at the merchant who he suspected was the Door Knocking Ghost.

An old man's hand riddled with livor mortis was chopped off.

There was no blood, no surprises; the knife in his hand worked exceptionally well as if it naturally accomplished the deed.

And that vendor didn't cry out or scream in pain, but instead, he suddenly lifted his face to look at Yang Jian, his pallor under the straw hat ghostly and ashen, his gaze hollow, numb, yet still that all too familiar, and yet startling, visage of an old man.

Without a word, Yang Jian picked up the knife and turned to leave.

After all, it was just a dream, and in dreams, he could kill anyone.

No sooner had he taken a few steps,

than the old man he had slashed, silent and undisturbed, calmly took off his straw hat and followed with a somewhat sluggish pace, as if trying to chase down Yang Jian for some debt, or perhaps to reclaim the knife. Whether the old man would seek revenge was unknown.

However, Yang Jian didn't care, striding through the market like an ancient tyrant, unaccountable for injuring someone, moving on without a second thought.

As he passed by a meat stall, he faintly thought he heard a familiar voice, like that of Zhang Wei, buying meat there.

"Boss, I want ten pounds of lean meat, cut for mince, with not a bit of fat on it..."

Yang Jian paused in his step, looking over out of instinct, but then there was no one at the meat stall anymore.

Damn.

Could he really dream about Zhang Wei too?

What the hell.

Wasn't he off doing live streams? Why would he be buying meat in my hometown?

Yang Jian felt his subconscious had been completely deciphered by ghosts, so much so that the ghosts seemed to know all his memories in the dream, otherwise, why would so many bizarre things appear, each related to him, unknown to anyone else? Otherwise, why would Xiao Yuan feel so strange and puzzled?

But as soon as he moved away from the meat stall, he heard Zhang Wei's voice again, "Add another ten pounds, all fat, and no lean parts, chop it for mince too..."

"He's going to get beaten up buying meat like that," Yang Jian muttered, suppressing the urge to look back.

This had to be the mischief of his own subconscious, influenced by Zhang Wei too much in the past, so much so that his figure appeared even in nightmares.

"Add another ten pounds of tenderloin cartilage, also finely chopped for mince, with no lean parts on top..."

By the time he left the market area, that voice still faintly drifted to him.

Definitely going to get beaten up.

Yang Jian was sure, the Zhang Wei in his dream would be severely beaten up by the butcher, whether or not he would be beaten to death depended on his luck.

But the deeper he ventured into the market, the more fearful he became.

Because he noticed many nightmare-like presences, this market seemed to gather all the past nightmares, presenting items so bizarre one had to take a closer look.

At one stall, he saw a Dead Man's Head on display.

In the arms of a woman, he saw a greenish-black dead baby.

Inside a shop, there was a heavy coffin, in front of which was set a spirit tablet that lacked only the deceased's portrait.

Finally,

when he encountered a person, he couldn't help stopping in his tracks, even feeling an urge to turn back and leave.

It was a woman dressed in red, with a veil over her head.

She stood silently and straight by the side of the road, face covered, but he could sense she was probably looking in his direction.

But before Yang Jian could turn to take another path, he discovered the old man who had bought the knife far behind him was following, the woman carrying the dead baby was approaching, and the coffin from the shop was being carried out by the owner...

"What a joke, playing with me, right?" Yang Jian's heart went cold.

The way was blocked by ghosts.

From all sides, ghosts drew near.

Chapter 720 The Thing That Appears

At this moment, Yang Jian hadn't expected that when he entered the market to search for Xiao Yuan and Lin Xiaoxi's traces, he would end up becoming the most endangered person himself.

Strange things were closing in from all directions, all of which were terrifying supernatural incidents that he had experienced before, as if the fears in his heart had manifested in the dream, leaving no room to escape.

The old man who looked just like the Door Knocking Ghost, the woman holding the infant Hungry Ghost, the heavy coffin carried out from a nearby shop—he couldn't be sure whether a Ghost Envoy would emerge from it... All these were nothing, the deadliest was a figure blocking the path in front of him, dressed in red clothes, wearing a red head covering, resembling a girl about to be married.

The Ghost Bride.

The nightmare within nightmares, Yang Jian had briefly made contact with this entity before. Back then, the three layers of the Ghost Domain couldn't prevent the Ghost Bride from killing, and the ghost painting possibly related to the Ghost Bride even suppressed his ghostly eye so much that it couldn't be opened.

Facing this entity, it was impossible not to be afraid.

"There is only one real ghost within the dream, the rest are false and can be killed," Yang Jian gritted his teeth, didn't move rashly, gripping the knife he had just picked up from a stall tightly in his hand.

At this point, he had no choice but to fight desperately.

Even though he now had only one hand and had lost the strength of the ghost within him, his mindset and discipline remained. Waiting for death was out of the question.

"These strange people approaching me should all be fake, illusory, but not necessarily all fake, some could be real... The real ghost is hidden among these entities and will definitely take advantage of my distraction to act against me and kill me here."

Although Yang Jian was a bit panicked at the beginning, he had now become exceptionally calm.

Because for him, this was also an opportunity.

An opportunity to turn the tables and kill the ghost right here.

As long as the real ghost in the dream was killed, the nightmare would end. This was the rule that Xiao Yuan and Lin Xiaoxi had figured out before.

But now Yang Jian's only worry was whether the ghost in the dream really was that easy to deal with?

Knowing that the dream had already moved into its mid to late stages, according to the logic of the dream, the later the ghost appears, the more terrifying it becomes, and in the end, you may be no match for it at all.

"The Door Knocking Ghost, the Ghost Infant, or the Ghost Coffin... or perhaps the Ghost Bride," Yang Jian scanned swiftly back and forth.

The knife in his hand got tighter.

It seemed to be a random choice, but he didn't believe that was the case because the ghosts here were very familiar with his memory. If a ghost were to approach him to make a move, it would choose a target that he was least likely to notice.

The Door Knocking Ghost?

Definitely not, he had already slashed that guy with a knife. If it were the ghost, it would not have pursued him.

The Ghost Infant?

Or the woman holding the Ghost Infant?

Yang Jian's gaze flickered; this was a high possibility. In addition, the likelihood of it being the Ghost Bride wasn't small either.

Among these many eerie entities, the one he dared not get close to the most was the Ghost Bride, and also the tall male corpse that had appeared in the market before—a terrifying existence even in real life, endowed with the freakish ability to kill any ghost manipulator.

But within the time of contemplation, the strange people around had already approached within ten meters of Yang Jian.

"Excuse me, excuse me, let me through," a voice rang out. It was the Coffin Shop owner, followed by the coffin being carried over by five or six people from inside the shop, looking like they wanted to pass by his side on their way to somewhere.

Dangerous people and things were closing in.

The bustling, seemingly normal market, in fact, held danger and horror.

"Do it."

Yang Jian clenched his teeth, unwilling to think any further. He felt that the ghost here was onto his style of doing things: think first, then act, causing him to miss out on some crucial opportunities. Thus, he decided to change, to become impulsive and reckless.

In the dream, whether they were people or ghosts, they could all be killed. With that in mind, why think any farther?

Suddenly, he charged out like a thug.

His first target was the Ghost Bride.

The best way to face fear was to exterminate it, to butcher this red-garbed spectral being first and erase it from his nightmares forever.

Yang Jian's remaining hand tightly gripped the sharp knife, feeling his blood boiling, his heartbeat quickening, as if he was killing for the first time, just like an ordinary person. Logically, this feeling should not have appeared anymore. After all, influenced by the ghost, if he were to really kill someone, he wouldn't so much as blink, just like stepping on an ant.

"That's right. Without the influence of a ghost, this is the real me... So I can feel nervous, afraid, excited. My instincts, subconsciousness, before now had all been influenced and suppressed by evil ghosts. Now that I've broken free from their influence and entered the dream, these latent elements within me have emerged."

Yang Jian's eyes turned slightly red as he suddenly sprang to kill.

He charged towards the person dressed up like the Ghost Bride, and without any hesitation, thrust the sharp knife directly at it.

Not precise, yet fierce and ruthless.

After all his experiences, his growth was clearly evident. He might not be able to compare with his cousin, who killed without batting an eyelid, but at least he was tough.

The sharp knife easily pierced through the body of the Ghost Bride, penetrating the clothes and sinking deep inside.

...

The sensation of flesh being torn apart transmitted clearly, making one feel alienated, yet it allowed the release of some of one's negative emotions.

Is this what it feels like to stab a ghost oneself?

At that moment, Yang Jian no longer feared the Ghost Bride, feeling a kind of indifference towards life and death.

This state, to put it more colloquially, was a blood frenzy.

"Thud!" Contrary to what he had imagined, no abnormality occurred; after being stabbed, the Ghost Bride swayed and eventually collapsed to the ground, blood flowing, staining the surroundings red.

She did not attack Yang Jian, nor did she resist, like a hollow shell, bearing the image of a Ghost Bride but not the terrifying and eerie abilities of a malevolent spirit, so in the dream, she was wounded and died.

However, the fall of the Ghost Bride did not stop others from continuing to approach.

It seemed that her death did not affect the outcome that Yang Jian would be continuously attacked.

"Not a ghost? Then keep killing," Yang Jian grew bolder and did not lose his rationality.

Without any words, he clutched the sharp knife and set his sights on the woman holding the Ghost Infant.

The Ghost Infant was a ghost, and the woman was not human; they should not be treated as normal, so there was no sense of guilt or shame, so Yang Jian charged again, taking advantage of this moment to

eliminate as many as he could. The fewer people around, the higher the probability of ghosts remaining, thus securing his safety.

As Yang Jian advanced to kill, the woman did not run away, but the Ghost Infant in her arms let out a piercing scream, as if it were a real malevolent spirit, chilling to the bone.

But these things could not stop Yang Jian's actions; he quickly dispatched both the woman and the blackish-green dead infant.

His breathing was heavy.

His killing intent was rising.

Yang Jian seemed to release the fear and caution he usually reserved for malevolent spirits, feeling an inexplicable sense of exhilaration, trembling with it at the moment.

It was not fear, but excitement.

At this moment, he set his gaze on the Door Knocking Ghost elder who had sold him the knife.

This was his third target.

Knife in hand, Yang Jian charged again, ready to dispose of the old man in this nightmare.

But at this moment, it didn't go as smoothly; as Yang Jian rushed forward, he suddenly felt a sharp pain in his body. Strangely close by, an unfamiliar person carrying a Ghost Coffin appeared beside him, holding a long Coffin Nail that pierced through Yang Jian's body and into his abdomen.

Blood gushed freely, and his bodily strength seemed to be drained at that moment.

Yang Jian turned to look.

He saw a stiff and unfamiliar face, identical to the one on the previous Ghost Rope, but there was something different about it. The previous faces were numb, dead, but this face had some undeserved human-like emotions, revealing a strange smile.

How peculiar this face was.

"Is this guy a ghost in the dream?"

Yang Jian instantly woke up, and though wounded, clenched his teeth and growled, mustering all his strength for a desperate fight.

If he could just dispatch this fellow, waking up from the nightmare, any severe wound would no longer be a problem.

But the person with the eerie expression seemed to sense the danger and retreated quickly, avoiding Yang Jian and widening the gap as if this ghost had been killed in this way before in a past moment. Thus, it learned, it grew, it would not make the same mistake again, shrewd beyond belief.

His desperate fight fell flat.

Yang Jian stumbled and collapsed on the ground, his wounds worsening, his blood being drained.

That moment the knife-selling old man approached, but he did not attack Yang Jian; instead, he took the knife from Yang Jian's hand and left without a word.

Yang Jian wanted to stop him but lacked the strength.

His injury was too severe, with the long Coffin Nail still embedded in his body.

It seemed the ghost of the dream now stood by, stiff, the lifeless face bearing a bizarre smile.

The ghost did not approach but waited for Yang Jian to take his last breath.

It was excessively cautious, careful.

It also seemed to have figured out all of Yang Jian's traits; therefore, it masqueraded as a Coffin Carrier, bearing a Ghost Coffin, while in Yang Jian's mind, he thought the Ghost Bride was dangerous, the Hungry Ghost was dangerous, the Door Knocking Ghost was dangerous... In reality, none were. The real danger lurked in an inconspicuous corner.

"This guy..." Although severely wounded and lying on the ground, Yang Jian was not dead, his consciousness was very clear.

Watching the ghost not far ahead, he felt anger.

But also a sense of powerlessness.

So, this was the nature of the nightmare; humans and ghosts alike were extremely fragile, a single stab robbing them of all ability to act.