

Watch Out! Danger Ahead - Chapter 1

Chapter 1

Ten minutes ago, a case was reported on Changyan street, located east of the City Hall. Song Qingxiao rushed over as soon as she heard the news.

That area was at the heart of the Imperial City. It was located close to the University of Science and Technology that the Shi family members attended. If the riot affected the school, it might cause the displeasure of the Shi family, who was part of the royal family.

In that day and age, the constitutional monarchy system's birth had significantly reduced the royal family's influence, but they still possessed great reputation, status, and wealth. With the help of their noble blood lineage, the Shi family was situated firmly at the top of the social pyramid.

All the students studying at the University of Science and Technology were the most gifted young people of the Empire. Everyone who studied there had distinguished bearings. Even the security guard who stood outside the university carried himself with a sense of superiority. When he spoke to Song Qingxiao, he seemed to be displeased with her.

"I've received an alert that someone is causing a disruption thirty meters away around that corner. You must know that's where the University of Science and Technology is located."

The guard sounded a little haughty as he spoke to her.

"This disturbance must not affect the university," he continued, "Otherwise, the municipal government will receive a complaint from the university."

The guard suspected that the woman who stood before him was incapable of solving the problem.

Song Qingxiao wore an ill-fitting patrol guard uniform. Furthermore, she was skinny and weak-looking, and her complexion was pale. Her thick, long fringe covered most of her eyes. When she spoke, her voice gave off a sense that she was fragile and feeble.

No matter which aspect he considered, her appearance was completely at odds with her role as a patrol guard.

Of course, there were other female employees within the Empire's guard system. However, all the women who entered the system were primarily clerical workers and had nothing to do with patrol duty or resolving riots.

A few women from noble backgrounds or those who showed outstanding talent would be selected during their schooling days to undergo additional training. That was so that they could work in specialized departments.

There were other women in the patrol guard department, but all of them were forces to be reckoned with. Their strength was equal to any of the other men in the team.

That was why the university guard could not understand why the patrol guard department had accepted such a pitifully weak-looking girl into their team.

"I understand."

Song Qingxiao could see that the middle-aged guard looked unhappy with her. Her lips quivered, and she said in a quiet voice, "I won't let the riot affect the peace here."

She promised him that because it had been so difficult for her to obtain her job. She had strived hard for ages before she got hired.

What she studied at university was completely unrelated to her job as a patrol guard. She had just graduated the past year. While at university, she had studied hard, and her grades were excellent. However, none of it had been any help in helping her find a job.

Even though the times changed rapidly, Song Qingxiao's destiny was still incompatible with a comfortable and secure job within the city's municipal department. Everything was stacked against her. From her low status, her ordinary bloodline, to her father's criminal record. Her father had committed a crime at a young age and was left with a permanent record. All of it was a stain on her resume.

Her mother was a drunkard, and her family had racked up a huge debt. Song Qingxiao desperately needed a job to support herself. The job as a patrol

guard involved long working hours, low wages, and considerable danger while on the job.

Hence, they always lacked the manpower and were forced to relax their recruiting standards. That was how Song Qingxiao managed to avoid being rejected from the position despite her father's record.

She had fought extremely hard for the chance to have a two-month probation. However, all the other people on the team were extremely displeased with her. Her team leader had previously warned her that if she could not complete a single job or received a complaint, he would instantly toss her off the team.

"I'll solve this problem as soon as possible."

She looked up as she spoke. Even though her voice was soft, there was a determination in it that was hard to miss. Failure was not an option for her. No matter what, she had to solve the issue!

The sun was blocked by voluminous grey clouds, seemingly about to rain. The buildings belonging to the Shi family at the University of Science and Technology entrance were extremely tall. They seemed to tower into the clouds, and it made Song Qingxiao feel small and insignificant.

She turned around and raced towards the location of the disruption, brushing shoulders with many of the geniuses within the university compound. She was like an ant—completely inconspicuous.

When she was young, she had previously dreamt of getting into the university, which was the best in the Empire. She dreamt of becoming a top scholar who would be highly sought after by all the leading companies.

It was a shame that some things could not be realized merely through hard work and effort. It was an impossible dream that she would never be able to achieve.

Song Qingxiao sprinted quickly. The voice of that university guard was like an alarm bell in her head. It only took her a couple of minutes to get to the location of the disturbance.

Changyan street was located to the east of Imperial City's city center, the western exchange hub. The most western part of the city was a rough and chaotic area. It was called the city slums. It was known for being dirty, messy,

and terrible. Various forces struggled for power there, and crimes occurred frequently. Things were so bad that even security guards were not always willing to enter the area when a report was made.

During normal times, the various gangs were wary of the government and would never cause trouble beyond their own territory. Neither would they go near Chanyan street.

After all, the University of Science and Technology was situated there, and everyone in the Empire considered that place to be the Shi family's domain. Hence, no one dared to create any disturbances there as they did not want to attract any trouble for themselves.

A group of gangsters were gathered there. By the looks of them, they all looked fairly young—still wet between the ears. They seemed fearless and overconfident in their own abilities as only the young could.

Song Qingxiao's heart sank. If the people making a ruckus here were adults, she could have scared them off by just mentioning the Shi family. However, since the people who were causing the disturbance here were immature youths, things would be a little more tricky.

"Okay, break it up. Leave the area!"

Song Qingxiao raised her voice and shouted loudly, "You are not allowed to cause a disturbance in this area. Please leave immediately!"

Her yelling caught the attention of the youths there, and they subconsciously turned to look toward her.

Every single person there was bigger and stronger than her. When the group of arrogant youths saw her standing there in her guard uniform, they found the sight hilarious. When they recovered from their surprise, they burst out into laughter.

"Get out of here! Mind your own business!" snarled a youth with a fierce expression.

"This is Changyan street. It's right next to the University of Science and Technology of the Shi family..."

The group of young people started to circle around Song Qingxiao. She did her best to stand tall and keep her back straight, but she looked like a deer caught in the headlights.

Due to the disturbance, several cars a distance away were blocked from moving. There was a black car right in the center of those cars. A youth sat inside and casually glanced outside the window when he noticed the girl surrounded by a group of savage-looking teenagers. She looked like she was going to be torn apart by them in the next second.

He was about to turn away since he did not have a strong sense of curiosity and was not the type of person to stick his nose into other people's business. From what he saw, he could gather what would happen next. Unless something unexpected happened, it was almost inevitable that blood would be spilled.

He could see that Song Qingxiao was clearly terrified, but her actions were at odds with her scared expression.

A woman was seated across him in the car. She noticed him staring out the window and followed the direction of his gaze. She observed the scene happening before them and lazily stretched out her arms.

'That woman is dead meat!' she thought to herself.

However, in the next moment, she heard the youth say, "You Qi, go and settle that problem out there."

A respectful acknowledgment could be heard from the front of the car. The car door was opened, and the woman who sat across the youth frowned slightly.

An error had occurred in her previous prediction. She watched as that group of youths who gathered to cause a ruckus ran off in all directions under the powerful intervention of You Qi.

Song Qingxiao—who was in that oversized guard uniform—looked as white as a sheet but wore an expression that showed that she was grateful and elated to be rescued. The woman returned her gaze to the car and looked at the youth in the corner. Her gaze went cold as she closed her eyes.

Song Qingxiao nearly ended up in big trouble on her first day on the job. Thankfully, things were settled without any issue. Her stomach was in knots the entire day, but she did not receive any complaints in the end.

The day finally came to an end. Song Qingxiao let out a sigh of relief when she left work after spending the whole day in a state of unease. It was already dark when she was about to head home.

The weather had been unusually hot and humid, and the weather forecast predicted a thunderstorm. She needed to rush home before it started to rain. She was penniless, so it would be a huge burden if she fell sick after being caught in the rain.

There were two more little alleys to pass through before she reached home. It was extremely dangerous on the west side of the city after dark, so she sped up her footsteps.

The sound of thunder resounded in the sky. It grew louder and louder, signaling that a massive storm was imminent!

Boom!

A loud crash of thunder rang out, and a bolt of lightning streaked through the sky, illuminating the pitch-black alleyway. Huge droplets of rain began to rain down from the sky. Song Qingxiao barely had the chance to raise her hands to shield herself from the rain before seeing a figure dressed in a raincoat running towards her through the rain puddles, guided by the light from the lightning.

At that moment, in that place, a person dressed like that could not be up to anything good. All she could do was lower her head as the rain and wind pummeled against her body.

Song Qingxiao shivered involuntarily. 'He' gave off a chilling aura that made her hair stand on end. A sickly sweet scent hung in the air that was reminiscent of blood.

Song Qingxiao's body was wound up tightly. As the person drew closer towards her, 'his' strapping tall figure made her feel like there was no place for her to hide in the alley. Song Qingxiao knew better than to offend a character who dared to roam the alleys alone in the nighttime. She hunched her shoulders and tried to make herself as small as she could.

As that person came closer and was just about to pass her, Song Qingxiao continued to clench her fists tightly. In the next second, that person raised his arms, and all she could feel was as if a giant python had wrapped itself around her neck.

She reached out her hands in an attempt to pull the hands off her when that person pulled out a dagger. He thrust it towards her, aiming for her throat.

She felt like a helpless grasshopper with no ability to retaliate. The tip of her fingers clung to the long fingers of that person. 'His' hands were drenched from the rain. They were so cold that they seemed devoid of any warmth.

The thumb that was pressing firmly against the dagger seemed to have an extra joint. Song Qingxiao looked at it in confusion. That person spun the dagger and was clearly about to end her life.

That person looked extremely self-confident. With a single strike, the job was done, and he turned to leave. A huge gush of blood flowed out of the wound on her throat. The blood spurted violently and was rapidly washed away by the rain.

Song Qingxiao's body convulsed on the ground. Thunder boomed relentlessly, followed by lightning streaking through the air. She stared at that person's retreating figure. A corner of his raincoat was turned up, and that person left while humming a little tune. From the sound of his voice, it seemed like he was a young man of about thirty years old.

Who was this person, and why did he want to kill her? Numerous questions filled her mind and made her eyes go wide in confusion. Her severe blood loss made her pupils dilate. Was she about to die?

That thought flashed across her mind, only to be quickly followed by another explosive thought.

'Will you enter the Trial of God?'

Chapter 2

'Ten, nine, eight...'

The massive blood loss began to make Song Qingxiao's consciousness blurry. She recalled her mother, and numerous long-forgotten scenes started to appear in her mind. That mysterious countdown continued in her mind.

'Six, five...'

'Four...'

'Three...'

Her fingers twitched, and her mind began to wander. She could not feel her body, and the sound of the rain in her ears disappeared. All she could hear was the sound of her heart beating interspersed with the countdown.

'Two...'

She did not want to die! She had just graduated and had only recently managed to get a job to support herself. She had only been on the job for a day.

Luckily, she managed to survive her first day on the job despite having encountered some trouble. She did not want to die quietly in an alley. The next day, once the rain stopped, perhaps some people would pass through the alley. Even then, they might not spare a second glance at her corpse!

Should she enter the Trial of God? She used the last of her energy to move her lips. Rainwater gushed into her mouth. Foam mixed with blood trickled down her chin. Her desire to live won over her fear of death.

'Yes...'

The thought had barely registered in her mind when her fingers began to twitch the next second lightly. What she felt was no longer the wet and cold stone pavement but a smooth floor. She was no longer in the dark alley where she met the end of her life. There seemed to be others around her. She could hear the sound of heavy breathing!

"Welcome to the Trial of God's test space!"

Song Qingxiao took a deep breath of fresh, cool air and sat up immediately. She opened her eyes! Several other people were sitting or standing beside her. All of them turned to look at her with shocked expressions.

There were no strong winds or heavy rainfall. The dark alley and the little tune that she heard before she died was not here either. She looked around, assessing her surroundings carefully, and subconsciously reached out her hands to touch her throat.

Before she lost consciousness, her throat had been slit open by that person. She still remembered the feeling of that dagger entering her body. Song Qingxiao went as pale as a sheet. When her hands reached her throat, it felt smooth and perfect. There was no wound, and she could breathe normally.

The scene right before she was killed was like a nightmare. She raised her arms and saw that her left arm still had traces of fresh bloodstains. It was proof that she did not imagine what had happened before.

“What is this place? What’s going on?” Song Qingxiao mumbled to herself as her body trembled non-stop. Everyone around her looked at her with fear in their eyes.

Everything that had happened was beyond her scope of knowledge. However, she guessed that it might have something to do with the voices that appeared in her mind.

Song Qingxiao steadied her nerves and used her hands to support her as she stood up. Since she had just been through a dangerous situation, she was instinctively wary of the strange environment.

She noticed something odd about the place. A gray fog enveloped everything. Only an open space of about 30 square meters was left uncovered. Apart from that, there were no other decorations or furnishings.

About seven or eight people beside her were located quite a distance away from her, and they stared at her vigilantly.

“What is this place?”

It seemed like they were all strangers since everyone had kept a distance from each other. The group of people consisted of men and women of all ages. No two were alike.

A young woman dressed in a red one-piece dress and high-heels uncrossed her arms. She fiddled with her hair before she asked, “Who are you people? How did you end up here?”

Everyone there exchanged looks with each other. However, since they were all strangers, none of them seemed to want to speak up first. That woman swept her gaze over every single person within that open space before her eyes finally landed on Song Qingxiao, who was the last to enter the area.

Song Qingxiao's appearance was the most frightening one among them all. Her clothes were thoroughly drenched, and there were bloodstains all over her chest as well as her sleeves. Her hair was disheveled. She looked as white as a ghost, and her lips were devoid of color. She looked extremely gross and destitute as if she had been through a rough time.

It was clear that Song Qingxiao did not come from a good background. When the woman's gaze landed on Song Qingxiao, she looked just like everyone else—a little nervous but also disdainful and disgusted.

“Hey, new person. Who are you? What's your name, and how did you get here?” The woman quickly asked Song Qingxiao a series of questions as she stared at her. As soon as she spoke, everyone else stared intently at Song Qingxiao and waited eagerly for her answer.

Since Song Qingxiao was still unsure about where she was, she did not answer honestly when the woman directed those questions at her. That night's event had made her extremely wary, and she kept her guard up high. The unfamiliar environment and the strangers around her made her feel even more anxious.

She copied what everyone else had done and moved to a spot within the open space that was a little further from the others. She then curled up into a ball. By then, one of the others had begun to grow impatient and sternly questioned her.

“Did you hear what she said?”

The person who spoke up was a strong, muscular guy who wore a tight tank top. The tank top exposed his arm, which was covered in tattoos. He had a fierce and mean appearance, and he raised his fist as he spoke. It seemed like everyone was most apprehensive about him since they had all moved far away from him.

Song Qingxiao was still taking deep breaths since she was still traumatized by the sensation of being stabbed by the dagger. She could not shake off the feeling of not being able to breathe. Even though the wound on her neck had

mysteriously disappeared, she was still severely affected. She still stretched out her neck and raised her chin as she took deep breaths in.

She said in a loud voice, “My name is Song Qingxiao. I’m not sure how I ended up here. I’m pretty confused about it myself.”

She did not mention the mysterious voice that appeared in her mind. Neither did she bring up the ‘Trial of God’. Looking at how they reacted to her words, it seemed as though no one suspected her of lying.

The woman who had questioned her seemed to be focused on the bloodstains on Song Qingxiao. She was clearly curious about what had happened to her before she arrived. Her reaction proved that everyone here in this space must have arrived here abruptly. Everyone else there could have also received the prompt to enter the Trial of God before they mysteriously arrived in the space.

From the way the other people were dressed, they were all doing different things at different times before they were summoned to the ‘Trial of God’. For example, the woman who had questioned Song Qingxiao was dressed in a dinner gown, while another middle-aged man further back—who was short and plump—seemed to be wearing work clothes.

Song Qingxiao was unclear about why she had been able to enter the trial, nor had she figured out what the purpose of this trial was. However, since she was introverted and did not like to draw attention to herself, she kept quiet after she had answered the woman’s questions. While she listened to the conversations around her, she quietly observed all the people in the space.

She did a headcount, and there were a total of nine people in the space, including herself. Apart from the woman who asked her the questions and the scary-looking burly chap, there was also a short, chubby guy who looked about forty years old. There was a bespectacled and refined-looking man next to him.

On the other side, there was a young man and a young woman, both with green eyes. Sitting in the east corner was a slightly plump woman in office wear. A young male doctor who wore a white coat stood about two meters away from her. He had his arms crossed in front of his chest and wore a deep frown.

The bespectacled, middle-aged man's eyes lit up, and he spoke as he adjusted his glasses.

"It looks like everyone arrived here by accident. Even though I don't understand why we have all arrived here, since we're here now, we should try to figure out where this is and what has caused us all to appear here."

He used his hands to push against the ground as he stood up.

"I suggest that in a place like this, we should all sit in a circle and introduce ourselves. This is so that we can get to know and become familiar with each other."

As soon as he finished speaking, the fierce-looking chap laughed loudly.

"Who are you? Why should the rest of us listen to what you say?" he asked.

Chapter 3

When the middle-aged man heard his words, his smile faltered slightly. However, he quickly put on another smile and said, "Why don't I introduce myself first?"

Song Qingxiao had not let her guard down at all since she entered the mysterious space. She still felt uneasy since she was in an unfamiliar environment. Her childhood and, not to mention, the life-threatening situation that she had just experienced, made her extremely sensitive to the small details in other people's expressions.

Hence, she noticed that the bespectacled, middle-aged man looked at the burly chap with contempt and displeasure, but it was also mixed with a bit of fear.

"My name is Zhou Jing, and I work in the Dongji province municipal center. I have many years of work experience."

The middle-aged man looked very pleased with himself as he said that. He was well-dressed and looked like a gentleman. He did indeed fit the appearance of a man who worked in a government agency. The people around him seemed to relax their guard around him after he said that.

In the strange and unfamiliar environment, no one knew each other. Hence, everyone had their own ways of self-preservation. His identity as a public servant made everyone feel a little safer.

Even the burly thug relaxed his menacing expression after he had heard Zhou Jing's self-introduction. Once Zhou Jing saw that his identity made everyone feel more settled, his spirits were seemingly lifted. He once again suggested to the group the idea of getting everyone to sit in a circle. That time, his suggestion was not met with as much resistance as before.

Song Qingxiao's body still seemed a little out of her control. Her hands could not stop trembling. She had already caught everyone's eye because she arrived drenched and covered in blood, and because of that, everyone clearly seemed to be wary of her. They ended up avoiding her. Song Qingxiao moved her body with much difficulty to sit closer and join the circle.

Zhou Jing began to speak.

"We should start by sharing about who we are, our backgrounds, and also what was going on when we ended up here. We should share everything that we know with each other."

He coughed once to clear his throat before he continued by saying, "After all, this place is a little odd."

There were no doors or windows in this place. Apart from the nine people here, there were no other sounds.

"I've tried."

As soon as Zhou Jing finished speaking, the male doctor who wore a white coat took his hands out of his pockets. He held a brand new smartphone in his hand.

"You can't make calls here. There's no signal."

As soon as he said that, expressions of horrified surprise appeared on everyone's faces. Considering how advanced the era was, science and technology made great strides every day. The satellite network could reach almost every corner of the globe. It was a severe problem if one's phone had no signal and could not make calls.

Everyone started to panic as they all reached for their phones. The lady in the red dress seemed to have entered the space without her purse, which contained her phone. Hence, she could only look towards the teen next to her who carried a backpack. She watched as he retrieved his phone from his bag and gave it a shake. He looked up in disappointment. Shaking his head, he said, "My phone has no signal too."

After everyone had checked their phones only to find that none of their phones could get any signal, Zhou Jing put his phone down and said, "I'm guessing that gangsters might have kidnaped us. Before they kidnapped us, they must have done something to kill our phone's signals."

His words frightened a couple of people there. However, Song Qingxiao felt that was not the answer. Even if she did not consider the mysterious voice that sounded in her mind earlier, the method that she entered this space defied the boundaries of what could be explained by science. There was no way that gangsters could have magically transported her from that alley she used to get home into this space in the blink of an eye.

Just as that thought popped into her head, someone quickly objected.

"That's impossible."

The person who spoke up was the male doctor who had previously mentioned that his phone had no signal. His expression was solemn as he spoke, "I was at work when I suddenly appeared in this place. If we were truly kidnapped, no one would have been able to do this."

As soon as Zhou Jing heard someone disagree with him, he felt his authority was challenged and instantly felt a little unhappy. He responded, "There's nothing impossible about it."

He straightened his back and continued, "I can tell from how you're dressed that you're a doctor. Hence, you must know about the properties of certain drugs. If the gangsters used some sort of psychedelic drug on you, you would lose consciousness in a short amount of time."

"During this time, they would transport you to this place that they had prepared. Your brain and eyes would have been affected by the drug, so you would have hallucinations about what happened before. Hence, it would give you the wrong impression that you were wide awake when you appeared in this place."

Zhou Jing's manner of speech was full of certainty. His voice was deep and commanding. At the same time, he used his body language to emphasize his points. Hence, many people were influenced by him. From the looks on their faces, it seemed that many people agreed with his theory.

'That's impossible!' thought Song Qingxiao as she hung her head. As soon as she heard his argument, she pursed her lips tightly. If it were up to her feelings, she would be willing to believe Zhou Jing's words. However, logically, there was no way that she could accept his argument.

Before entering the mysterious 'Trial of God test space', Song Qingxiao was killed by a stranger. Before she died, she chose to enter the trial and discovered that she had been brought back to life and her wound had disappeared.

They were all unbelievable happenings, and it was like a dream. However, the bloodstains on Song Qingxiao's body and the dirt between her fingers proved that her previous experience was not a hallucination.

Not to mention, based on what she knew, Zhou Jing was from the Dongji province. Yet, Song Qingxiao was from the West District of Imperial City. It was enough to prove that all the nine people there, including herself, could be from different regions and provinces within the Empire.

In fact, if she were bold, just by looking at how soaked her hair and uniform were from the rain, she would say that the people there were not only from different places but even the time and environment they came from were different.

After she had entered the space, based on the reaction after the doctor discovered that his phone had no signal while Zhou Jing was speaking, it appeared that everyone had not been in this space for long. That was why no one had noticed that there was no signal.

When all the evidence was put together, Song Qingxiao made a bold guess that no one would be able to gather a group of people of different ages, gender, and backgrounds from different times and different locations in one place at about the same time. Even if they had made preparations beforehand, this feat was impossible—unless the person who did this was God!

She once again recalled the voice in her head that said, 'Will you enter the Trial of God?' and she could not help but shudder.

"It's not possible!" The doctor refuted Zhou Jing's words again. His tone was darker the second time. Zhou Jing felt quite unhappy that the doctor had contradicted him once more, especially since everyone else had agreed with his guess. The doctor had contradicted him multiple times. Zhou Jing's expression turned somber, and he raised his voice.

"What grounds do you have to say that?"

The atmosphere seemed to become a little tense. Everyone exchanged looks, and no one dared to say anything in that situation. The audience's gaze swung back and forth between Zhou Jing and the doctor as if they tried to decide who between them was their pillar of strength.

The doctor glanced at Zhou Jing, who was pretty worked up, and returned his phone to the pocket of his doctor's uniform. He raised his wrist and showed off his wristwatch. "It's true that phone signals can be tampered with. However, I've discovered that my watch has also stopped functioning."

As he spoke up to that point, the doctor sighed and rotated his arm so that everyone could get a better look. Song Qingxiao lifted her head to see that his wristwatch's needle was out of control and spinning crazily at high speeds.

"This could be the effect of a magnetic field. I suspect that we are currently in a mysterious space."

The doctor's words caused everyone to panic. However, strangely enough, Song Qingxiao began to relax after hearing his words, her nervous and tightly-wound body began to relax. The doctor's words seemed to confirm her own suspicions.

Chapter 4

The doctor's words caught nearly everyone by surprise. Everyone started to panic as soon as they saw the doctor's wristwatch. The woman in the red dress mumbled to herself, "Is it possible that what I heard before wasn't a hallucination?"

Her voice wavered slightly as she said that. The youth carrying the backpack next to her turned around and asked, “Did you hear the prompt to enter the ‘Trial of God’ too?”

There was a hint of terror in the youth’s eyes. That occurrence, which was beyond anything that science could explain, made everyone freeze in shock.

The doctor frowned deeply as he glanced at the wildly spinning hands of his wristwatch.

“So, it seems that everyone heard the words ‘Trial of God’.”

His tone was absolutely certain. Apart from the woman in the red dress and the youth with the backpack, everyone exchanged looks speechlessly, but no one refuted his claim. It was evident that what the doctor said was true. Everyone had heard the mysterious prompt before they entered the mysterious space.

Song Qingxiao hugged her knees with her arms. She felt a premonition that something terrible was about to happen. The events that occurred that night riddled her with anxiety. In the depths of her anxiety, she felt that what was about to unfold could undermine her future.

“Who was the first person to enter this ‘Trial of God’ test space?” asked the doctor.

Since he was the person who pointed out that their phones had no signal and the issue of his wristwatch being disrupted by the magnetic field, he quickly seemed to become the person that everyone trusted. He had easily won over the authority over the group that Zhou Jing had strived to achieve.

His question was not met with any resistance from the others. Even the burly chap who had previously acted defiantly scratched his head as he looked around the space while deep in thought. The girl sitting to Song Qingxiao’s left raised her hand cautiously and said, “I think... I think that it’s me...”

The girl’s voice was soft and reedy. She looked about fifteen or sixteen years old and had a head of straight black hair. Her face still retained child-like features, and she was on the verge of tears.

“There was no one else here when I first entered this space. She entered soon after me.” As she spoke, her tears started to trickle out of the corner of her eye,

The girl pointed at the plump woman dressed in office wear. The woman admitted to that a little helplessly.

“Yes, that’s true. The person who entered after me was Zhou Jing.”

The doctor nodded. “I entered after him.”

The sequence after that was the youth with the backpack, and then the middle-aged man who was short and fat. They were followed by the burly chap, the woman in the red dress, and finally, Song Qingxiao.

“Was there anything different about this place when you entered?” asked the doctor. At his question, everyone’s gaze landed on that girl. She was about to burst into tears from all the people staring at her. Her nose turned bright red, and she blinked rapidly.

“No, everything was the same as it is now. There was just no one else here,” she answered. The whole place was surrounded by fog. When the girl entered, she screamed only to discover that there was no one else here. She began to feel frightened and found a central spot to sit. People slowly began to arrive soon after that.

From the girl’s story, one could tell that she was easily frightened. However, it could be because she was still young, and her personality was a little fragile. The doctor questioned her closely but did not seem to discover anything useful.

At that moment, Song Qingxiao discovered that everyone had received a mysterious prompt to enter the ‘Trial of God’ test space. However, she was stumped as to what they needed to do next to leave the place.

She guessed that since the place was called the ‘Trial of God’ test space, it was expected that everyone would have to undergo some sort of test. Her eye twitched non-stop. Since she was the last person to arrive, she felt that the odds were stacked against her.

Since they were in an unfamiliar environment and would soon have to face an unfamiliar situation, the people who had arrived before her must be hiding something.

The worst part about the whole thing was that she was in a dangerous situation before she arrived. Hence, she had nothing on her. Since they did not know when they would leave, it could become quite problematic since they did not have food or water.

“I want to go home!” wailed the girl. Everyone was already a bundle of nerves because of the series of events that had brought them there. Once she cried, everyone’s faces dropped.

The doctor looked at the girl and said loudly, “No one is clear about what’s going on. There’s nothing that we can do about being stuck here.”

He stuffed his hands into his pockets. “I suggest that we split up and explore this place. Hopefully, we’ll be able to find a way out quickly.”

The space was extremely unfamiliar and filled with heavy, thick fog. Since the way everyone had arrived was rather odd, the doctor suggested that two or three people form a group for safety’s sake. They would split up into four groups that would each head off in different directions to see what was hidden behind the heavy fog. Hopefully, they would also find the best way to get out of the mysterious place.

Zhou Jing felt unhappy as soon as he heard the doctor’s orders. He thought that the doctor had stolen his previous ‘authority’ from him, making him feel resentful. Zhou Jing frowned as he protested against the idea.

“You want us to explore the area? We can’t be sure that there’s nothing dangerous out there. Since everyone got here through the prompt, why don’t we wait it out? Maybe it’ll be better to see if that mysterious voice would appear again?”

Zhou Jing’s words seemed to gain the approval of a portion of the group. The short, fat, middle-aged man’s gaze flitted between Zhou Jing and the doctor. It looked like he was trying to decide who to trust.

The group seemed to split into two camps of thought. One side was represented by the burly chap who agreed with the doctor’s suggestion. The other side included people like the woman in the red dress who preferred to

go ahead with Zhou Jing's suggestion and stay where they were, waiting for another instruction to come.

The woman in the red dress swept her hair back and asked with a glint in her eyes, "How about this, since you guys are willing to explore the area, you should just go. The rest of us can stay here and wait for news..."

As soon as the woman in the red dress said that, the plump woman chuckled and looked at her contemptuously. Before she could speak, the doctor said, "I'm warning you now, there is no signal here, and we are completely cut off from the outside world. More importantly..."

The doctor paused momentarily and pointed out what Song Qingxiao had worried about before.

"There's no food here and no water source. After she entered," said the doctor as he pointed towards Song Qingxiao, "No one new has entered this space. I personally think that we're the only ones here who are supposed to go through this 'Trial of God'. No one knows when the next instruction is going to come. However, if you're stuck here, you'll have to bear the consequences yourself."

His words were a warning to everyone, and they got a rude awakening. Zhou Jing did not dare to make another sound even though he was still unhappy. Although everyone was fearful and apprehensive about this space, they decided to follow the doctor's orders since there was no better option.

There were a total of five men in the group. In the unfamiliar environment, the burly chap's strong and muscular figure gave him a strong advantage. In the group, many people hoped to be in the same group as him.

Coming second after the burly chap was the doctor with his clear logic and sharp mind. Zhou Jing, who worked in the municipal center, was next in line. The woman disregarded the short and fat, middle-aged man and the youth with the backpack because of their age and image in the team selection.

In the end, after a bout of discussion, the doctor and the plump office lady formed a team. The burly chap and the woman in the red dress were in the next group. Zhou Jing and the youth with the backpack formed another group. That left the middle-aged man, the girl who entered this space first, and Song Qingxiao last, so they were forced to become a team.

In terms of power, it appeared that Song Qingxiao's team was the weakest. The middle-aged man stared at Song Qingxiao and the timid girl in displeasure. However, his protests did not affect the group, so he was forced to accept the group arrangement.

The four groups split off to head out in four different directions. Obviously, it was challenging to take a step into an unknown location, so everyone hesitated for quite some time. Finally, the doctor took the lead and dragged the plump woman into the direction of the thick fog.

Song Qingxiao felt a little uneasy as she walked in a different direction with the middle-aged man and the girl. Right when they stepped into the thick fog, that mysterious voice appeared once again in Song Qingxiao's mind.

'Welcome to the Trial of God.'

Chapter 5

Right at that moment, a sequence of cards appeared in Song Qingxiao's mind. The sudden appearance of the cards made the hairs on Song Qingxiao's back stand on end. Her guard and wariness reached new heights. She could hear the girl on her team shriek in terror, which was proof that she was not the only one who had received the prompt.

"Stop screaming!" snapped the short, fat, middle-aged man harshly. There was no telling what sort of dangers were hidden in this area. Their surroundings were unnaturally quiet. The girl's scream appeared both shrill and a little creepy under these circumstances.

The others had rejected the short and fat, middle-aged man because of his appearance. That was why he was forced to be in a group with Song Qingxiao and the girl. He was extremely displeased about it. The sudden and strange occurrence made his temper worse.

"I'm scared! I want to go home..."

The girl's voice was tearful, and she sounded extremely pitiful. However, it was clear that the middle-aged man had also received quite a shock. As soon as he heard her words, he scolded her.

“Of course, we all want to go home! However, we have no idea what’s going on, nor do we know what kind of dangers are out there. Do you have a death wish? Are you trying to get us killed faster by making such a racket?”

The word ‘death’ being uttered in a place like that made a chill go down the girl’s spine and even that of the middle-aged man. Song Qingxiao ignored the conversation of the two people beside her. Her attention was fully drawn toward the cards in her mind.

The sequence consisted of cards that were all a picture on a black background with red stripes. Three cards formed a row, and there were three rows in total. She felt a sense of oppression just by looking at those cards.

Song Qingxiao did her best to ignore the chill in her heart. She observed the pictures on the cards and pondered hard, but she still could not figure out the meaning behind them. However, she did notice that there were a total of nine cards.

There were nine people in the ‘Trial of God’ test space. The number of cards matched the number of people. She wondered if there was any connection between the two. The terrible sensation grew stronger. She could still hear that middle-aged man beside her scolding away.

She could not figure the meaning behind the number of cards. Song Qingxiao did not know what they needed to do to leave this test space.

Her palms were sweaty. They felt cold and clammy. The bloodstains on her palm became a little sticky from being mixed with her sweat.

The situation brought up the memory of the moment when she was killed. She felt extremely unsafe, especially in her environment. She subconsciously reached out her hand to touch her neck where she had been stabbed. In the next second, she heard a voice in her mind.

“You have selected an item.”

Song Qingxiao was startled by the voice. When she came to her senses, she noticed that she held something in her hand. She gripped it tightly and felt a sharp pain in her palm.

She licked her dry lips and lowered her head to see that she was holding a dagger that was the length of a palm. The blade was as thin as a silkworm’s

wing. When she rotated her hand under the dim light of the fog, a silver gleam reflected off the side of the dagger.

The middle-aged man did not appear to notice her reaction and continued to rage at that sobbing girl. Song Qingxiao could not comprehend where the dagger came from. However, it was a good thing to have it under those circumstances. She could protect herself.

Even though she was unsure how useful the dagger would be in the mysterious space, she still slipped the dagger discreetly inside the cuff of her sleeve. She concealed it by folding her sleeves.

As Song Qingxiao did that, the fog surrounding them seemed to be dissipating at a speed that the human eye could notice. The space started to brighten up, and she could clearly see the figures of the short, fat, middle-aged man and the girl.

"I'm truly unlucky to end up with pieces of trash like the both of you." The man seemed to be using the excuse of scolding the girl to express his terror. The girl did not dare to say a word. After he had raged at her for a good while, he began to grow tired and stopped to say, "This ghastly place is truly strange."

He shrugged and was about to continue speaking when the girl shrieked once again.

"Do you want to die?" The middle-aged man's tightly wound-up feelings seemed to have reached a breaking point. He raised his fist and looked ready to strike. The girl could only shrink back.

However, the middle-aged man did not end up hitting her. It was not because he had suddenly regained some semblance of rationality. Instead, it was because as soon as he raised his fist to strike that girl, Song Qingxiao noticed that a corded computer mouse had appeared in his clenched fist!

"What the hell is going on?"

The black cord of the mouse was still swinging. The short and fat man looked horrified, as though he was holding onto the world's scariest object. His hand shook violently as he tossed the mouse in his hand and clasped his head with both hands.

"I..."

The girl reached out her hand, and a phone with a pink rabbit cover appeared in her hand. She said with a terrified look on her face, "This is my phone, but I... I definitely put it in my pocket."

She looked at Song Qingxiao with tears in her eyes and said, "I don't know why it appeared in my hand."

When she saw the pitiful appearance of the girl who was clearly terrified out of her mind, Song Qingxiao took several deep breaths and forced herself to calm down before she said, "When you entered this place, did you take it out?"

The girl looked like she had just seen a ghost. She was about to imitate the middle-aged man's actions and drop the phone in her hands. When she heard Song Qingxiao's question, she quickly shook her head and said, "No."

The girl's teeth were chattering non-stop, making a soft clicking sound. The thick fog had dispersed, and under the dim light, Song Qingxiao could notice that the girl's facial muscles were twitching abnormally. It was apparent that she was beyond terrified.

"Earlier, when the doctor mentioned that his phone had lost its signal, I took my phone out to have a look. I'm very sure that I put it back into my pocket." The girl spoke up to that point and added another sentence, "No, I was playing with my phone before I entered this space..."

Her words reminded Song Qingxiao of the dagger that she had hidden in her sleeve. The short and fat, middle-aged man seemed to have also recalled something. He said, "That's right! Before I entered this place, I was holding my mouse."

Their words proved that the items they selected were possibly the last things they held or were in contact with right before entering the space.

Song Qingxiao's pupils widened in surprise. Her right arm reached for the dagger concealed in her left sleeve. If her guess was correct, the dagger she had obtained was likely to be the weapon that that stranger had used to kill her!

Once the middle-aged man had made the connection about the origin of these objects, he looked a little calmer as he asked, "You got your phone, I got my mouse. Hey, what did you get?"

He turned his head to look at Song Qingxiao. She lowered her eyes and shook her head.

“I didn’t get anything.”

She kept the presence of the dagger a secret.