

诡案组

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公安厅绝不容忍的捉鬼大案卷

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公安厅绝不容忍的捉鬼大案卷

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《诡案组》系列大结局 公安厅绝不公开的捉鬼案件

最后一卷，公安厅绝不容忍的捉鬼大案卷

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悬疑志

诡案组

大结局

公安厅绝不愿公开的捉鬼案件大揭秘

中国刑侦史上第一例，震惊全国的灵异凶案
警方内部绝密档案首度公开，首次揭秘警方不为人知的真相

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《诡案组》系列大结局 公安厅绝不公开的捉鬼案件

国内第一例，震惊全国的灵异凶案，（首次公开）

案件详情，警方的秘史和真相首度公开！

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Strange Investigations Team - Volume 01

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Novel Preface

N/A – Strange Investigations Team –

Preface

A coastal province in mainland China was one of the first adopters of the Open Door Policy. Because of the economic disparities between the regions of the country, many migrant workers from other provinces were attracted there, resulting in rapid population growth. The present day population was in the hundreds of millions.

With the influx of people, various problems naturally cropped up, including some supernatural affairs. Since the founding of our country, one of the fundamental national policies has been to eliminate feudal superstition, but when faced with unimaginable events that science has trouble explaining, things become difficult. For this reason, the provincial Ministry of Public Security secretly set up the Strange Investigations Team (SIT) to take care of the supernatural events that occur across the province.

Because the existence of the SIT contradicted national policy, the Ministry of Public Security never publicly acknowledged its existence. Forget ordinary citizens, even the vast majority of policemen serving had never heard about it. Since SIT's cases dealt with bizarre and unbelievable things, if made public, society would be sent into panic.

Therefore, all records of the cases handled by the SIT were made confidential within the Ministry, with only the team members and a few senior officials authorized to access them. But nothing was impossible, and everything had an exception. If these case files were to be published into a book and released publicly, what would happen? But dear readers, don't take this too seriously. Just treat it as a piece of entertainment and avoid asking too many questions, otherwise continuing this text will be difficult.

N/A – Strange Investigations Team –

Prologue

– Strange Investigations Team –

Volume 1 Prologue

Notes: I include ‘ge’ (older brother) and ‘jie’ (older sister) as is when used as a suffix that some characters will tag onto names of older males/females that they are familiar with. Somewhat similarly, ‘Xiao’ can be a surname or part of a given name, but is often used as an endearing prefix (meaning ‘little’).

(1)

“An ge, what do we do? It looks like an ancient tomb. Should we tell the foreman?”

The day was passing as the blood-red sun set in the west. At the base of the excavation site, a group of migrant workers were fervently discussing. They were all waiting for their boss, a burly man they called ‘An ge,’ to give his command.

An ge silently looked at the hole and then his eyes swept over the disturbed faces in the crowd. He spoke in a heavy voice, “The foreman’s already gone home. As long as no one says anything later, we’ll be the only ones who know what’s in this hole. Those who don’t want to suffer from poverty and aren’t afraid of death, come with me to take a look. If we find anything valuable, we split the profit. If anyone doesn’t wish to go, I also won’t force you...”

“I’ll go!” “I’ll go too!” “Count me in...” Everyone was very excited, as if they’d already seen the treasures inside the hole.

“Okay! If there are treasures, we eight will share them! If there’s hardship, we eight will bear them! If anyone has wicked intentions, let them die a painful death!” An ge’s expression was excited but slightly uneasy. He led the group into the cave that appeared like a giant behemoth devouring its prey.

10 months later.

“Ping’an, don’t go. Don’t leave me and your unborn child behind! Ooh...” In a hospital room, a nine-month pregnant woman cried in anguish in front of her husband’s bed.

Lying on the bed was a dying An ge, at his last breath. With much difficulty, he finally said, “We shouldn’t have disrupted her rest. She must be very angry. She must want to exact her revenge on us. Everyone else died, and I can’t keep living any longer...” He started coughing violently. After a long time, he was able to push out a few more words. “Take good care of our child. I spent my entire life as a construction worker. When our child is born, whether they’re a boy or a girl, please call them Xiaolou...” (Note: ‘xiao lou’ means ‘little building’)

An ge stopped breathing. His wife kneeled beside his bed and cried out painfully. In the midst of her cries, a faint and strange hissing sound could be heard...

(2)

The moon hung high in the sky, its light shining gloomily onto the quiet medical university campus. Outside the campus, three students, covered with the smell of alcohol, tried to climb the wall to get back into their dorm. One of them looked up at the moon in the sky and suddenly thought of something. He shivered and said, “Is today the 15th of the lunar month?”

“I think so, the moon’s pretty round. What’s the matter, Xiao Yu? Does it inspire you to get it on with yourself?” Fatty, who was climbing the wall, turned back and joked.

Four Eyes touched his glasses and looked up to the sky, as if truly intending to recite a poem. Xiao Yu gave him a shove. “Fuck off. I just suddenly remembered the legend about the female ghost with the baby.”

Four Eyes shivered. “Don’t talk about people in the day, and don’t talk about ghosts at night...”

“I’m here to cover you guys. What are you scared of?!” Fatty had already climbed to the top of the wall and extended a hand down to them.

The midnight campus was still and secretive. Even though there were three of them, their hearts still felt as if there was a chilly wind blowing. “Hiss, hiss, hiss,

the white snake immortal, with unlimited powers at a thousand years old. Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, the chilling north wind blows. A belly filled with tasty, fresh hearts..." When they walked into the camphor woods behind the dormitories, a faintly discernible nursery rhyme echoed through the trees.

Four Eyes stopped in his steps, his face pale as paper. "Did you guys... hear that?"

Xiao Yu's arms were crossed, and he nodded his head with a tremble. "I heard one of the seniors say that every full moon, a female ghost comes out from the forest with a baby in her arms, and she sings one nursery rhyme after another. If you run into her, she'll dig out your heart..."

"Don't scare yourself. That's just a ghost story that the seniors tell the new kids to frighten them. A few more steps and we'll be back at the dorm." Fatty kept looking around, but he didn't see this legendary female ghost.

"Run!" Fatty led them forward, but the three of them suddenly halted. They saw a woman standing next to a tree, stroking the baby in her arms. Her lips opened slightly as she sang a sad nursery song. Her hair grew down her back, swinging loosely. Aside from her opened mouth, it seemed as if the rest of her face was covered up.

The female's head slowly started to turn. The three boys, frozen from fear, saw what appeared to be a pair of glowing, bloodthirsty eyes behind her loose hair.

"Ahh!" A mournful shriek broke through the silence of the campus.

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(3)

Ministry of Public Security, Office of the Director.

Director Liang's eyebrows furrowed as he flipped through some files sent over by the Criminal Investigation Bureau (CIB). A knock sounded from outside the door.

"Come in."

"Director, what is it that you need?" An overweight, middle-aged man walked inside. Embedded on his flabby face was a pair of deep eyes.

“Ah Zheng, when it’s just the two of us, just call me by my name.” The director’s voice was very friendly and didn’t carry the authoritative tone of a boss. Still, the other party responded indifferently, “Director, while we’re at work, it’s still best that you call me Liang Zheng.”

“Do you still blame me for taking you out of the CIB that year? I didn’t have another choice either.”

“It’s nothing. I’m doing well in the Anti-Vice Department right now. Every day, I’m either dining and drinking or gambling and playing stocks. I don’t have to use my brain at all. I’m very happy with the idleness.” Liang Zheng smiled slightly, uglily. It was the kind of smile that made a person think of the phrase ‘an insincere smile.’

“And you said it’s nothing. I know that you have a lot on your mind. Two years ago, when you were investigating that case, I was forced to action by the minister and government. You kept investigating though, so I had no option but to drop you into Anti-Vice.” The director closed his eyes slightly, as if recalling an unpleasant memory of the past.

“It’s all in the past. There’s no need to bring it up now.” Although he spoke very leisurely, there was a barely observable trace of hatred in his eyes.

“What’s in the past has passed, but that doesn’t mean it won’t happen again.” The director suddenly grew serious as he tossed the files in front of Liang Zheng.

Liang Zheng casually flipped through the files and then put them back down. “Medical university female ghost claims two lives and injures a third. This isn’t the business of the Anti-Vice Department.”

A sly smile slipped onto the director’s lips. “Yes, this case has nothing to do with the Anti-Vice Department. Strictly speaking, the case doesn’t fall into any department’s jurisdiction. I’ve already contacted Wang Shuji in preparation to create a ‘strange cases team’ to handle these types of supernatural cases. Are you interested in a change of work environment?”

A gleam of excitement flickered across Liang Zheng’s eyes, but he responded calmly, “The government will never allow for such a team to exist.”

“That’s correct, it would not be allowed, so the government will not

acknowledge the existence of this team. In name, the team will be just another investigation team under the CIB, but you only need to report back to me about the cases. Trial proceedings and rulings will all happen internally, and there will be no communication with the media and public.”

Liang Zheng didn't say anything, but his lips gradually turned up. His smile wasn't the kind on one's face, but the kind hidden inside the depths of the heart. The director continued, “You can pick any five people in the Ministry to work as your subordinates, but you must investigate and solve this case within half a month.”

“If you can get me this one person, we can solve the case in a single week,” Liang Zheng said firmly.

“Who?”

“Theft Prevention's Mu Shenyu.”

The director thought for a moment. “Oh, you mean Xiao Mu who worked with you in the CIB?”

“Exactly.”

“No problem. It's too much of a waste having a talented person as him sitting in Theft Prevention anyway.”

“As for the rest of the team, I'll let you know after I go through the personnel files.”

“Mm.”

“If there's nothing else, then I'll take my leave.” When Liang Zheng arrived at the door, he suddenly turned back and said, “Thank you... (older) brother.”

– Strange Investigations Team –

Chapter 1

– Strange Investigations Team –

Volume 1

1 Medical University's Female Ghost

The Way which can be spoken is not the unchanging way.
The names which can be spoken are not unchanging names.

These two lines come from the Daode Jing (the Scripture of the Way and Its Virtue). Although just a few words, it told the truth of the world. If one was to try to properly and completely explain these two sentences, I'm afraid that a lifetime wouldn't be enough to do so. But to briefly discuss its meaning, perhaps we could understand it to mean: The things we can reason and speak out are not universal truths. The things that we put a name to are not everlasting.

The world is large and full of wonders. There are strange, fantastical, and unexplainable stories that happen every day. Stories circulate and get printed, eventually becoming gossip for the general public. Everyone has their own experiences and their own views. When they come across rumors and hearsay, they will naturally add on their own ideas, and by the time they tell the next person, the story has already changed.

So as falsehoods are piled atop one another, the story becomes unrecognizable and even contrary to the original. It can even be reduced to a ghost story that senior students use to scare the new kids. But who would have ever thought that compared to the legends that were passed down, the truth would be even more absurd and ridiculous.

My name is Mu Shenyu. As a child, I was constantly sick, so my mother was worried she wouldn't be able to raise me well and 'sent me off' to someone else. Although in actuality, they had just found me a godmother. My mother's family had a strange custom, that is, searching out a sorceress to act as a godmother for children who were often ill. They believed that this would allow the child to

grow up healthily.

My godmother was known as Witch Ling, the most famous sorceress in my hometown. Every year, the number of people who sought her out to become their children's godmother was no less than one hundred. However, becoming a godmother was no simple feat. She would only make a contract with nine children each year. It was said that she was afraid that her powers wouldn't be able to handle it if she had too many godchildren.

I was born in the Month of Ghosts (Note: the 7th month of the lunar calendar; roughly August), and it was also a premature birth, so I was often ill after I was born. My mother said that when I was 18 months old, I had a continuous high fever for three days. At one point, the fever even reached 40C. After two days in the hospital, the medicine stopped working and the doctors didn't know what else to do. From the looks of it, things weren't going well. Fortunately, my grandmother quickly arrived and told my mother to seek out Witch Ling's help.

My grandmother was from a fishing family, and she spent more time drifting on the sea than on land. That year, she returned to shore and was greeted with news that I was on death's door. Without even taking care of her catches, she headed to the hospital urgently and brought my mother and me to find Witch Ling.

Witch Ling was a distant relative of my grandmother's, and she lived on an old, stone boat. The so-called stone boat was actually a boat-shaped house that was built on the shore, constructed with stone, wood, metal, *etc.* Although from afar, it looked no different from a fishing boat, it was fixed in place and unable to move.

That day was the eve of the lunar new year, and the sky was already dark when we arrived at Witch Ling's residence. Because it was nearly New Year's, she had put away her altar and was unwilling to perform an exorcism for me. Only after Grandmother's pleas did she reluctantly agree.

According to my mother, when I entered the stone boat, I was still drowsy with sleep. Witch Ling prayed in front of her witch matron idol for divined tea, and after she worked on me, making me drink the tea, my spirit immediately livened. When I left the stone boat, I was full of energy and vigor. After I returned home, I

decocted in the herbal medicine she gave me, and then my fever broke.

After the start of the new year, my mother requested of Witch Ling to become my godmother. At the start, she was adamant in her refusal. And once more, only after my grandmother implored of her did she finally agree. I heard that during that year, I was the only person she contracted with.

The day of our pledge, Godmother gave me a beaded chain made from soul iron. She said that my soul was easy to scare away, so I must always wear the chain on my body to keep the soul steady.

Actually, all the children on my mother's side of the family wore a bracelet or pendant made from soul iron. My mother had once tried to seek one out for me, and while they weren't extremely valuable objects, they weren't easy to find either. From then on, I always wore the chain on my wrist. However, as I grew older and my wrist grew thicker, more beads had to be added to the chain. The extra beads were provided by another distant relative whom my grandmother sought out.

Every New Year's and on festive occasions, I would pay a visit to Godmother. Although from the outside, her stone boat didn't look very out of the ordinary, the inside looked like a small temple. The walls were made of sandalwood for the Buddhist prayers to reverberate. Two walls in the main hall were decorated with banners, offerings from those who'd received her help. Each time I visited, I would find more banners than the last time, and in recent years, she'd received so many that there was no space left to hang them. This likely had to do with the changing social climate, for when I was younger, Godmother had been looked upon as an 'evil monster.'

Behind the main hall, there was a small storage room filled with strange medicinal herbs. I don't call them strange because they are rare. Contrarily, you used to be able to pick them right from the side of the road. The odd thing about these herbs was that they could not be found in all of the pages of the 'Compendium of Medical Herbs.' But when I was younger, no matter the ailment I'd been diagnosed with, these herbs cured me every time. Speaking of strange things, my mother told me that after my contract, I rarely got sick. When the occasional cold and runny nose came around, we just asked Godmother to make some tea with the herbs, and I would recover quickly. Before then, the time I

spent in the hospital was no less than the time I spent in my own home.

Around the time I was 11 or 12, we went to visit Godmother for the new year. After she looked at me in silence for a long time, she let out a sigh and said earnestly, “Dear boy, I don’t have such great abilities, so I’m afraid I can only protect you until you reach your majority. When you grow up, you’ll definitely become a policeman...”

Godmother said that I was born in the Month of Ghosts, so my life was destined to be one filled with ghosts. My yin energy was particularly strong so I would lure in evil spirits. The reason I had often gotten sick when I was young was because I had offended a fox immortal in the hospital where I was born. As for why there was a fox immortal in the hospital, Godmother said she didn’t know.

Godmother believed that the witch matron was a deity that protected young boys and girls, and so after one’s coming of age ceremony, the witch matron didn’t care about you anymore. While wearing the spirit iron beads helped to ward away some evil spirits, it had little effect on the more powerful evil bringers.

I could never figure out what type of immortal the witch matron was, and Godmother never gave me a clear explanation. From my understanding, she was most closely related to Grandmother Pillow, the very Mother Yin of legends.

Godmother said that when I grew up, I must rely on the police to keep away evil spirits, that I wouldn’t be as easy to mess with that way. Although at the time I didn’t understand that she’d meant the relations between a man and woman when she said ‘grow up’, it was during that time that I became determined to become a good policeman who brought peace to the people. She said that even if I had the police to protect me, I should still act very carefully because my fate was tied to them. My life was bound to be filled with powerful winds and tides, and a small mistake could end my life.

Time flew by, and with the blink of an eye, I’m nearly 30 years old and I’ve been in the police force for several years. I’ve seen my share of tides, but I was still a nobody. Although my fate was currently unfavorable, I’d had better days... Ah, a man doesn’t lament on his past glories. The past isn’t worth mentioning now,

and it's better to face the present before you!

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“Stop there!” In the past two years, I'd called out this sentence tens of times each day. Because I am a policeman. An unlucky policeman in the Theft Prevention Department.

The one I ran into that day was a new face, but seeing that he was as good as a marathoner on the run, he wasn't an amateur. He must have come over from a different neighborhood. A pickpocket would probably be considered a rather fluid profession, and one wouldn't stay to work in a single place for too long... By proper terms, they are committing a crime and earning dishonest meals. If they stuck around in a place for too long, a fatal disaster was bound to come knocking on their door.

On the bustling street, there were countless pairs of eyes watching coldly as I pursued the pickpocket. If even a single one had stepped out, I wouldn't have had to run until I was out of breath. Unfortunately, in my two years with Theft Prevention, I had yet come across any such good citizen.

I wasn't even ten meters behind the pickpocket. I just had to run a little more and I'd be able to grab onto him. But my damned right leg started cramping at the worst time, yet again, and I could only limp after him. In an instant, the distance between us widened. He turned back to glance at me. Then he pulled out the stack of 100 yuan bills from the stolen wallet and tossed the wallet to the ground. As he was about to turn into a dark alley, a pale hand grabbed at his collar and yanked him back.

I ran over to the pickpocket and started huffing nonstop. I finally caught my breath and then I saw that the person who'd caught the thief was a tall girl. She looked pretty delicate, with shapely eyebrows, long and flowing hair, a pair of slender legs, and her arms didn't really look thick and sturdy. If I hadn't seen with my own eyes, you could beat me to death, and I wouldn't have believed that she'd pulled back a grown man with one hand. Although the pickpocket was kind of short, he was at least 50kg. If it were me though, she definitely wouldn't have been able to do it.

“Did he steal your wallet?” the girl asked in a dignified tone, like that of a hero.

Just then, a young man came over and picked up the wallet from the ground. He ran over to us and quickly said, “He stole my wallet.”

I pulled out my police ID and showed the girl. She glanced at it and then said disdainfully, “So your name is Mu Shenyu... Someone like you can be a cop too. No wonder the state of public security is so bad right now.”

I tried to cover up my embarrassment with coughing. “...Thank you for your help. I’ll take care of the rest.”

Then the girl pulled out her own police ID, and I discovered her name was Li Zhenzhen. “I’m afraid you’ll get another cramp and let him get away. It’s probably better for me to capture. Senior!”

The word ‘senior’ sounded very ear-piercing when she said it. It was clear that she was aiming for a cutting remark. Ah, I really wanted to find a trash can to crawl into. Damned cramping leg!

“If you two lovers want to play with each other, go home and do it. Stop wasting my time!” The pickpocket was obviously unhappy about being caught, and by a girl at that. He looked to be in a worse state than me, and that restored my mood.

Zhenzhen released him, but she still held on by his collar and mercilessly threw a punch at his lower back. It was so painful that his tears nearly started flowing out. After he cried out that the police was beating someone, the passing people suddenly crowded around.

“You think that because you’re cops, you’re so great?! I didn’t steal anything. You think you can extort a confession from me (by torture)?!” Looks like he was trying to pretend he hadn’t done anything. Acting wasn’t just a skill that actors studied. It was a compulsory subject for thieves as well.

I pulled out the wad of bills from his pocket, about ten 100 yuan bills. I waved the notes in front of him. “Didn’t you steal these?”

“Steal?! What do you mean?! The money was in my pocket. Of course it was mind! Everyone, come and make up your minds by yourself!” It was really a loss for the entertainment industry that this guy wasn’t filming movies. As he continued shouting, the crowd grew larger. Ah, why wasn’t everyone so

enthusiastic when I was chasing him earlier?

“Say that one more time!” I raised my fist, getting ready to hit that wretched, rotten face of his. Of course, he wasn’t dumb enough to suffer at my hands, so he quickly raised his arms above his head. The crowd started to discuss, and they seemed to conclude that I was violent and abusing my power.

I pulled back my fist and waved the money in his face again. “I’ll ask you again. Are you sure this money is yours?”

“Of course!” He spoke with a very confident and righteous tone, as if it really were the truth.

“Then I’ll have to arrest you for possession of counterfeit bills.” I smiled at the onlookers and held up the bills.

“What?” His eyes widened as he looked over the fake bill in my hand. This was indeed a wad of counterfeit money, very obviously so. Even the onlookers could tell.

“That money’s not mine. It’s his.” Panicked, he pointed at the owner of the money. “It’s his, his.”

The owner quickly waved his hands and shook his head. “That money’s not mine. It’s not mine, I don’t have any counterfeit money.”

I ignored the foolish looking owner and spoke seriously toward the pickpocket. “Then you admit that you stole his wallet?”

“This...” He nodded his head helplessly.

I raised my fist again and he covered his head with his arms. “You’re still hitting me after I admitted to it?”

“Who said I was going to hit you? Look at this money again...” I waved the bills in my hand for the crowd to see once more.

“It’s real? How?” He couldn’t understand at all. Zhenzhen’s expression, which had been looking at me like I was a clown, suddenly grew uncertain.

As the crowd started again, a little girl cried out excitedly from among them. “Mister Policeman, you must be a magician!”

I smiled, pleased. I walked over to the little girl, crouched down, and pat her head. I pulled out a piece of candy. “You’re right. Here’s your reward.”

An hour later, I was sitting in an office, kneading my right leg and smoking. The pickpocket was caught, but the owner ‘disappeared.’ This kind of thing happened every day, and in the end, of course, the pickpockets pat off their bums and walked out. This was one of the reasons behind the difficulty of improving public security.

“What is it? An old illness?” My colleague Zhu Yong came over to sympathize. Although his concern couldn’t ease away the physical pain of my leg, I still felt a bit comforted inside. I tossed him a cigarette and tried to put on a smile. “It’ll be fine after I rest a bit.”

He sat down next to me and lit his cigarette before complaining, “I don’t know what the guys on top are thinking. You solved tons of major cases when you were in the Investigation Bureau, and then they dropped you here to catch petty thieves. The tiger’s fallen to the land! (...and will get insulted by dogs)” (Note: *i.e.* a man who loses his position is subjected to indignity)

“Ah...” I sighed. When he put it like that, it really made me sentimental about the past. Two years ago, I was at the Criminal Investigation Bureau, and Xiao Xiang and I had both been awarded top rookie awards. If not for that strange case about the ancient sword serial killings, I wouldn’t have fallen so far. Not only did I nearly lose my right leg, Boss was even dropped into the Anti-Vice Department. And my old partner, Xiao Tong, was still unaccounted for. Still, if I was given the same chance again, I would still chase after that case. Until the rocks are revealed in the water (the truth is revealed), I won’t give up. This is my principle as a person.

After chatting a bit with Zhu Yong, Team Leader Wang Bin came over with a notice. “Ah Mu, your work’s finally paid off. When you get promoted, don’t forget about us guys here!”

“Coffin?! I’m still alive!” (Note: being ‘sent off in a coffin’ sounds like the word for ‘promotion’) I grabbed the notice from his hands and felt rather confused after reading it. It was a transfer notice, notifying me to report to the ‘Strange Investigations Team’ (SIT) immediately. But after working so many years with the

police, I'd never heard of such a department. I asked the guys if they'd heard of it.

“Who cares what department it is. It'll still be better than catching petty thieves here.” Zhu Yong pat my shoulder in encouragement.

He was right. There was no department more depressing than Theft Prevention. Although I felt very hesitant, I still got ready. Of course, Wang Bin wouldn't let me off that easily. I wouldn't be able to get out of a celebration dinner.

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The notice said that SIT's office was located within the Public Security building, but I'd been here for four or five years, and there was no such team, which means it must have been founded recently. I asked several of my seniors, but none of them knew about it. I roamed around the entire building and finally found an inconspicuous room near the toilets on the third floor with a sign that said 'Strange Cases Management Team.'

I pushed the door open and walked inside, finding that it wasn't as shabby as I'd been expecting. The place was pretty big and the lighting was adequate. There were five desks and rows of cabinets along two walls. Farther inside was the team leader's office. There was one male and three females inside already. A short girl and a tall girl had their backs to the door as they chat. The other girl was standing in a corner where the light didn't reach. The only male inside was sitting in front of a computer, tapping on the keyboard. He wasn't very tall, and he was rather thin, so much that he looked like a monkey. A monkey that hadn't bathed in days. I suddenly felt that he seemed a bit familiar, like a suspect I'd previously arrested.

“Wei Bolun? What are you doing here?” After a moment, I finally remembered that this monkey had been brought in for questioning regarding invasion of government computer systems. Unfortunately, there wasn't enough concrete evidence at the time, so he hadn't been prosecuted.

He raised his head to look at me, a helpless expression on his face. “Forced amnesty.”

“You two know each other?” The two females who'd been chatting walked

over. One of them was Zhenzhen, who had helped me catch a thief not so long ago.

The woman standing in the corner also walked over to us, so we all started to introduce ourselves. I was the first to speak up. "I'm Mu Shenyu and I joined the police force more than six years ago. I've been working in Theft Prevention. You can call me Ah Mu."

"I'm Li Zhenzhen and I graduated from the Armed Police Force Academy. I've been working with the Armed Police Force for two years." Intentional or otherwise, Zhenzhen glanced at me, as if making a point. To be honest I never thought there was anything that great about the police academy. After all, weren't they the sort who could only use their fists and not their brains!

"My real name's Wei Bolun, but my internet buddies call me Wei ge. If you all don't mind, you can call me Wei ge. After all, I'm a bit older than the rest of you. I used to be a top hacker, and I've done a lot of big things in the past. You police used to be completely helpless about catching me, but then some guys came and trampled into my house for no reason this morning and dragged me here. They said they were giving me amnesty or something, and if I didn't want to help, they'd lock me up for a few years first. What kind of world is this, ah..." Wei ge shook his head and sighed, as if he'd suffered major grievances.

"I'm Le Xiaomiao, but my friends like to call me Miao Miao. I just joined the police force and I don't know much about anything. Please take care of me." The one who just spoke was the short girl who'd been chatting with Zhenzhen earlier. She was probably about 156cm tall, with shoulder length hair and big, shining eyes. Her face looked like a doll's. I really had my suspicions that she'd mistaken this for the police academy and had walked through the wrong door. No matter how you looked at her, she looked just like a student! A high school one at that. Considering her height, unless she had connections, there was no way she'd have made it into the police force.

The only one left was a slim and mature beauty. The way I saw it, her maturity was most obviously shown in her chest area. From my years of handling cases, I was sure that she was at least a C cup, and D cup was also very possible. As I tried to deduce her cup size from her side profile, I noticed that she was hiding something behind her waist, on the right side. She had a coat covering it, so it

wasn't easy to discover. Her expression was very cold, and when she spoke, she seemed as cold as falling snow. "I'm Yuan Xueqing, from the Forensic Firearms Division..."

Just as Xueqing started speaking, someone pushed open the door to the room and walked in. He was a portly, middle-aged man. He walked over to us with a case file in his hands. "Looks like everyone's here. I'm Liang Zheng and I'll be your team leader from henceforth."

Liang Zheng, a name I hadn't heard in a long time. I should have known he was the one who brought me in. "Boss, aren't you living well in the Anti-Vice Department? What's going on with this Strange Investigations Team?"

"The director established SIT to specifically take care of the supernatural cases that happen in the province." Liang Zheng handed the case file over to me and said, "The medical university's in a big mess right now. Two dead, one injured. The director said that if we can't solve the case in a week, the team's going to be dismissed and everyone will be laid off."

Wei ge feebly raised his fist. "I'm not one of you guys!"

The boss' calm face suddenly tightened up and he glared at him. Like an angry tiger roaring, he shouted, "Cut your crap or I'll have you shot for espionage! You actually dared to hack into Hong Kong PD's system and even left a Trojan."

"I just wanted to see a few more body art pictures that Xi ge shot..." Wei ge gave an embarrassed laugh. But the boss was being ruthless. He pointed at him and yelled out, "Xueqing, I order you to immediately execute this pervert!"

"Yes, sir!" Xueqing pulled out a Type 54 pistol from her coat and aimed it between Wei ge's eyebrows.

Wei ge immediately raised his right hand and put up three fingers. "I swear on the name of the hacker, from today forward, I will exhaust all my abilities to assist in the investigations. If I've spoken any false words, let my body be covered in tiny dicks!" It was only a brief moment, but his face was already covered in sweat.

"Chief, confirming the order to kill?" Xueqing stared at Wei ge, loading her gun without hesitation. Her tone was indifferent and emotionless, as if there was just

a practice target in front of her.

“Let him live a few more days. If he dares to make a mess, you can turn him into a eunuch.” Boss glared ferociously at Wei ge, who couldn’t help but tremble.

“Yes, sir!” Xueqing glanced at Wei ge’s lower body and then skillfully unloaded the bullets. She replaced the gun into her coat, as if nothing had happened just now. The expression on her face was still cold. Wei ge covered his legs with his hands, afraid the other party would suddenly shoot at his crotch.

“What do you think about this case?” Boss asked me after taking care of Wei ge.

I skimmed over the case file. It was a murder case involving a ghost legend, but from the evidence, it was unlikely to be the work of a ghost. “I don’t think it’s really a ghost. The victim of the alleged ghost attack died from a heart attack, from being scared to death. But the report states that there were obvious physical wounds.”

“Mm, your analysis seems reasonable. I don’t care whether the murderer is a person or a ghost, but we’ve got to solve the case within a week. Go to the hospital with Zhenzhen to find out more about the situation from the surviving victim. Report to me if you find out anything.” When the boss finished speaking, he left the office.

Zhenzhen looked me over with suspicious eyes. I helplessly shrugged. “Let’s go. There’ll be time to look at (this) handsome guy later.”

Zhenzhen rolled her eyes. “Tch, you, handsome? You might want to take another look in the toilet.” (Note: This is a mocking phrase, said to someone you don’t believe to be attractive. Not sure if this explanation I saw was a joke or not, but it’s spoken with the intent that ‘(you think) you’re so handsome, you’d be able to see your own beauty in the reflection of your urine.’)

Note: [Female ghost](#) on Wiki

– Strange Investigations Team –

Chapter 2 (1/2)

– Strange Investigations Team –

Volume 1 2 Room 106 (Part 1)

In a hospital room filled with the scent of disinfectant, a patient with his entire arm bandaged up was lying on a bed. His name was Yu Zhen and he was a second year medical student, the only survivor of the medical university's female ghost case. He told me and Zhenzhen about the terrifying events that led to the present situation. After he spoke a bit, his entire body started to tremble uncontrollably. These events might have been the most terrifying thing he'd ever experienced—

That day, my parents sent over some money, so I said I'd treat Fatty and Four Eyes to some drinks. We ran into two decent looking chicks, and we were going to get them drunk, but who'd have expected them to hold their liquor so well? Not only didn't we get them drunk, we wasted our time for getting back to the dorm.

The old man in the security room is pretty contemptible. He'd let us inside without saying a word, but the next day he'd report us to the head teacher. We already suffered multiple times because of him during our first year, so this time, we decided to climb over the back wall.

Heading to the dorm from the back wall means we had to pass through a grove of camphor trees. It's extremely dark there. We'd heard that there was a female ghost that roamed about there, but that was just a legend, so we didn't pay much attention to it. Who'd have thought that we'd really meet her.

After we walked into the woods, I felt something wasn't quite right. It felt colder than usual. At the time, I was thinking that it might have been because we'd drunk too much, so I let it go. I just wanted to get back to the dorm and sleep. But not long after we walked into the woods, we heard the faint sound of

a woman singing. It sounded like a nursery rhyme or something. I was terrified and my head went numb. If I were by myself, I'd definitely have just run. Even though it was the first time I heard it, it's still very clear in my mind.

.....

Hiss, hiss, hiss, the white snake immortal
With unlimited powers, a thousand years old
Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, the chilling wind blows
A fresh, tasty heart into its belly goes
Wheeze, wheeze, wheeze, paying no heed
In the immortal tomb, a hundred years of sleep
Rumble, rumble, rumble, a guest is here
Instead of bringing gifts, they're ready to sear you

.....

The song sounded both near and far. It was faint and secretive. I couldn't tell which direction it was coming from, but the longer I heard it, the more frightening it was. Fatty was braver, more solid too. So he walked in front. Me and Four Eyes felt a little more at ease, and the three of us ran back to the dorm. But before we could run very far, we saw that female ghost...

At first, we thought it was just someone with a white gown, playing a joke on us. Because the trees in the grove grew thickly, the moon was obscured and we couldn't see well. We just saw a white figure in front of us. By the time we realized she was a white robed ghost carrying a baby, she'd already charged at us. We cried out in terror and ran as fast as we could.

Fatty was fat, so he ran slower. He was the first to get caught by the female ghost. I heard his tragic screams, calling out for help. I even imagined that he was on the ground, being ripped apart by the female ghost, his heart being pulled out. But I was really just too scared. I didn't even dare to turn back, and I just kept running through the woods.

Four Eyes was originally in front of me. Maybe he couldn't see well so he tripped. If I had helped pull him back up then, maybe he wouldn't have died...

(At this point, Yu Zhen suddenly stopped shaking. Instead, tears poured out from his eyes. Perhaps his cowardly act of leaving behind his friend made him

feel guilty. And perhaps this guilt would torture him for the rest of his life.)

As I ran out of the forest, a blood chilling shriek came from behind, and then my arm was grabbed by a blood covered ghost. Although the female ghost's fingers were long and elegant, she had a death grip on my arm as if her hands were pliers. Her dagger-like nails dug into my skin, and blood gushed out onto my clothes. I was so scared I nearly fainted. Being that close to a female ghost was that kind of terrifying. Even though I only caught a glimpse, I can still remember that horrifying image— A blood red right eye, visible beneath the messy hair covering most of her face. Her lips were raised up, revealing a secretive smile. Her white clothes were stained with bright blood, like roses in the snow, emitting a stifling aura.

I don't know where my courage came from, but I suddenly tried to kick her foot. Only, my aim was off and I didn't hit her. Instead, the baby in her arms went flying through the air. That baby was probably only three months old at most. It wasn't wearing any clothes, its skin white as snow. When it went flying, it didn't even cry. It was probably dead. But she was very concerned about him and with a scream, she rushed after him. I figured she would let go of me, so I started running out of the woods as fast as I could. When I got out, I kept running until I got back to the school.

That's when I realized that my shirt sleeve had been torn and my entire arm was covered in blood. I thought the female ghost had only dug into my skin a little, but when I looked more carefully, I saw that all the skin had been pulled off...

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After listening to Yu Zhen's account, I organized my thoughts and picked out the main points:

First, the female ghost was able to scrape off all the skin on his arm. Aside from proving that her wrist was extremely strong, it also confirmed my previous guess— She used a physical body and wasn't some mist-like ghost. Which also meant that she was likely a living person, or at the least, something like a zombie.

Second, the 'baby' that Yu Zhen sent flying is very possibly the key to this case.

Suppose the female ghost was a living person. That would mean she either suffered from a severe mental illness, or she was possessed by the soul of a dead baby. I'm more inclined to believe in the former as the existence of ghosts is difficult to believe.

Something else to note is the nursery rhyme that the female ghost sang. The words were very strange and the meaning wasn't immediately clear. Perhaps this nursery rhyme didn't have any special meaning, but I still suspect that it's somehow related to the case at hand.

After Zhenzhen and I left the patient room, we went to find the resident physician to better understand the student's ailment. His physician was the vice president of the hospital, so it seemed the hospital placed great importance on his condition. The vice president flipped through his charts and said, "His condition is currently stable. We haven't found any signs of poison..."

"Poison? Why would he be poisoned?" Zhenzhen asked in confusion.

"Mm..." The vice president hesitated. "Perhaps you should make a trip over to the forensics investigators."

The Ministry of Public Security Forensics Department, a place I hadn't set foot in for two years. And prior to that, it was was a place I frequented. As we walked down the hall, I greeted a few old friends, and then I led Zhenzhen into the office. A wretched man in a white lab coat sat in front of the computer, organizing his files. When he saw me, he immediately put down his work and walked over towards me with open arms, wanting to give me a lively hug. "Hi, Old Mu! What wind blew you this way? Are you back in the Criminal Investigation Bureau (CIB)? Should we celebrate? Take me out for a few drinks!"

I immediately jumped back. "Old Ye, please remember that your field is a disgusting line of work. Don't cover me with the smell of corpses as well."

Ignoring my taunt, his eyes landed on Zhenzhen who was standing next to me. He extended his arms to shake hands. "I'm Forensic Investigator Ye Liunian. You must be Ah Mu's partner!"

Zhenzhen wasn't a total idiot, and she quickly hid her hands behind her back as she bowed her head forward. "Hello, Dr. Ye! I'm Li Zhenzhen. Please take care of me."

Liunian let out a helpless laugh and snapped at me, "What do you want?"

I pinched my nose and said, "Rubbish. Why else would I need you other than to see a dead body?! Hurry up, I can't stand your smelly corpse scent."

"Stinking Mu, you bastard, cursing me out when you see me. See if I won't mess you up..." Liunian, this guy. Although he was a bit strange, his IQ wasn't low. When I mentioned the corpse smell on him, he quickly walked towards me for a hug, and he even pursed his lips for a kiss. Oh God, seems like I'm going to have to bathe in rice water tonight, or this corpse smell won't disappear.

Zhenzhen looked at us with disgust. She might have even thought we were gay.

After the jokes, Liunian brought the two of us to the dissection room that reeked of formaldehyde. He pulled over two corpses covered in white sheets, and then said attentively to Zhenzhen, "It's your first time, right? Make sure to ready yourself!" Then he pulled off a white sheet.

Under the sheet was a thin body, likely the one Yu Zhen called Four Eyes. His fists were clenched tightly and there were several long wounds on his right arm with some dark blood that had oozed out. There were no signs of livor mortis. The muscles on his face were distorted, his complexion was dark, and his lips were black like ink. His eyes protruded slightly, as if he'd died with grievances. It was horrifying to say the least. If you saw that corpse in the middle of the night without any preparation, you might even die of fright.

When Zhenzhen saw the pair of eyes, she frowned. Liunian picked up the report, and with a serious expression, he read out, "The diseased, Luo Weiguang, 20 years old. Right arm shows four scratches consistent with being grabbed. Bite mark on the right side of his neck. No other obvious signs of trauma. Cause of death is suspected to be poisoning."

"Do you know what the poison was?"

Liunian scratched his head. "I tested it, and it's an unknown alkaloid substance. The toxicity level was extremely high, several times more toxic than that of a poison dart frog."

From what I knew, the poison dart frog was the most poisonous animal in the

world. Less than 5 cm in length, its poison could kill 20 thousand rats, and they would die almost instantly. If this was more poisonous than a poison dart frog, there was likely only one answer. “It can’t be witch poison?!”

“I wouldn’t be able to tell you that, and I can’t write that on the documentation. What I can tell you is that the venom was injected via the neck of the diseased. A conservative estimate would be that the poison killed him within a minute, but more realistically, the process probably only lasted a few seconds. And his brain might have died the very moment the venom was injected.” Even Liunian, who had inspected countless corpses, couldn’t help shivering as he spoke.

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Because of Liunian’s explanation, I was even more convinced that this was likely witch poison. Although I don’t think that the killer was a ghost, if her teeth or saliva contained extremely toxic poison, would she still be considered human? Perhaps I should presume that the killer was a zombie.

“Look at the diseased’s arm.” Liunian pointed at the scratches on the diseased’s arm and they were very strange. There were only four scratches, and the space between the second and third was significantly larger than than between the others. “The scratches on the other body are the same. Since the scratches appear this way, the killer’s right hand probably didn’t have a middle finger.”

“Was this one poisoned too?” I pointed at the corpse that was still covered up.

“No, but the method of death is even more frightening...” Liunian covered up Four Eyes’ body with the white cloth and then uncovered the other body. Fatty. The skin color of the corpse was normal, and the livor mortis on his chest and abdomen suggested that he’d died lying down. His lips were pale and his eyes were closed. There were multiple scratches on his arms, shoulders, and neck, but no signs of bite marks. Looking over his body, there didn’t appear to be any fatal wounds, so I wondered what Liunian meant when he said ‘more frightening.’

“Doesn’t seem like he was poisoned, and there are no fatal wounds, so what was the cause of death?”

“You’ll know when you see the back. Help me out, I can’t flip him on my own.”

Liunian signaled for me to put on a pair of gloves. Although I wasn't excited about the prospect, I helped him flip over the body. This fatty didn't just look heavy. He was probably more than 80kg, and the two of us exerted quite a bit of effort to turn him.

When we'd nearly turned the body over, Liunian made it a note to tell Zhenzhen, "Hey Beautiful, make sure you ready yourself!"

"Oh," Zhenzhen responded, without much heed to Liunian's warning. And then when we got the body flipped over, with just a glance, she ran over to the garbage can to vomit.

On the back of the corpse, there was a palm sized hole. It was empty and looked like a bottomless pit. The endless depth made a person indescribably afraid.

"The heart is gone?" I couldn't help frowning.

Liunian picked up the other report and read out loud, "The diseased, Liu Dahai. Thirty six scratches on his body. Cause of death was removal of his heart. The wound on his back is relatively flat. Although it may seem incredible, the killer must have dug it out while he was alive. However... No heart tissue was discovered on the scene."

"Do you think it was eaten?!" My words caused Zhenzhen to vomit even more intensely.

After parting with Liunian, I jokingly asked Zhenzhen, "You must have vomited all the contents of your stomach. Do you want to eat something first? There's a shop nearby that's famous for its spicy duck hearts."

Zhenzhen's face contorted in disgust, as if she wanted to vomit again, and then she violently kicked my bottom. "If you dare say it again, I'll show you what being a mixed martial arts champion means."

I pat away the footprints on my pants and shrugged. "Alright, let's go then. We'll investigate at the medical university..."

Since the boss and the university's President Lu were friends, we first stopped in to his office, but he happened to just have gone out. Perhaps he was troubled by all the stories about the female ghost holding a baby! If we couldn't meet the

president, then the only thing left to do was check out the crime scene.

The crime scene was a very dark camphor wood. Our colleagues at the CIB had already been by, and all the evidence at the scene was collected already. What couldn't be taken away would have been recorded. We made a few rounds around the place, but other than the lush camphor trees and dense foliage that blocked out the sun during the day, we didn't find anything new. Then I had the thought to question some people at the dorm.

– Strange Investigations Team –

Chapter 2 (2/2)

– Strange Investigations Team –

Volume 1 2 Room 106 (Part 2)

The camphor wood was right behind the female dorms but quite a ways away from the male dorms. As we exited the woods, I struck up a conversation with a passing female student. “Pretty girl, can we talk for a bit? Aiya...”

Zhenzhen kicked me from behind and pushed me to the side. She walked forward and roughly grabbed onto the female student’s shoulders. She showed her ID and called out, “Police! What’s your name?”

The student’s face was covered in panic. “M-my name is Yaxian... Zhao Yaxian. I haven’t committed any crimes. Why are you grabbing me?”

“You don’t need to tell me whether or not you’ve committed a crime! I came to ask you, tell me everything you know about the murder case from the past few days!” Zhenzhen’s attitude was very forceful, likely a habit from her days in the Armed Police. After all, the men and women they dealt with on a daily basis probably weren’t a devout bunch.

“I don’t know anything!” Yaxian looked like she was going to cry.

“Look at you, scaring the poor girl. Let me handle this!” I couldn’t stand watching Zhenzhen’s method of work, so I pushed her hand away from Yaxian. Of course, it was a very ‘gentle’ push because I didn’t want to get kicked again.

Naturally, you treated criminals with more force, but you had to be polite and courteous with civilians. When speaking with a gentle and cute girl, you had to be more tender. “Don’t be afraid, I’m not here to take you away. I just wanted to ask a few things... Ah, there’s some chocolate growing on your head...” I pulled out a piece of chocolate and handed it to her. Her hands were very smooth.

“So you were a magician, haha!” Yaxian’s emotions calmed. I told her a few

jokes to get her laughing. Zhenzhen scoffed and slipped off to the side, muttering to herself. She thought I couldn't hear her, but my ears were long enough to catch her saying, "Tch, just knows how to trick girls."

After we spoke a bit, I started to question her. "Yaxian, can you tell me if anything else out of the ordinary happened the night of the murder?"

"I don't know if this counts..." Yaxian hesitated before telling me about a strange occurrence at the female dorms that night—

Room 106 on the first floor of the female dorms had been vacant for a long time. It was said that a girl had died in there and that it was haunted, so no one dared to live in that room.

When I first got to the school, I heard about it, but since I hadn't seen anything with my own eyes so I was a bit skeptical. After I moved into room 105 across the hall, I often heard footsteps in the corridor in the middle of the night.

In the beginning, I used to think that someone was just using the restroom, but after I kept hearing it, it didn't seem quite normal. The restroom is located at the head of the corridor, but the footsteps always started at the main entrance and then disappeared when they got to room 106. Then, from room 106, they would head back to the entrance.

I was chatting with one of my seniors and then this topic came up. She told me that there used to be a girl who lived in room 108. Once, she wanted to go to the restroom in the middle of the night. When she opened the door, she heard the sound of footsteps, so she popped her head out the door to take a look. Who would have guessed that what she saw was a female ghost with white clothes and disheveled hair, carrying a bag of things from the main entrance. She was so scared she nearly wet her pants. She immediately closed her door and got back into bed. The next day she moved out of the dorms to an apartment off campus.

"Did you hear it on the day of the murders as well?" I asked after listening to Yaxian's account.

Yaxian nodded. "Mm, usually, I can hear it every night. My bed is against the wall by the door so I can hear it very carefully. I just never had the guts to open the door and take a look. Actually, everyone in the dorm knows about it. No one on the first floor ever dares to use the restroom in the middle of the night.

“Can you take me to see your residence supervisor?”

“Of course I can take you, but the supervisor’s pretty strict. You’ll have to be careful!” Yaxian grabbed my arm affectionately and led us to the female dorm. She told me that the supervisor was a Ms. Yu, and she told me about how she always gave the girls a hard time. Zhenzhen followed behind us in a bad mood.

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Yaxian didn’t dare to provoke Supervisor Yu, so after she brought us to the front, she left. Inside was a 50 year old woman sitting there, dozing off. I called to her and woke her up. After explaining our purpose for coming, I asked to be taken to room 106 to investigate.

“That’s a storage room, and it’s been locked for a long time. No one goes in or out of it. What’s there to investigate about it? But if you want to see, follow me.” Supervisor Yu was obviously unhappy about being woken from her slumber, an angry look on her face as she led them to the room.

Although Supervisor Yu said that room 106 had been locked a long time ago, she didn’t have a hard time opening the door at all. The door was unlocked in an instant. Just as she’d said, the room was being used as a storage room. Other than being filled with boxes of junk, there was nothing particular about the room. Perhaps the most interesting thing was that although the floors were a bit dirty, there wasn’t much dust. The boxes of things, however, were very clearly covered in a layer of dust.

Zhenzhen opened up a few boxes and found that they were full of old sports equipment. She asked, “Why isn’t this stuff stored in the gym?”

“There’s no space in the gym, and no one dares to live here anyway.” Maybe because she was used to treating the students fiercely, but Supervisor Yu didn’t look at Zhenzhen pleasantly either.

“Why?” Zhenzhen’s attitude was also pretty poor.

“Why? Because someone died here!” Supervisor Yu answered cynically. “Ten years ago, a female student died here. After that, people said the place was haunted and no one dared to live here. All we could use it for was storage.”

Zhenzhen shivered and looked around. “Is this place really haunted?”

“There are no such things as ghosts. Tons of cowards though. I’ve been the supervisor here for ten years and I haven’t even seen the shadow of a ghost.” Supervisor Yu ridiculed. Zhenzhen’s face reddened in embarrassment. (Note: Though I’ll probably miss a bunch later— wordplay alert; a word for word translation of ‘cowards’ would be ‘cowardly ghosts’)

“Some students say that they hear strange sounds in the middle of the night. Do you know about this?” I asked.

“Don’t believe in their nonsense. After lights out, I check several times before going to sleep. I’ve never heard any strange sounds before.” Supervisor Yu’s tone was very firm, and I suspected that she was an atheist.

There was nothing particular in the room, but the windows caught my attention. I walked over to them and tried to open them, but even after exerting a lot of strength, they wouldn’t budge. The window seemed to have been broken by someone before, with a great amount of force. But could a woman be that strong?

Supervisor Yu glanced over at me. “The window’s been broken a long time. I don’t know how many years it’s been since it was opened.”

It was a sliding window with an aluminum frame. Through the dust and grime-covered window, you could just barely see the woods where the murders took place. Although the fact that the window faced the woods couldn’t prove anything. If the window could be opened, then this room would be rather suspect.

I stared at the window and lit a cigarette. Supervisor Yu quickly became unhappy with me. “Mr. Police Officer, please don’t smoke here. This is a storage room after all. If a fire starts, who will take responsibility?!”

I shrugged and waved at Zhenzhen. “I’m going out for a smoke.”

Just as I stepped out into the corridor, I saw Yaxian wave at me from room 105. I walked inside and was surrounded by her and her roommates. Actually, I was getting quite the welcome!

After I spoke with Yaxian a bit, we started playing cards. Of course, I also asked if she’d heard any more news. One of the other girls spoke up that Uncle Liu at

the guard room would know the most about the case, and she suggested that I have a chat with him.

“You’re playing hooky! Go and die!” While we were playing happily, Zhenzhen charged in unexpectedly and kicked me over. The frightened girls huddled together.

“Who’s playing hooky? I’m working here!” I pulled myself up and cleared off the dust on my clothes.

“Playing cards is working?” Zhenzhen’s big eyes were filled with anger as she gave me a death glare, as if I’d murdered her whole family or something.

“Since you weren’t playing cards, did you find any leads? If not, just stay on the sidelines and don’t interrupt my work. Go, go, go...” In order to keep myself out of harm’s way, I quickly pushed Zhenzhen out of the room and then continued playing cards. Her fists were pretty good, but when it came to words, she was way behind me.

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After about an hour of playing cards, Yaxian and her roommates had to head to class, so I parted with them reluctantly. Just as I exited the dorm, Zhenzhen appeared out of nowhere and grabbed onto my collar. She asked peculiarly, “You played cards for half the day. Did you find any leads? If not, don’t count on me staying polite!”

I pushed her hand away. “Do you know what it means to run before you can walk? If you want some clues, follow me!”

“We’ll see what kind of game you’re playing,” she huffed as she followed along behind me.

I led Zhenzhen to the guard room at the main entrance of the school. Inside was an old man playing chess by himself. Uncle Liu. After I looked over his chess game, I said, “Cannon, horizontal two to six.”

Uncle Liu lifted his head and looked at me. Then he moved the piece according to my directive and thought for another moment. “Chariot, forward one to three.”

“Horse, forward six to eight.” I sat down in the chair opposite him and started

playing chess.

“General, horizontal four to five.”

“Horse, back eight to seven.”

“Cannon, back two to one.”

.....

The two of us went back and forth like this for an hour before the game finally ended in a tie. I laughed and said, “Uncle Liu, you’re really good. It’s been a long time since I’ve come across an expert like you.”

Uncle Liu wanted to continue, “Kid, you’re not bad yourself. Want to have another match?”

I checked my watch and then looked over at the impatiently waiting Zhenzhen. I shrugged helplessly, “I’d really like to, but I still have some things to take care of...” I showed him my ID and told him that we were currently investigating the female ghost murder case, but we didn’t have any leads.

“Instead of running around outside, why don’t you just ask me? I’ve been a security guard here for more than thirty years. There’s nothing I don’t know about. Come on then, I’ll tell you about the female ghost as we play another match.” Uncle Liu seemed to be afraid that I wouldn’t agree. He quickly set up the game board and started telling me about the female ghost—

We have to start ten years ago. Back then, there was this girl living in room 106. One night before graduation, she suddenly went mad and killed her roommate. She even pulled out her heart and ate it.

When I went to take a look at the room the day after, the floor was covered in a puddle of blood. It was terrifying. But there was a rather curious thing. That girl died so horrifically, so it stands to reason that she must have screamed loudly. But none of the girls in the neighboring rooms heard any cries for help that night. They didn’t even hear any arguments or sounds of quarreling. At the time, there were also two other girls who lived in that room. They both said they’d gone to sleep early and didn’t know anything. It seemed like the girl who died had willingly let herself get killed.

In order to maintain the school's reputation, the school board buried this matter. I heard that they'd paid off the dead girl's parents. And girl who went mad was sent off to a mental institution. From then on, no one dared to live in room 106.

About two or three months later, I recall the new semester starting around then, a pair of lovers secretly sneaked out to the camphor woods behind the dorms. After that, no one ever saw them again. At the start, everyone laughed it off and said they'd run off to elope. But a few days later, there was a foul smell in the female dormitory. That's when they found the lovers' corpses. Their deaths were terrifying. The boy's face was black. But it was even worse for the girl. Her heart had been pulled out.

Everyone grew scared and anxious because they never found the murderer. Moreover, it was just like the case with the girl from room 106. The girls' hearts had been pulled out of their chests. That's why people started saying that the female ghost's spirit hadn't left, that she came out to haunt and attack people.

After that, there were a few more deaths that occurred in the woods. The causes of death were nearly the same. If there was just one person, their heart was pulled out. If there was more than one person, the others faces all turned black. There were two or three that made it out alive, and they all said that the killer was a female ghost holding a baby.

I'm not sure if it's just a coincidence or not, but every time it happened, there was a full moon. As the story got passed around, people would add their own details to make it more frightening. After that, the school couldn't do anything except create a rule that students couldn't go out to the camphor grove at night. The last time there was a case like this was probably five or six years ago. Most of the new students don't know about it, and they think that it's just a legend. Who'd have thought it would happen again...

After more than two hours, the chess game ended with a tie once more.

"Do you know the names of those girls who lived in room 106?" I handed Uncle Liu a cigarette and lit it for him.

"There are at least ten thousand students in this school. How could I remember that. Moreover, it's been ten years. Mm..." Uncle Liu let out a puff of

smoke. “Take a walk around the library. They should have the student files in the archives, but it might be troublesome to find.”

“Then I’ll take a look in the library. When I have time, I’ll come back for a game of chess.” I said my goodbyes and then motioned to Zhenzhen, who was probably growing moss by now, to head out.

Uncle Liu waved us off reluctantly. “Remember to come back when you’re free. I’ll be here every day.”

The sun was going to get off work soon, but we wouldn’t be able to get off work in such a timely fashion. In order to solve the case by our deadline, we couldn’t delay. We quickly headed over to the library.

– Strange Investigations Team –

Chapter 3

– Strange Investigations Team –

Volume 1

3 Another Missing Heart

From the information we gathered, the medical university's female ghost case was likely connected to the murder in room 106 ten years ago. And so we decided to head to the library to lookup the files for the female students back then and continue our investigation.

Most university campuses had a library, and hidden in each one was a secret that most people didn't know about. Of course, digging into this secret wasn't an easy task, otherwise it wouldn't be a secret.

When we arrived at the library, there weren't many people present. In the huge space, there were only a few people. Rather than quiet, it felt more like it was deserted. It seemed that students nowadays didn't really spend their time on studying. The library administrator seemed to have disappeared somewhere as well. After asking a few students, it seemed she'd gone to eat.

Student records were probably locked in the archives. If the administrator wasn't present, staying here would be a waste of time. And they couldn't just 'smash into the door' as Zhenzhen suggested.

In our rush to catch the killer, we hadn't even eaten lunch. Now our stomachs were grumbling. Since staying here would just be a waste of time, why not go out for a meal first. So I made the suggestion, "Why don't we go out to eat first?"

As soon as I mentioned eating, Zhenzhen seemed to have recalled those nauseating corpses from the dissection room, unable to find even the slightest bit of an appetite. "You go ahead. Just bring me back a few plain buns."

"How can you just eat plain buns?!" I suddenly thought of a good place to go.

“I heard Yaxian mention that the restaurant by the school gate is pretty good, especially their pig’s heart soup. Once you eat it, you’ll get addicted. Want to try it out...”

“Go to hell!” Zhenzhen sent me flying with a kick.

I arrived at the restaurant Yaxian mentioned, and it was filled with people. They were pretty much all students, boys and girls alike, gathered in small groups. With some difficulty, I finally found a seat. After I ordered two side dishes and a serving of pig’s heart soup, I sat quietly and listened to the students chattering around me. The students mostly talked about games, lewd jokes, and their ‘evil’ teacher. Of course, the thing they talked about most was relationships. Some of the older students also talked about job interviews and internships. Although most of it was useless information, occasionally, I would hear something that might help us...

“Xiao Ma, do you think Professor Xiao sells the hearts? The dissection room is full of all sorts of specimens. The only thing missing is hearts.” The speaker was a boy with glasses at the next table.

Xiao Ma’s face was full of disdain. “Wow, you just figured it out? I heard one of the seniors say that after one of their dissection classes, someone saw him secretly walk out with the hearts!”

A student with longish hair asked, “No way. Who did you hear that from? What’s the point of taking the hearts away? The bodies were stored in the freezers for quite awhile, so they can’t be used for transplants. Who would buy them?!”

The guy with the glasses quipped, “How would I know? Maybe he sells them to some perverted collectors!”

Xiao Ma joked, “I think he just takes them home to stew, haha!”

A girl from another table interrupted them, “Stop being so disgusting! We’re all trying to eat here!”

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As I drank my pig’s heart soup, I wondered about the students’ conversation. Why did this Professor Xiao take away the corpses’ hearts? For reason, corpses

used for dissection classes probably wouldn't be preserved with too much care, so they wouldn't be able to be sold in the organ trade. If it was to make items for collectors, wouldn't eyes be better? Why did he choose hearts? Perhaps I ought to look into this Professor Xiao. Every time the female ghost killed, she took away a heart. Maybe there was some connection between these two.

Just as I was about to strike up a conversation with the kid called Xiao Ma, an urgent cry came from outside, "The library's on fire!"

Zhenzhen was still in the library, so I had to hurry over to check on her. I called for the bill and quickly dropped the money on the table before running out. As I headed out the door, I seemed to have heard a female voice inside calling out, "Supervisor, check please..."

The fire in the library was burning fiercely. When I arrived, the sky was lit up in a fiery red. After some searching, I finally found Zhenzhen among a crowd of people, a decent amount of her hair burnt off. I asked her what happened.

"I'm not sure how to say it. Not long after you left..." With a frightened voice, Zhenzhen recounted the events that happened after I'd left—

Not long after you left, the library administrator, Pan Qiuxia, returned. I told her that I wanted to find the files of some girls who lived in the dorm ten years ago, and she told me that the files were in the archives room. But since I only knew when the girls were at the school and I didn't know their names, it would probably take awhile to find the files. She brought me to the archives room and helped me search.

The number of files in the archives room wasn't an ordinary amount. The room was more than 100 sqm with twenty shelves. Each shelf had three layers. Looking at it all already made me a bit dizzy. Thankfully I had the administrator's help, otherwise I wouldn't have even known where to start. She said that since we didn't have the student's names, heading directly into the files wasn't a good idea. She suggested we start with the dorm logs. Since no one lived in room 106 after the incident, we'd find their names as the last occupants of the room.

The dorm records were located at the shelf in the very back. After searching a bit, we found the records from ten years ago. But when I flipped through the logs, they somehow caught fire. We wanted to put out the fire, but we were

unable to, so the whole archive room went into flames...

“Ah...” I sighed. “I’ve seen a lot of idiots, but there haven’t been that many who were as dumb as you!”

“You can’t put all the blame on me. Who knew that the records would start burning for no reason? And all the white smoke left me unable to even open my eyes. Otherwise, it wouldn’t have turned out this badly.” Zhenzhen was trembling as she asked nervously, “Do you think it was that female ghost causing trouble and preventing us from investigating?”

I found a problem with what Zhenzhen told me. “Are you sure there was white smoke coming from the records?”

“Mm,” she nodded her head. “So much that I couldn’t open my eyes.”

“How did the files catch fire in the first place? Tell me in detail.”

“I just flipped open the log book and turned to the records for room 106, and then my fingers started feeling warm. I think I saw some light too. And then the white smoke came out. Scared, I dropped the book onto the ground. Who would have expected the book to just catch on fire then? The nearby records caught on fire too. Because of the debris, the fire got out of control. I tried stomping out the fires and the administrator went to fetch fire extinguishers, but they were all broken. We couldn’t use any of them.” Zhenzhen showed me her burned fingers.

“Mm, it definitely wasn’t the female ghost intervening...” Perhaps this case was hiding even more unknown secrets.

The next morning, I walked into the SIT office and saw Zhenzhen with a new haircut chatting with Miao Miao.

“Why did you cut your hair? Bad breakup?” Miao Miao circled Zhenzhen curiously.

Wei ge, who’d been typing quickly on his keyboard, suddenly stopped and stretched his neck out to eavesdrop.

“There aren’t even any guys after me, how can there be a breakup!” Zhenzhen retold the story of the fire at the library, explaining that she didn’t have a choice with the haircut. When the girls continued on with their insignificant gossip, Wei

ge yawned and went back to his keyboard.

“Good morning!” I greeted everyone. Then I feigned surprise towards Zhenzhen, “Wow, your new haircut isn’t bad!”

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“Good morning? Take a look at what time it is.” She rolled her eyes at me.

I checked my watch. “I’m only twenty minutes late. That’s early enough. Better than Xueqing...”

“Someone calling me?” Xueqing appeared behind me, like a ghost, scaring the living daylight out of me.

“She got here really early, even before us,” Wei ge said as he yawned again.

“Comrades, good work!” I saluted before quickly changing the topic. I asked Miao Miao, “Did you find the files about the case from ten years ago?”

Miao Miao laughed apologetically. “There are so many cases, how can I find it by myself? And it’s so boring. After an hour and a half, I started getting sleepy. Thankfully Xueqing jie helped me...”

“Wah, so the cold Xueqing jiejie was actually quite the warm-hearted model citizen! Applause!” I clapped, a mischievous smile on my face.

Xueqing looked at me calmly, her eyes light, as if not feeling anything. She spoke indifferently, “There was no record of the case, which means it probably wasn’t formally filed.” She paused and then added, “I’m a year younger than you. You can just call me by my name, no need to add the jiejie.”

Whether they were a beautiful woman in their early 20s or an old white-haired woman, age was a very important number. If you guessed they were younger, there was no harm. If you guess older, you might bring an unexpected calamity. Xueqing, the ice beauty, was no exception. In the future, I’d have to remember to be more cautious with my words. One wrong word, and I might end up more wronged than Dou E. (Note: see [The Injustice to Dou E](#) for more)

“No way! That’s too outrageous! Lives were lost and they didn’t file for an official investigation?” Zhenzhen was shocked.

Zhenzhen had never worked in the CIB, so she didn’t understand that this was

a very normal occurrence. I gave her a quick catch up lesson. “The less you do, the less you do wrong. Avoiding something entirely to avoid the wrong is the motto for a lot of people. For a case like this, it wouldn’t be surprising if the family of the diseased wanted to keep things quiet. After all, the killer had a serious mental condition, so the court will use some discretion. The sentencing wouldn’t have been too harsh.” Then I asked Wei ge, “Did you come out empty-handed as well?”

“Give me another fifteen minutes.” Wei ge yawned and continued, “This kind of physical labor doesn’t require any skill at all. So boring.”

“Then I’ll give my report to the boss first and come back.” Zhenzhen and I headed to the team leader’s office.

In the team leader’s office, Boss was staring at the fluorescent computer screen. He didn’t look away when we entered. I casually sat down and lit a cigarette, which was quickly extinguished by Zhenzhen. I really missed my days of partnering with Xiao Xiang. He never put out my cigarettes, and when I didn’t have any on me, he’d cover me. I wonder how he’s doing now. Perhaps he’d already left this world... Let’s hope he was still alive though, even if it was already two years since there’d been any news about him.

After reminiscing about my old partner, it was time to get back to business. I reported the results of yesterday’s investigations to the boss and started giving my opinion, “This case is more complicated than I’d originally thought. All that can be certain of right now is that the female ghost with a baby is just a pretense. Perhaps there’s someone who’s using the murder case from ten years ago to cover up an unspeakable secret.”

“How can you be so sure?” Boss’ eyes were still fixed to the computer screen and his eyes were very steady, as if he hadn’t even heard the content of my report.

I gently lifted up Zhenzhen’s burnt fingers and explained, “The log book catching fire wasn’t a ghost causing trouble. Rather, someone had coated the page with white phosphorous. Under normal circumstances, there would be nothing strange with the log book, but once you flip to the page coated in white phosphorous, a person’s body temperature coupled with the heat generated

from the friction of turning the pages would be enough to ignite it.”

Zhenzhen looked at her fingers and then came to a realization. “You mean that someone’s pretending to be a female ghost to murder people, and they also messed with the log books? But what would their motive be?”

Sitting in the chair, I stretched out my limbs. “I’m not sure. If it was just to keep the students away from the woods, there wouldn’t be a need to kill, because that would attract the attention of the police. And we didn’t find anything in the forest either.”

Boss kept staring at his screen, with no intention of speaking. Instead, Zhenzhen asked anxiously, “So what are we supposed to investigate now?”

That was simple. “Since they want to destroy the files of the people who lived in room 106, we’ll definitely be able to find some clues with the four girls who lived there.”

She seemed to have run into some trouble comprehending, as she furrowed her brows. “The archives room was burnt down. How are we supposed to find the four girls?!”

“We’ll have to see how good Wei ge’s skills are.” I lit another cigarette, and this time she didn’t put it out.

“Mm, we’ll continue investigating in this direction. Xueqing and Xiao Miao will check out Professor Xiao. Let me know if you find anything.” The boss’ tone probably made Zhenzhen feel that he wasn’t paying attention. As we were leaving, she tried getting a glimpse of his screen.

“How can the team leader be looking up stocks this early in the morning!” she asked when we left his office.

“Stocks are his specialty. If you have the money, you should play with him,” I joked.

Face full of disdain, she said, “I’m not playing in the stock market. It’s just the same as gambling.”

“Of course they’re not the same. Gambling is illegal, but the stock market is legal. You even have to pay taxes!” After joking with her, I walked over to Wei ge.

“Did you get the info for the four girls?”

“All you gave me was when they were enrolled at school, and you want me to find them? You’re holding me to quite a high esteem.” Wei ge’s smug face made me think of a rather graceless description— full of himself.

“So what did you find? ...century’s greatest hacker.” I handed him a cigarette.

“Well spoken, well spoken. Here...” Wei ge handed me two sheets of A4 paper. A graduation photo and a list of names. “I went through the Xiaonei Network and class lists, available to any ordinary internet user, and found that the creator of one of the lists mentioned a murder case right before graduation. What he described fits the case of room 106, so you’re probably looking for students on this list. I copied the graduation photo and student list directly from the site. Not a lot of people posted to that group. There was only one IP posting, and they hadn’t posted in a long time. (Note: Xiaonei, now [Renren](#), was a social networking site for college students)

The graduation photo was enlarged, but the original resolution wasn’t that good to start with. The image wasn’t very clear, and you could only really see that there were 31 students in total. You could just barely make out who was male or female, but it would be impossible to find someone from the image alone. The class list simply had 33 names on it, no method of contact. It didn’t even list the genders of the students. The list of students had two more names than there were people in the photo, and they were likely the murderer and victim from room 106. But the graduation photo seemed to hold pretty much no value.

I scratched my head and asked, “You have anything else?”

“A normal person would only be able to give you this, but I’m a hacker. Of course I wouldn’t be such a disgrace.” Wei ge sat in his chair and let out a puff of smoke. With satisfaction, he said, “I’ve already tracked down the IP addresses of the poster and visitor. The poster’s IP is from abroad, so I can’t pinpoint a specific location right now, but I’ve already sent her an email. As for when and if she’ll reply, I don’t know. The other IP is from the provincial general hospital. Going through the hospital’s computer system, I found out the IP originated from a computer on the seventh floor. If you take a trip over, I’m sure you’ll find

something.”

“Thanks!” After thanking Wei ge, I got ready to head out to investigate with Zhenzhen, but he stopped me. “Don’t run off so quickly. Let me tell you something else that’s very interesting. It might be related to this case.”

I halted my steps and listened.

“As I was hacking into their system, I discovered some encrypted files. They were mostly accounts of neglect and mistakes of the staff, things like causing a death by administering the wrong medicine and other sensitive stuff. But then there were also mentionings of stolen hearts from the corpses in the morgue in recent years. Presently, there have been maybe thirty or forty stolen, once every one or two months.”

Hearts!

Missing hearts!

More missing hearts!

Was there some unknown connection between the general hospital and the female ghost? Very complicated. This case was getting increasintly interesting.

– Strange Investigations Team –

Chapter 4

– Strange Investigations Team –

Volume 1 4 Already Dead

The provincial general hospital was built in the early days after the liberation. In recent years, it's undergone rapid development and was now one of the best hospitals. The area of the hospital was more than 200 thousand square meters, and the equipment housed inside was state of the art. In addition, there were numerous well-known experts and professors currently residing at the hospital. Each day, there was an endless stream of patients, mostly from within the province, but some patients were attracted from outside the province as well. Although it appeared well and successful, there were many problems being hidden away, in particular, management issues.

I looked up the civil disputes filed against the general hospital and found records for (at least) three cases of corpses with missing hearts. Because the hospital reached a settlement with the diseased's families in the end, the police didn't intervene and there weren't detailed records of the cases.

When I arrived at the seventh floor of the hospital, I finally understood the painstaking efforts that the government poured into the family planning policies. There were countless patients in the waiting room, crowding up the 300 sqm space. Because there weren't enough chairs, some patients were standing outside the examination rooms. However, a few of the examination rooms looked deserted.

We walked over to the rooms that didn't have any patients. I stopped at one of the rooms and said to Zhenzhen, "The person we're looking for is in this room."

"Why? There are so many rooms. What makes you so sure that this is the right one?" Zhenzhen's eyes were filled with suspicions.

I explained, "If you were a doctor with patients lined up outside your door,

would you be able to go online to search through old school bulletin boards?”

“While that’s true, there are several rooms that don’t have patients!” She really had a lot of questions to ask.

“Take a look at the papers Wei ge gave you!” I couldn’t be bothered to explain more.

Zhenzhen pulled out the list of names and compared them to the placard on the door. She mumbled to herself, “Xiao Yixuan... Ah, didn’t you only look at the list once...”

I pointed to my head and laughed. “All the names are here.” Then I knocked on the door.

Inside the consultation room, there was a handsome 30-something year old man playing games on his computer. When he saw us enter, he immediately put on a friendly smile and stood up politely. “Have a seat. Where are you feeling uncomfortable?”

“Hello, Dr. Xiao! I’m Mu, an officer from the CIB...” I sat down and explained our reason for visiting. “From what I’m aware of, you graduated from the medical university. You must have some recollection of the murder case in room 106 of the female dormitory ten years ago. Can you please tell me everything you know?”

“That’s a terrifying memory that would give a person recurring nightmares. Although it was a long time ago, recalling it still makes my hair stand on end. To be honest, even until now, I have a hard time believing that a girl as gentle and quiet as Xiaolou could actually use such a cruel method to kill her classmate.” Xiao Yixuan’s face paled and his body trembled unconsciously. Slowly, he retold this frightening, dust covered memory from ten years ago. Maybe because of fear, his account was a bit disorganized—

The four girls who lived in room 106 were Ye Xiaolou, Xia Yulan, Yue Yingqing, and Qin Qiongzhi. We were all in the same year, and Xiaolou and Qiongzhi were also my classmates. They were really good friends, at least, they were before the incident.

Xiaolou was the school flower. Of the four girls, she was the prettiest and she

had a very nice temperament, so a lot of guys pursued her. But I never heard of anyone winning her over. She liked to stay in the library to read, and she always politely refused her pursuers.

She got along really well with Qiongzhi, and in fact, all four of the girls got along very well. But since the two of them were in the same class, they were together more often. Since no one ever heard about either of them having boyfriends, the boys speculated that they might be homosexual.

Because Xiaolou was really pretty, every move she made caught everyone's attentions. Sometime around a year before graduation, she started to gain weight. Someone joked and asked her if she was pregnant, and her answer back then was very strange, "I'm going to become Maria (or Mary) soon. You should be happy for me!"

Over the Spring Festival break, neither Xiaolou or her roommates went home. When the new semester was about to start, she'd obviously lost weight compared to before. And her complexion was always poor, a bit pale. Everyone suspected that she'd gotten rid of the baby. But she'd never had a boyfriend, so everyone was puzzled. They started to wonder if she was somehow like Maria, getting pregnant while still being a virgin.

What's even weirder is that in the following semester, all four of the girls had gotten very pale, and they looked as if they had anemia. The only one who was a little better was Yingqing. But other than that, there was nothing strange about the four of them. Up until the incident, there was nothing unusual either. I never heard anything about Xiaolou or Qiongzhi having any arguments. They spent all their time together, inseparable.

The evening before our graduation, some of the guys and I brought two cases of beer up to the rooftop of our dorm. The moon was round and beautiful that night and we drank until we couldn't anymore. Everyone was really excited, and other than some sadness at the inevitable parting, there weren't any strange feelings. No one would have thought that such a horrifying thing had happened across the way at the girls' dorm.

That night, none of the girls in the dorm heard any sounds of a fight or argument. No one had felt there was anything out of place at all. Everything was

the same as usual, and the only thing different might have been the complicated feelings of the soon to be graduates.

The next morning, pandemonium hit the girls' dorm. The school council all came and a lot of teachers were blocking the entrance. After asking around, we finally found out there had been a murder. I heard that that morning, room 106 was very quiet as the morning passed. A few girls wanted to check to see if they hadn't woken up yet, but when they opened the door, they were shocked and didn't even scream out until awhile later. All the girls who saw the scene cried out in horror, and a few even fainted from fright.

According to the first girl who saw it, the scene of room 106 was basically like this— Open the door, and then all you see is red. Blood flooded out over everything. Covered in fresh blood, Xiaolou kneeled down in the center of the room, her messy hair covering her strange and smiling face. She kept staring at the cold corpse in front of her...

After Xiao Yixuan finished, his body was still trembling slightly. After a long while, he finally calmed down.

“Do you know what happened to Ye Xiaolou after that?” I asked. From what we knew so far, it was very possible that she was the female ghost with the baby.

He rubbed his face to wake himself up a bit. And then he said, “I heard that she was sent to a mental health hospice in the suburbs, but I'm not sure if she's still there or not.”

“Do you have the addresses or phone numbers of the other two roommates?”

“I wasn't in the same class with them, and we weren't very close. I never contacted them again after graduation.”

“This doesn't help us!” Zhenzhen quipped with a frown.

“I heard that this hospital's lost quite a few hearts from the morgue. Is that true?” I stared at him, and he unconsciously avoided my gaze. “I heard about it, but I'm not very sure. You know, that kind of thing affects the hospital's image, so the guys in charge tried to keep news from leaking out. So I don't know much either.”

“Oh, apologies for disturbing you then.” After some parting words, Zhenzhen

and I left the consultation room.

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“This Xiao guy seems to know something else,” Zhenzhen said just as we stepped out.

“He’s not a suspect, and we can’t force him to say anything he doesn’t want to.” I spread out my hands helplessly.

“So how do we check about the missing hearts?”

“Let’s put it aside for now. It’s a matter concerning the hospital’s image, so I don’t suspect they’ll be very willing to cooperate. Moreover, if they hospital knew more about it, they probably wouldn’t have lost so many hearts in the first place.” I put a cigarette in my mouth but I didn’t light it. Then I said, “We’ll have to let the boss talk to some people before we can investigate this any further. Let’s take a walk in the suburbs first...”

We drove to the city limits, to the mental health hospice. It looked like a white prison, and each of the doors were made of solid, stainless steel. Only, instead of prison guards, you had white-clothed angels watching over the prisoners in hospital gowns. Visiting the place was just like visiting a prison, and perhaps the biggest difference was that those who visited this place also had to pay medical expenses.

I asked the information desk for the files on Ye Xiaolou. After searching through the database, the nurse gave me a shocking answer, “She’s dead.”

“Dead? How did she die? When?” I’d been suspecting Xiaolou to be the female ghost. If she’d been discharged from the hospital or had gone missing, that would have been fine. But if she’d already passed away, then who was killing these people? Was it really a ghost making trouble?

“She’s been dead for eight or nine years now. It was suicide,” the nurse answered indifferently, as if it had just been a stray cat that had died.

“Are you positive she was really dead?” I couldn’t let it go and asked again to make sure.

“If she was dead, then she was dead. What else is there to check?!” The nurse grew impatient and her increasing tone drew the attention of others in the

vicinity.

“Does the doctor who was in charge of her still work here? I’d like to understand Ye Xiaolou’s condition while she was alive.” The living saw people and the dead saw corpses. If our lead gets cut off right here, it would become significantly harder to solve the case in a few days.

“It’s already been ten years. A lot of doctors have come and gone. How am I supposed to find this out for you?!” Then the nurse went to do other things and left me on my own.

I was a slightly discouraged for a moment, but thankfully my mind was in good condition and my skin was thicker than most people’s. I quickly started working again and bothered the nurse for Ye Xiaolou’s files. She impatiently printed out a copy for me. In the files, there was a large photo. Although the eyes of the person in the photo were dull, they clearly attracted others’ pity. As Xiao Yixuan had said, she was really very beautiful.

As I was going through the contents of the files to find some helpful information, a head popped up beside me— She was a fifty year old cleaning lady. I noticed her staring at the photo in the files, and I felt that god wouldn’t leave me hanging like that. I asked the woman, “Do you know her?”

The cleaning lady nodded. “She stayed here in the past. I remember her a bit.” And slowly, she told me about Ye Xiaolu’s stay at the hospice—

Comparably, she was one of the calmer ones here, so calm that she barely spoke. She usually sat in the corner with a book. For us, patients like that were really the best you could hope for. We didn’t have to worry about them. Aside from meals and bathing, we didn’t have to watch out for them, unlike those troublesome patients who had to be tied to their beds.

Usually, patients like that wouldn’t leave much of an impression, especially since there were so many patients. The only reason I can still remember her after so many years, aside from her being very pretty, was that she made a big mess at the end.

Her doctor was a guy named Ou. He’d just gotten here at the time and he wasn’t married yet. I heard he didn’t have a girlfriend either. Maybe she was really too beautiful, so beautiful that trouble came to find her. Xiao Ou and her

got along well and spent much of their time together. Over time, it may have turned into love... Or maybe I should say it bred ill will. He actually raped one of his patients.

Although she had some problems in the head, when faced with Xiao Ou's assault, she still knew to fight back. She covered his body in bite marks. After that, she often sat in the corner sobbing. Truth be told, at that time, she was just like any other ordinary girl, and it made your heart ache for her.

The hospital director was very worried about this matter. After all, if news of the situation got out, the hospice would be in lots of trouble. Just as the director's head felt like it was going to explode, she committed suicide with an empty syringe. When the nurse wasn't paying attention, she stole a needle and then locked herself in the washroom. When the nurse found her, she was already dead.

She'd stolen a 5ml syringe. I heard the nurse say that using that kind of syringe, she would have had to inject herself (with air) twenty times to die, and she had to hit her vein each time. The nurse also said that you'd be in a lot of pain before dying this way.

After she died, something happened to Xiao Ou. All the places he'd been bitten turned black and he got a very high fever. It didn't recede and then the next day, he died. Before he died, he kept calling out, "She's coming for revenge, she wants to kill me," and such words...

After the cleaning lady's account, I asked the question I was most concerned about. "How was her body taken care of after her death?" I still suspected that Xiaolou was the ghost. Her body may have undergone some type of transformation after her death, and then she returned to the university to kill.

"She was cremated, of course! The director is terrified of dark and spooky things, so even without her family's consent, he had the body burned. With Xiao Ou's inexplicable death, who wouldn't be scared? He quickly had both of their bodies cremated." The cleaning lady's response overthrew my hypothesis.

"After she was raped, was there any blood?" Although the question was rather embarrassing, it was one that needed asking because it was related to Xiaolou's previous pregnancy.

The aunt pondered over it and then answered firmly, “No.”

“You’re sure?”

“There definitely wasn’t any. I was the one who cleaned the rooms that day and her blankets didn’t have any traces of blood. There wasn’t any on the bed or the floor either. There was a little bit on her clothes, but that was from Xiao Ou’s wounds. That’s not what hymen blood looks like.” From her age, this woman was not likely to be inexperienced in this matter, so she probably wasn’t wrong.

After thanking her, we were about to leave, when she suddenly called us. “Hey, hey, let me tell you one more thing. I don’t know if it will be of any use to you. When she first came and I helped her bathe, I noticed some wounds on her breasts, like she’d been bitten by a vampire. But the wounds were very small, so it might have also just been a bug bite...”

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As we left the hospice, I organized the information we’d received today. Yixuan said that all the girls in room 106 suddenly got very pale in their final semester, and the cleaning aunt said that Xiaolou’s breasts had bite wounds. With this, could we infer that the other three roommates also had the same wounds? But how was the wound formed? Did room 106 have bloodsucking bats or... vampires?

Aside from that, since Xiaolou didn’t bleed after she was raped, it could be presumed that she wasn’t a virgin and she’d likely experienced child birth or an abortion before. If during the rape, there was inadequate fluids secreted, the rough motion could potentially cause bleeding. However, if the woman had previously given birth, her body may have been more relaxed and the likelihood of bleeding was much smaller. Suppose she’d been pregnant before, then who was the other party involved? Xiao Yixuan said she didn’t have a boyfriend, but in actuality, she did. Did he really not know, or was he lying? She couldn’t have gotten pregnant and still been a virgin!

Xiaolou’s suicide method was also rather confusing. In her given situation, injection of air into the bloodstream was undoubtedly the suicide method with the highest success rate. It was different from hanging oneself, an attempt which someone may discover easily, or cutting, which left sufficient time where

she could be saved. For a patient with mental illness, calmly assessing the knowledge they had was not an easy thing. Moreover, she couldn't just prick herself with a needle randomly. She had to pump air into her veins at least twenty times. One couldn't help but wonder if she actually had a mental illness, or if she had faked it to be acquitted.

Whether she was truly mad or not, she was already dead, so the likelihood of her being the ghost was very slim. Although I still suspect that the female ghost is a living person or a zombie-like creature, the facts left me considering the possibility of a mist-like ghost.

"Where are we going now?" Zhenzhen interrupted my thoughts.

"We're going to the historic district to find someone," I answered casually.

"Who?"

"Mei Qiaoying."

"Who is she?"

"I don't know." I handed Xiaolou's files to Zhenzhen. Under relatives, the name Mei Qiaoying was listed along with an address.

Within every bustling city, there exists a run-down corner, and the people who live in that run-down corner are often the ones who contribute the most.

When we got to the historic district, night had already fallen. From the address, we arrived in front of an old, run-down house. Light leaked out from the windows, so there was likely someone inside. After I knocked on the door, the rusty iron door popped open a sliver. Behind the door was an old woman with a thin and haggard face. She asked very cautiously, "What is it?"

After I showed my ID and explained our reason for coming, she calmed down a bit and invited us in.

"Pardon me, but the security in the area isn't good, so we have to be more wary at night. Please don't take offense." Mei Qiaoying brought over two cups of hot water.

I looked around at the inside of her house. It was very small and old-fashioned. The building was probably more than three decades old, and any piece of

furniture in the place wouldn't be much younger than myself. Even the cups in front of us were chipped. The owner of the house seemed to be rather poor.

"Auntie Mei, can you tell us a bit about Xiaolou?" After a few courteous words, I got to the point.

"Ah... I'm not sure if I should say my life has been difficult or if Xiaolou's life was difficult. After she was born, she lost her father, and then at such a young age, she..." Auntie Mei sighed as she started to tell her daughter's story—

Xiaolou's father died early, so I painstakingly raised her on my own. She was a very smart and obedient child. All the teachers and students at school liked her, and she was very diligent with her studies. I never had to worry much about her. But ever since she got into the medical university, I felt that she changed, and yet, I wouldn't be able to tell you what about her changed. Anyway, after so many years as her mother, if she changed, of course I would feel it. At first, I thought she'd gotten a boyfriend so I didn't get too concerned about it. But later on, I kept feeling it wasn't right. I felt that something had happened to her.

Our house is small, so we always slept on one bed. After she got into university, she lived in the dorm and only came home over school breaks. When she stayed at home, I'd woken up several times in the night to realize that she wasn't in bed. Instead, she was standing at the window, staring up at the moon in the sky. When I called her, she didn't respond. And then when I asked her about it the next morning, she didn't have any memory of it.

In the end, she rarely came home, but she would call home every week. I didn't worry about it too much at the time. After all, the environment at home isn't great, so if she didn't want to come home, I couldn't blame her. It was fine as long as she was living well and happily. Even when she didn't come home for New Year's, I didn't say much about it. I thought she'd been spending the time with her boyfriend!

The day before the murder, she called me and said some odd things. She asked if I wanted to live in a bigger house, if I wanted to have more money than I could spend, if I wanted to live forever. I said yes, of course I want that, but as long as she was by my side, that would be enough. Nothing else mattered. She was silent for a long time and then finally said to me, "Mom, I'll make sure to let you

live the best life in the future!” I never expected that something would happen the next day.

After the incident, the school stepped up to control the situation. Although she didn't have to go to jail, she was sent to a mental illness hospice. During those days, I used up all my tears, but that wasn't the worst thing to happen. She stayed in the hospice for more than a year before she committed suicide for no reason...

When she got to that part, Auntie Mei couldn't help her tears from falling. The hospice had apparently hidden the matter that Xiaolou had been raped, but seeing her in such a state of despair, we naturally couldn't pour salt on that wound and tell her the truth. And since both parties involved in the incident were both dead now, there was no point in trying to lay the blame.

“Have you ever met Xiaolou's boyfriend?” Although her expression was dim, I still had to ask the question.

“No. Actually I'm not certain whether she ever had a boyfriend. Every time I asked her, she would say she didn't have one, but I kept feeling that she was dating someone.” A mother knows her daughter best. Although she couldn't confirm it, but a mother's instinct was more trustworthy. During Ye Xiaolou's time at university, she likely had a boyfriend. If that was the case, that meant it was very possible she'd been pregnant before, and it also explained why the female ghost carried a baby when she attacked. Of course, this was entirely based on the conjecture that the killer was a ghost, although I had some reservations about that.

“What was Xiaolou's father like?” Zhenzhen seemed to want to comfort Qiaoying, but she seemed unable to find the right words and unwittingly asked about her diseased husband.

“My husband was named Ye Ping'an. He didn't have any particular abilities. Before he died, he worked in construction. Actually, it's quite a coincidence. The dorm Xiaolou lived in at university was built by his engineering team. But not long after the dorm was built, he passed away. He didn't even have the chance to see Xiaolou once...” Qiaoying's tears started streaming down again.

The father built the dorm and then died. The daughter lived in the dorm, and

then went mad and killed someone. It was indeed a coincidence! I couldn't understand her feeling towards it, so I asked, "Can you tell us how your husband died?"

"The doctor said he had stomach cancer. He was usually okay, but that day, his stomach hurt a lot. When he went to the doctor to get it checked, the doctor said that it was already too late and they couldn't cure him. A few days later, he left us. That was when Xiaolou was nearly going to be born. If he'd been able to hold on for a few more days, he would have been able to carry his daughter in his arms..." After a moment of silence, she wiped the tears from her eyes. "Several of his colleagues also ended up with stomach cancer. I suspected the meals at the construction ground were too poor quality. Before he died, he often complained that their meals were like pig's feed."

Zhenzhen once again used her clumsy words to try to comfort Auntie Mei. Just as we were going to leave, Auntie Mei seemed to have recalled something else. She said to us, "I remember that when they were constructing the dorm, they seemed to have pulled out a large white snake as they were digging out the ground. They were very greedy at the time and immediately cooked it to eat. I'm not sure if maybe they offended something, and so calamity hit us..."

After we left Auntie Mei, I kept thinking about the same question— After the construction of the dorm, the father passed away in a strange manner. After the daughter moved into the dorm, the daughter started to change, and in the end, she even turned mad and killed someone... Was the problem perhaps the dormitory, or rather room 106?

Perhaps Uncle Liu had some information about this.

Notes: The words 'raped' and 'breasts' were censored out as **, but contextually, the words fit, so I thought I ought to use them.

– Strange Investigations Team –

Chapter 5

– Strange Investigations Team –

Volume 1

5 Strange Tomb of the White Snake

“Miao Miao, did you guys find anything?” On our way over to the medical university, I gave a call to Miao Miao and put her on speaker phone so Zhenzhen could hear too.

“Oh, ah...” a relaxed and comfortable yawn sounded on the speaker. “Hey! The sky’s already dark, what time is it? I’m starving!”

“You... weren’t just sleeping, were you? Didn’t you go with Xueqing to monitor Professor Xiao?” God! Was this damn girl here to work or just play around?

“Ah...” Miao Miao yawned again. “Mm, isn’t this Xueqing’s jacket? Where is she...”

“I’m here.” Xueqing’s voice sounded from the speaker. She was actually right next to Miao Miao. She took the phone and said, “Ah Mu? We found something. What about you?”

“We’re heading over to the university. We’ll be there in about ten minutes.” Fortunately Xueqing wasn’t here to play. No wonder Boss had the two of them work together. If he’d made Miao Miao my partner, she’d have infuriated me. If Zhenzhen partnered with her, that would be even more scary. Who knows if someone might lose their life. On that matter though, why did the boss let Miao Miao onto the team anyway? That old fox would never recruit anyone who would drag him down. Unless Miao Miao had some talent that made her better than others. But no matter how you looked at her, she was as dumb as a brain-damaged middle school student, even though she’d already graduated from college.

What was the boss up to? Was this rat poison or a strength enhancer? It really

made a person confused.

“Prof Xiao’s already returned to his dorm and he probably won’t head out again. We don’t need to watch him now. We’ll meet you at the school gates in ten minutes.” Xueqing sounded like she was giving me an order. After she spoke, she hung up, without a care to whether I agreed or not. Although I knew she didn’t have any ill will, this kind of attitude really was hard to accept.

When our car pulled up to the school gate, they were already standing on the side of the road. Miao Miao carried a powder blue backpack with Hello Kitty print. When she got in the car, she pulled out some snacks and orange juice, which made me even more certain that she was here today to go on a fun outing. Boss was either a cat looking to get burned or he’d lost his mind, otherwise he wouldn’t have chosen a subordinate like her even if she were the governor’s daughter.

“We didn’t find anything substantial from the monitoring, but we accidentally came across something else...” Xueqing refused the Dove chocolate that Miao Miao tried to feed her, and told us what they’d discovered—

Prof Xiao’s full name is Xiao Guoqiang. Male, 62 years old. Chief physician, professor, and doctoral advisor. Prominent contributor to the nation, receives government subsidies... Current dean of the medical university, head of the cardiology department, head of cardiac research at the provincial general hospital... He has served as editor for the ‘Chinese Journal of Medicine’, chief editor and editorial board member of ‘Journal of Interventions’, author of ‘Practical Cardiology’, ‘Xiao Guoqiang’s Heart Surgery Cases’...

There was nothing particular about his morning. Professor Xiao gave a lecture and then buried himself in his papers at his lab. He also ate lunch in his lab room. I thought that we were going to return without any success, but then in the afternoon, we saw an unusual scene.

Although our monitoring spot was more than 200m away from Prof Xiao’s lab, with high definition military binoculars, we could see very clearly each and every strand of hair on his head. And he looked younger than his age. Even though his hair was white, his complexion was ruddy and he didn’t have many wrinkles. He looked maybe 50 years old. If he were to dye his hair black, no one would believe

that he was over 60.

After he gave his lecture, he stayed in his lab, going through documents and writing his thesis. There wasn't anything particularly eye catching. But about 15 minutes later, a pretty 30 year old woman with hair down to her back walked in with a stack of documents. She closed the door with her round bottom and then put down the documents on his desk. Judging from her age, she was likely Prof Xiao's assistant, Zeng Qianyi.

When she first walked into the lab, Prof Xiao hastily drew the curtains closed, but there was still a two finger wide gap that wasn't covered up. The area around the desk could just barely be seen.

After he drew the curtains, Prof Xiao grabbed Zeng Qianyi from behind and reached into her blouse with his left hand and under her skirt with his right hand. Her pale face blushed slightly, and hidden in her intoxication was a slight inkling of helplessness. After groping her up and down, Prof Xiao pushed her onto his desk and rushed to lift her skirt and pull down her panties...

"Ah..." After listening to Xueqing's account I couldn't help shaking my head with a sigh.

"What? Is there a problem?" Zhenzhen didn't understand. Her face was slightly rosy, likely a reaction to Xueqing's short 'porn piece'.

"If only I were there, ah..." I sighed again.

"Was my work inadequate?" Xueqing's cold voice sounded from behind. I saw her brows furrow in the rearview mirror.

"Your work wasn't inadequate. I was just thinking that it was really such shame not to be able to see such a stimulating live show with my own eyes! Ouch..." As I was speaking, a fist landed on my right cheek. At the same time, someone knocked me on the back of my head.

Zhenzhen had wanted to high-five Xueqing, but the other party appeared to not even see her outstretched white palm. She continued reporting about the info she'd received today, and so Zhenzhen could only foolishly high five with Miao Miao's outstretched hand, a bit embarrassed.

Aside from accidentally discovering that Prof Xiao was having an affair with

Asst Zeng Qianyi, Xueqing also found out that he was widowed early and had yet to remarry. But he had a son named...

“What? Xiao Yixuan is his son?” So Prof Xiao and Xiao Yixuan were father and son. This cast another burst of fog onto the case.

Although Prof Xiao was already over 60, but with his position in the medical world, there were tons of young and beautiful girls who would give themselves to him. Wasn't there a young masters student, a Ms Weng, who married an 80 year old physicist?

If Prof Xiao intended to remarry, there probably wouldn't be a shortage of pursuers. So then, why didn't he marry a second wife instead of messing around with his assistant? If the media got hold of this immoral matter, he could come to ruin in his late age.

And did Prof Xiao's relation with Xiao Yixuan have anything to do with the missing hearts case at the general hospital? If yes, then what did he need so many hearts for? Suppose he wanted them for research purposes, he could ask the hospital to donate them. Did he have to steal them?

The number of questions kept growing. It was too complicated to figure out now, so the best thing to do was put it aside in the meantime. First, let's go talk to Uncle Liu. Where a car travels, there will be a road.

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Miao Miao left on her own by taxi. Although she was a cop, we weren't very at ease. Unfortunately, we still had work to do, so we couldn't send her home. After she left, Xueqing continued to monitor Prof Xiao, and Zhenzhen and I paid a visit to Uncle Liu at the security room.

The security room was lit with a dim light. The radio on the table was playing Teresa Teng's 'Small Town Story', and Uncle Liu was sitting on a chair with his eyes closed as his right hand tapped against the arm rest to the melody. His lips were slightly parted as he sang along quietly to the classic song.

This scene couldn't help but bring out an aching feeling in my heart. Most older men were just like him, spending the whole day with a TV or radio as a partner. They'd dedicated their youth to our society, but in the end, society

abandoned them.

“Uncle Liu, I came to play some chess.” Zhenzhen and I entered the security room and dropped the snacks we’d plundered from Miao Miao’s bag onto the table.

“Your company alone is fine. Why did you buy so many things?!” Uncle Liu was clearly overwhelmed by all the snacks on the table.

“It’s fine, someone else gave them to me, so I’m just sending them along. Come on then, let’s play chess.” I took a seat as if we were old friends.

“Sure. If you have time, we can play all night.” Uncle Liu set up the chessboard.

Zhenzhen didn’t have the patience to watch us play chess, so she told me she’d go for a walk outside. Without waiting for a response, she just left.

During our match, I asked Uncle Liu if anything out of the ordinary happened during the construction of the female dormitory. After thinking about it for a bit, he started to tell me what he knew. “It must have been 30 or so years ago. Enrollment started increasing and they naturally couldn’t all fit in the original dorm, so the school decided to build a new one. At the time, the area around the school hadn’t yet been developed. The number of students wasn’t exactly large, so I was often idle working security here. Usually when there was nothing much to do, I’d take a stroll over to the construction area and get to know the workers. I still remember that the guy in charge was called... something like An ge...”

“Was his name Ye Ping’an?” I asked.

“Yes, yes, that’s right. His name was Ye Ping’an. His last name isn’t a common one, and his name was rather meaningful, so I still remember it. An ge was a pretty good guy, whether it was to his men or an outsider like me. So when I had some free time, I would help them out with some light work.” As Uncle Liu recalled his youth, a smile slipped onto his face, but this smile quickly turned into a slightly pained expression. He continued, “The good die young. I don’t know if the dorm had bad fengshui or if the place was haunted by spirits, but accidents kept happening to An ge and his crew.” (Note: Ye Ping’an means that the night is calm and safe)

“The first accident was Xiao Zhang’s. That day, he and An ge and the rest were

on the rafters, putting in the exterior walls for the fourth floor of the dorm. Originally, he was chatting and laughing, but then he suddenly said his stomach hurt. Then he fell off. When An ge and the other guys finally climbed down, he'd already stopped breathing and was dead.

“After that, An ge’s team started to die, one after another. I heard they all came down with gastrointestinal diseases like stomach cancer. When the dorm was completed, only An ge was left. But he didn’t make it long after that. A few days after the dorm’s completion, he also left. Ah...” Uncle Liu let out a long sigh. Recalling these things of the past could only make people sigh.

Auntie Mei said that her husband often complained about the poor food at the construction grounds, so I asked Uncle Liu if that was the case. Was it possible that that was related to An ge and the others’ deaths?

“It was a bit poor, but not to the extent that it would kill a man!” Uncle Liu was incredulous at my conjecture. “That year, there was a shortage of ingredients. Being able to fill your stomach was already pretty good. Back then, the food for their team was provided by the school cafeteria. It wasn’t the best, not really much different from what they fed a pig, but all the students and I also ate the same thing. Nothing happened to us!”

“I heard that An ge and his team dug out a snake. Is that really true?” I only asked this casually. Who would have expected the unimaginable past I was about to hear of.

“This...” Uncle Six pondered a moment. “I seem to recall such a matter. An ge and the guys cooked up the snake and even asked if I wanted to eat some.”

“Did you eat it?”

Uncle Liu seemed to recall something frightening and his shriveled up body shuddered. “I didn’t. I never could eat those types of wild animals. Moreover, that snake was pulled out from a coffin. I didn’t have the guts for it.”

“From a coffin? Do you have more details?” Uncle Liu’s words caught my attention.

“I heard it from An ge. What happened was something like this...” Uncle Six retold An ge’s tale. I organized the story in my head a bit, and the scene from 30

years ago gradually formed in my mind—

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The day was passing as the blood-red sun set in the west.

An ge and the other eight men were sitting on the site eating their pig feed-like dinner. Not only was the cafeteria food poor tasting, for guys in their line of work, the portions were definitely not enough. It was probably only enough to make them half full.

Originally, they could go home, just like the foreman, to enjoy their wives' home cooking. It may not have been the most delicious, but they would at least be able to eat until they were full. But to earn a bit more money to support their families, they stayed at the construction site with their bodies covered in sweat.

After lunch, they rested a bit before continuing to dig out the foundation area. "Hey, everyone, get over here!" Xiao Zhang's urgent cry caught the others' attentions and they all headed over to him.

"An ge, what do we do? It looks like an ancient tomb. Should we tell the foreman?" Xiao Zhang pointed at the dark cavern before him. His voice trembled with both excitement and nervousness.

Even if you'd never tasted pork, you've seen a pig run before. While the construction workers had never excavated a tomb themselves, they'd heard about it before. It wasn't a very rare situation. An intact tomb, regardless of its size or age, and there would be at least a few valuable things inside. Gold and jade weren't uncommon. For this group of laborers, even a small gold ring would be equivalent to several months of their salary.

An ge silently looked at the hole and then his eyes swept over the disturbed faces in the crowd. He spoke in a heavy voice, "The foreman's already gone home. As long as no one says anything later, we'll be the only ones who know what's in this hole. Those who don't want to suffer from poverty and aren't afraid of death, come with me to take a look. If we find anything valuable, we split the profit. If anyone doesn't wish to go, I also won't force you..."

"I'll go!" "I'll go too!" "Count me in..." Everyone was very excited, as if they'd already seen the treasures inside the hole.

“Okay! If there are treasures, we eight will share them! If there’s hardship, we eight will bear them! If anyone has wicked intentions, let them die a painful death!” An ge’s expression was excited but slightly uneasy. He led the group into the cave that appeared like a giant behemoth devouring its prey. Xiao Zhang followed behind him with the oil lamp, and the other men also eagerly headed into the cave.

Inside the hole was a stone room that was smaller than they’d imagined, only about 40 sqm. It was a tight fit with all eight men inside. The air wasn’t as thick as they’d imagined either. Presumably, when they’d dug out the entrance, fresh air had already streamed inside. Xiao Zhang raised the lamp above his head, shining it across the entire room. The group looked around, hoping to find the glimmerings of gold, but they were only left disappointed. This small and narrow room wasn’t fit to be called an old tomb, perhaps just a grave. There were no funerary objects anywhere in sight, just four walls with a sarcophagus in the middle of the room.

With disappointment, the men’s eyes landed on the sarcophagus. Both the stone walls and coffin were simple and unadorned. There was no decorative design on them, so the tomb’s owner was likely not a very rich person. However, since they were able to build a tomb, the place couldn’t be without at least a few gold bars!

The greedy men gathered their courage and their strength, and forced the heavy lid off to the side, hoping to find something valuable on the owner’s body. When Xiao Zhang lifted the oil lamp to shine over the coffin, everyone was shocked.

There were no gold or jade treasures in the sarcophagus. In fact, there weren’t even any clothes inside, because there was no human corpse lying inside. Instead, there was a motionless white snake with crude feet attachments curled up inside.

“Fuck, it’s a snake!” someone called out, breaking the silence. Following, the other men started cursing. Suddenly, Xiao Zhang shrieked. He pointed at the snake’s head, his mouth gaping wide but unable to say anything. The others turned to the snake and saw its round, open eyes and a tongue sticking out of its slightly open mouth.

The men unconsciously stepped back, but after a moment of observation, they realized that while the snake was alive, it couldn't move. "Since there's nothing valuable here, let's just eat this big snake!" An ge had just been speaking out in anger. He didn't expect that the other men readily agreed with this idea.

Because they didn't have any cooking tools, An ge went to find the security guard, Xiao Liu— that is Uncle Liu, to help out. They went to the cafeteria to find some tools, and of course, he explained the entire story to Xiao Liu, even inviting him to taste it.

Helping them get some tools wasn't a problem, but eating a snake? Uncle Liu didn't dare. Moreover, it was a strange snake pulled out from the ground.

After the white snake was pulled out from the cave, the men didn't find anything particularly strange about it, just that it didn't move. Even when they cut its stomach and peeled its skin, it didn't struggle. But that just made it all the easier to slaughter and cook the snake.

An ge personally handled the cutting up of the snake. Although it was his first time, he was still able to dig out the gallbladder in tact. When he asked who wanted to eat it, everyone pushed it off to someone else. In the end, the snake gallbladder was left for him. He ate it in a single bite.

After they cut up the snake, the men built a fire with branches and twigs to make a snake soup. An ge said it was very tasty and the others said it was the most delicious thing they'd ever eaten. Uncle Liu wasn't sure if they were saying that to goad him into eating some with them, but they really ate it up eagerly. There wasn't a drop left in the end, and they even chewed up the bones before spitting them out...

After Uncle Liu finished retelling this memory, we continued our chess game as I started to wonder— Why did the sarcophagus hold a white snake within it, or rather, why would a white snake be in a sarcophagus?

Suppose the white snake had crawled into the sarcophagus on its own, then there were two possibilities. One possibility was that when the snake was smaller, it crawled into the coffin from a gap and then grew larger after eating the corpse inside. However, a snake's method of consumption was to swallow things whole. Would a snake that could crawl through a small gap be able to

swallow a human corpse? Even if it could swallow one, would eating a human corpse make it grow a small pair of feet? The other possibility was that the snake was originally large and powerful, enough to be able to push the cover aside to eat the corpse inside. Then it turned the coffin into its nest. While there was still some possibility that the snake was able to push aside the cover, being able to close it afterwards was just too unimaginable!

If the white snake was unable to enter the sarcophagus on its own, that meant someone put it in there. If that was the case, then the tomb was likely created for fengshui purposes.

I kept thinking about it, but to no avail, and then I lost the chess game as well. After I thanked Uncle Liu, I decided to check up on Xueqing's progress with Zhenzhen. If she hadn't found anything, then we'd just call it a day. But when I called Zhenzhen's phone, she didn't pick up. After several calls, it was still the same. I suddenly had foreboding feeling. Uncle Liu seemed to find it strange as well, so he grabbed a flashlight to help me search for her.

– Strange Investigations Team –

Chapter 6

– Strange Investigations Team –

Volume 1 6 Double Ghost Attack

The moon hung in the sky, flickering. The quiet school campus emitted a strange aura.

Uncle Liu and I searched the main areas of the campus, but there was no trace of Zhenzhen. When I called her phone, there was still no answer. I called Xueqing, but she reported that Zhenzhen hadn't gone to find her. Also, since Prof Xiao had already gone to sleep, so she would meet up with us to look for Zhenzhen.

Although Zhenzhen was of the weaker sex, she was also a mixed martial arts champion. The usual hooligans wouldn't be able to bother her in the slightest. What I was worried about though, was that she would meet something out of the ordinary— The female ghost with a baby.

Tonight wasn't actually the full moon, but it looked pretty close. Zhenzhen may have gone to check out the camphor woods behind the female dormitory, and there was a high chance that she'd run into some trouble. Xueqing didn't agree with my guess, but neither did she oppose it, so I took it as a tacit agreement.

I decided to head to the woods to search for Zhenzhen. Without any hesitation, Xueqing followed along, but Uncle Liu didn't dare walk around the woods at this time. He warned us again that if we headed into the woods right now, we might run into danger. He was right, but we couldn't ignore that Zhenzhen's life might be at stake. Although she treated me as a punching bag, we were still partners in the end.

I told Uncle Liu to return to the security room and wait, and then to call me if Zhenzhen came back. Then Xueqing and I got ready to start searching the woods for Zhenzhen. Uncle Liu handed me his flashlight and reminded us again to be

extremely careful in the woods. If we saw anything white, we should leave immediately. I thanked him and then Xueqing and I headed to the mysterious area behind the female dormitory.

As we entered the camphor woods, I felt a sudden chill. Although I'd been there before, it had been during the daytime. The nighttime camphor woods had this indescribably eerie feeling. Large camphor trees blocked out most of the light. Despite how bright the moon was, it was still hard to see your own fingers in the woods. Only occasionally, you would be able to see a streak of moonlight through the leaves, like the moon goddess shooting an arrow to the ground.

The tall trees in the midst of the night looked like a monster baring its claws. It really intimidated and scared a person. But what really filled your heart with dread was the possibility that hiding behind a camphor tree was a white clothed female ghost, with disheveled hair and an ominous gaze, carrying a baby in her arms. And she could make her surprise attack at any moment.

Once we entered the woods, Xueqing walked ahead of me, instead of behind me as usual. It seemed like she wanted to protect me, and although having a woman protecting me left me a bit ashamed, there wasn't anything else to be done. If the female ghost suddenly appeared, I might not be able to escape. I only barely passed the last fitness exam, and my right leg always seems to start cramping in the most critical moments.

The flashlight was very bright, but in these dark woods, it suddenly felt very insignificant, only able to shine on a small area. Because the range of the flashlight was so limited, it actually made a person even more scared.

My nerves were like a taut bowstring. Xueqing suddenly stopped in front of me, and as I had been looking around, I unintentionally bumped into her. A soft female body. Even through her clothes, I could feel her baby-tender skin. This might just have been my own feeling, but there was a light jasmine fragrance on her body that sent me into a peaceful daydream.

But this wasn't the time to be daydreaming, because danger was currently lurking all around us. Xueqing stood silently in front of me, looking around at her surroundings. I quietly turned off the flashlight, lest someone discover our presence. With my eyes closed, I started to listen. Then I heard a female voice

softly sing, "...Hiss, hiss, hiss, the white snake immortal ...With unlimited powers, a thousand years old ...Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, the chilling wind blows ...A fresh, tasty heart into its belly goes ...Wheeze, wheeze, wheeze, paying no heed ...In the immortal tomb, a hundred years of sleep ...Rumble, rumble, rumble, a guest is here ...Instead of bringing gifts, they're ready to sear you ..."

When I opened my eyes, I realized that Xueqing had tensed up, looking towards 10 o'clock. Following her gaze, I saw a white figure deep inside the woods, like a white cloth draped over the trees. I thought, we'd found it... the ghost we were searching for.

Xueqing didn't make a sound. She didn't turn around either, her eyes fixed on the figure ahead. She slowly raised her hand and pointed, signaling her intent to head that way. As before, she didn't give me the chance to oppose or agree. I followed behind her quietly. Her walk was very relaxed, no different to how one usually walks down the street. She didn't intentionally slow her pace, and yet, her steps didn't make a sound.

When we were about 30m away from the white figure, with the help of the moonlight streaming through the leaves, I barely spotted a woman leaning against a camphor tree, dressed in a clean, white patient's gown. Her loose hair nearly covered her entire face, only revealing a beast-like, shining, red left eye and a slightly upturned mouth. Although her hair was disheveled, it didn't seem as if it had been ungroomed for a long time. Under the moonlight, I could see it shine. In her arms, she held a three month old baby, naked and with oddly pale skin. The baby's skin was very white and lacked luster, as if it had long ago dried up, but its body was plump like any other baby. This was, without a doubt, the legendary female ghost.

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As we approached, we caught her attention. She stopped singing and slowly turned her head. Facing us, her smile grew wider, exposing an extremely eerie smile.

My heart skipped a beat as I considered whether or not I should run. But Xueqing was already prepared for an attack— Her body tilted slightly to the right and reached into her coat, behind her waist. As she raised the gun in her right hand to the female ghost, she used her left hand to steady her aim. All of this

happened in an instant. If I had to describe it with one word, it would have to be 'cool.' I thought that if she were to open fire right now, the female ghost would be shot before she could even react. But was a gun effective on a ghost?

Indeed, the female ghost didn't show any alarm, and her lips were still lifted up high. From between her hair, her left eye still flickered with a blood, thirsty ferocity. She stroked the dead baby in her arms. Her right hand, missing half a middle finger, ran over the small head, but her blade-like fingers didn't appear to cause any harm. She spoke lightly, "If you want to save your partner, you have to immediately stop your investigation. Otherwise, your entire team will die!" She emphasized the word 'die,' and my heart started to beat faster as if her ghost claws had already dug into my back, about to pull out my heart.

Although my heart was enveloped in terror, I couldn't just give up here. I took a deep breath and then presented my police ID, though in this darkness, the ID looked like any other name card. Then I started reciting in a calm tone, "Don't move, we're the police! We suspect that you're involved with several murder cases. Please return to the police station with us for further investigation."

"Heeheehee..." The female ghost's laughter echoed in the dark. After a moment, she said, "You're inviting me for investigations? Heeheehee... Do you think you have the ability to bring in a ghost for investigations? Heeheehee..." Her laughter made my hair stand on end. She laughed and laughed, and then suddenly sprung at Xueqing.

The female ghost's motion was very fast, so fast that it didn't seem like running, but rather it was as if her feet had left the ground and she was flying towards Xueqing like a bullet. The 30m distance suddenly became just one meter. With a sudden attack like that, most people wouldn't be quick enough to react. But Xueqing wasn't just an ordinary person.

Bang! The crisp sound of gunfire rang through the woods. The female ghost that had been flying at Xueqing a moment ago was suddenly on her way to the ground. Her right shoulder had been hit by the bullet and fresh blood was seeping onto her white clothes. The 54 pistol was a powerful weapon at close distances. Although it had only hit a shoulder, it was enough to stop the other party from retaliating. But the female ghost on the ground wasn't just any ordinary person, so Xueqing didn't relax, her gun still pointed at the ghost.

The female ghost had already been shot once, but she didn't show any signs of being in pain. Her lips were still curved up in a smile. "You can't kill me, because I'm a ghost. A human killing ghost..." She tilted her head to the right. Xueqing realized that she was intending to run away and immediately fired.

Because the ghost was too fast, the bullet missed and only grazed her left arm. However, the force of the bullet caused the ghost to lose her balance and she fell to the ground, the dead baby in her arms flying several steps forward. She seemed to be very worried for the baby and immediately climbed up to retrieve it, but Xueqing didn't give her that opportunity. She opened fire again, but with the low lighting and increased distance between them, the bullet was unable to take a life.

The female ghost seemed to realize how difficult it would be to retrieve the baby now and flashed back behind a camphor tree. Using it as a barricade, she took the chance to run away.

Xueqing glanced over at me and then over to the dead baby on the ground. Without a word, she started chasing after in the direction of the female ghost. Although she hadn't said anything, I wasn't a fool. Of course I knew what she'd intended. I took off my coat and crouched down, quickly wrapping up the dead baby.

The ghost had always been carrying the baby, so I'd never gotten a look at its feet before. Seeing it clearly now, I was taken aback—The dead baby's feet were joined together, like a mermaid!

Xueqing had already headed quite some way away. It was dangerous here and I shouldn't stay long, so without any more thoughts, I carried the dead baby, about to run off after Xueqing. But when I stood up, I suddenly felt something rush by behind me.

I turned around and turned on my flashlight, revealing a white clothed female ghost before me. She seemed to be having trouble adjusting to the brightness of the flashlight as she held up her hand to cover her eyes. I took advantage of the time and kicked her in the abdomen, casing her to fall over. Then I ran away as fast as I could. I ran for my life without turning back. I could hear her chasing after me, but her speed wasn't that fast and she wasn't able to catch up to me.

My right leg was cramping and I was nearly out of breath, but thankfully I'd already run out of the woods. I looked around and didn't see a trace of the female ghost. It seemed that she'd given up when I was about to exit the woods. Underneath the moon's beams, I felt a kind of feeling as if I'd just narrowly escaped death. It seemed I was pretty afraid of death too. I was rarely met with this kind of situation when Xiao Xiang was my partner. With him by my side, I always felt safe.

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"Ah Mu." The sudden and cold female voice made me jump. I looked over to where the sound came from and my heart calmed slightly, because it was Xueqing. She saw me breathing heavily and asked, "What's wrong?"

"I was chased out by a female ghost." I continued breathing heavily.

A shade of doubt appeared on Xueqing's face. "Female ghost? I chased her all the way back here before she disappeared. How could she have been behind you?"

When my breathing finally returned to normal, I responded, "It was a different female ghost. Although they looked very similar, with the same white clothes and long hair covering their face, the ghost chasing me was a bit shorter and she seemed overall smaller. And her clothes didn't have any blood on them, so she probably hadn't been shot. Most importantly, her motions were a lot slower than the first ghost, otherwise you'd be collecting my corpse now."

"I'll make a note in the report that I was unable to protect you." Although Xueqing's voice sounded very cold, I supposed she was apologizing to me.

"I'm not hurt, so forget about the report for now. Where did you lose your ghost?"

"When I got out of the forest, I didn't see her anymore, so I probably lost her around here. I already checked the surrounding areas, but I didn't find anything." Despite Xueqing's still-cold tone, she seemed a bit warmer than earlier.

Then I took a serious look around us. There were no camphor trees to hide behind and the moonlight shined down leaving a silver sheen on everything.

Without anything hindering my field of vision, I immediately knew we were right behind the female dormitory, with the window of room 106 right in front of us.

Between the dorm and the woods was a field of empty space with nothing to hide behind. Did the ghost enter room 106 from the window? I walked over to the window and tried to push it open, but no matter how much strength I used, it wouldn't open. Just then, my phone started ringing. The security room's number showed up on the screen.

"Where did you run off to?" Zhenzhen's voice sounded from the phone.

"I should be the one asking that! When I called you, you didn't answer. Xueqing and I have been searching for you all this while."

"I think I left my phone in the car..."

"You win. Hurry over to the female dorm. We've found something."

Xueqing and I headed around to the entrance of the female dorm, and I started to unwrap the dead baby in my coat, taking a careful look at the abnormality with conjoined legs. I hadn't been able to see it clearly earlier, so I'd thought it was a baby's corpse, but looking at it now, I saw that it was actually a stuffed doll, soft as a pillow. Because I didn't know if the body was covered with some sort of venom or other harmful substance, I didn't touch it directly. Inspecting its appearance alone, it appeared to be made from human skin, the complete skin of a baby. I only saw a single seam along its back, but nowhere else. This piece of human skin was very pale though. Forget Asians, even white people couldn't be that pale, though there was the possibility that it had been bleached. There were no obvious reproductive organs on its lower body, though it was likely not male. Because its legs were conjoined, it wasn't clear whether it was female or intersex. Upon more careful inspection, its head and neck were a bit odd. The neck was a bit longer than an ordinary baby's would be, and its mouth area protruded ever so slightly.

Because of our limited tools, it would have been difficult to uncover any clues from the terrifying human-skinned doll, so I could only wrap it back up in my coat and wait for the technical team to examine it tomorrow.

We waited in front of the female dormitory, and a moment later, Zhenzhen came bustling over. I asked her where she'd run off to earlier, and she said

Supervisor Yu invited her out to eat—

I got bored watching you play chess with Uncle Liu, and I didn't know how long it would take, so I went out for a walk and to see if I could find some clues. Unexpectedly, I ran into Supervisor Yu. She had such a long face the last time we saw her, so I don't know what happened, but she actually walked over from pretty far away to greet me. She even started chatting with me enthusiastically.

After chatting awhile, she invited me to have dinner. Since we were working all day, I only had a few buns at lunch, and then when she asked, my stomach grumbled. She said that there was a restaurant in front of the school gate that her man opened, and then she said she'd treat me to a meal. I originally didn't think it would be good to go, but after she said she would tell me a bit about the female dorm, I followed along.

After we got to the restaurant, she brought me into a private room and had her husband personally cook me several dishes. Then we ate and chat. But everything she told me was very trivial and irrelevant to the case. Still, her husband's cooking was delicious. After I finished eating, I realized it had gotten pretty late. And then when I got back to the security room, I found out you guys were looking for me...

Why was Supervisor Yu suddenly so enthusiastic towards Zhenzhen? Did this have something to do with the two female ghosts? The first ghost we saw disclosed that she knew we were searching for Zhenzhen. Other than Uncle Liu, only the person who lured Zhenzhen off the campus would know about that.

After we entered the woods, Uncle Liu tried to dissuade us from going in, so the likelihood of him being involved with the female ghost was unlikely. On the other hand, Supervisor Yu's uncharacteristic enthusiasm was rather suspicious. Perhaps we ought to look into her background a bit.

Whether or not Supervisor Yu was involved, what we had to do now was search room 106 and confirm whether or not the female ghost had entered it. I asked Zhenzhen if Supervisor Yu was still at the restaurant, and she said that they'd left together. She said she was heading back to the female dorm to lock the doors. She should have gone inside shortly before we walked around front.

This case was becoming increasingly complicated and confusing, and more and

more people were becoming involved. But I believe that there is only one truth, and that truth might be hiding in room 106.

– Strange Investigations Team –

Chapter 7

– Strange Investigations Team –

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There were two female ghosts. Supervisor Yu was acting uncharacteristically. A conjoined-leg doll with human skin... The new clues made the case more complicated and confusing, but I believe that there is only one truth, and that was likely hidden inside room 106.

As we were about to head into the dorm, we ran into Supervisor Yu, walking out with a big ring of keys. I explained to her our purpose in coming and asked her to let us examine room 106 once more.

“You just saw it yesterday. What’s there to see...” Supervisor Yu’s tone was as unwelcoming as it had been before, but then a smile appeared onto her face. “Alright, alright, I have to make my rounds anyway. Follow me!”

It was said that women were fickle. Her face turned faster than a book’s pages turn, but Supervisor Yu’s actions really made a person suspicious. Although I felt there was something not quite right about her, but we couldn’t just drag her back with us. Moreover, we had more important things to do now.

Room 106’s lock was just as it was yesterday, very easy to unlock. It was relatively dark inside, but with the moon’s rays through the window, I was still able to see well. At the least, I could see that there was no female ghost inside. After Supervisor Yu opened the door, she let us inside to search, but she had no intent on turning the light on.

Zhenzhen walked inside first and reached against the wall to flip the light switch, but Supervisor Yu said, “No need to search for it, the light’s broken.”

“When did it break?” I asked.

“Probably last week.” Supervisor Yu’s casual response actually revealed

herself, for just yesterday, she said that no one had entered the room in a long time. How would she know that the light went out last week then? She didn't seem to notice her slip of the tongue, and I had no intention to reveal it either. It's easy to block a spear thrown in the light, but difficult to dodge an arrow shot in the dark. An arrow in the dark becoming a spear in the light was more advantageous for us, assuming that the arrow itself didn't know that it had been exposed to the light.

The room wasn't large and there was a whole bunch of stuff inside. If you were to hide inside, you could only hide inside one of the boxes. But the female ghost had disappeared at least 15 minutes ago, and if she had made her way into this room, that would still be enough time to escape to somewhere else on the campus, or even escape the campus entirely. So I didn't rummage through the boxes like Zhenhen, and I didn't guard the door like Xueqing. Instead, I immediately headed to the window.

Yesterday when I had been smoking, I intentionally left some ash on the windowsill. If the window had been opened in this short time, the ash would have been blown away. But when I examined the windowsill with my flashlight, I saw that the ash was still there and it hadn't changed much since I left yesterday. That meant that the window hadn't been opened. At least from yesterday up until now, it hadn't been opened.

Since the windows hadn't been opened, unless the female ghost could pass through walls, it was impossible for her to have entered the room. And if she could pass through walls, she wouldn't be waiting here for us to catch her, so it was pointless to remain here. Instead, we should finish up early and convene with the tech team tomorrow to see if they'd found any clues from the female ghost in the camphor woods.

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When I woke up, there were only five more days left to solve the case. To avoid being laid off, I arrived timely at the SIT office and walked into the boss' office with Zhenzhen, Xueqing, and Miao Miao. Boss was currently looking over the stock analysis in the paper. When he was done, he asked me what thoughts I had, so I shared the developments we'd made—

First, Ye Xiaolou had already died, so the chance of her being the killer was

nearly zero. The chance of her being the ghost was also nearly zero because the ghost made a hasty escape after being shot. It was unheard of in ghost legends for ghosts to be hurt from bullets.

Second, the female ghost was not a single person. There were definitely two people involved. One of them was pretty strong, but since she had a bullet wound, it wouldn't be that hard to identify her. Moreover, she left quite a bit of blood in the woods. After collecting and analyzing it, we should be able to ID her.

Third, Supervisor Yu may be involved in the case. We haven't ruled out the possibility that she's the mastermind behind it all. We'll have to put more efforts into this investigation.

Fourth, Prof Xiao and Xiao Yixuan are father and son. Because of their odd behavior, we cannot rule out the possibility that they are involved with the missing hearts case at the general hospital.

Fifth, we may be able to find some clues from the human-skinned doll that the female ghost left behind. We've handed it over to the tech team for laboratory analysis.

The Boss listened to my analysis, his eyes still on his paper. Then, in an indifferent tone, he said, "I've already met with the hospital director. They've been keeping track of the missing hearts and they seem to be sure that it's Xiao Yixuan's doing. But because of his relationship with Xiao Guoqiang, they can only open one eye and close the other. They'd like for the police to take care of things quietly, but don't touch a single hair on Xiao Yixuan until you have undeniable evidence. Otherwise, it will put a strain on their relationship with Xiao Guoqiang which would be rather difficult for them."

"How much power does Prof Xiao have that even the hospital directors are scared of him? Won't everything be taken care of if we arrest the the father and son pair?!" Zhenzhen said with disdain.

"Good question. Let Ah Mu explain it to you!" Boss handed the question over to me and continued reading the paper. I helplessly forced a smile. "Prof Xiao is a very influential person in the medical world. We either have to uproot him completely or we can't touch him. Other things aside, he has eyes everywhere, which is a problem. If he finds out we want to persecute him, and he incites his

students to leave, it'll be problematic. You have to know that his students are all elite people in the cardiovascular field. Especially at the general hospital. Nearly thirty percent of the cardiovascular students are his understudies. And the other seventy percent probably have a decent relationship with him. What if they all run? If the entire CV department is evacuated, will the executives eat well? If he goes to complain to the media and news of this gets out, even if the government can order a ban on the reports, it won't stop discussion on the internet."

"Then are we supposed to just leave him alone?" Zhenzhen was seething, as if she was facing her greatest enemy.

"You have to make sure you hit the snake head on and not the grass. Now go find the stick to hit the snake!" Boss' head was still fixed on his newspaper, and he didn't even raise his head.

"What's with hitting snakes and grass? What's that got to do with the case?" Zhenzhen's question really made me suspect that her IQ was under 90. I said to her, "The boss doesn't want us to hit the grass and alert the snake. If we want to catch Prof Xiao, we have to gather enough evidence to take him down with a single hit."

"I just didn't hear clearly before. I don't need you to explain." Zhenzhen tried to save some face.

"Alright, enough with the talk. Get to work." Boss beckoned with his hand for us to leave.

"Don't rush us off like donkeys just yet. There's still something I need to ask of you!" I told the boss.

Boss glanced over at me. "If you're asking for money, forget it!"

I laughed. "If I was out of money, I would ask Sis-in-law, no need to trouble you. What I want are the eight pieces."

Boss shot me another glance. "Don't you dislike guns? You never took them when I gave it to you before. Now you're coming to ask me for it?"

"I used to have Xiao Xiang to cover me. The situation's different now. You have to think about my safety! But I'm not asking for a gun this time either. Just get me some pepper spray."

“If you don’t want a gun, then that’s easy. I’ll fill in a slip and you can just go get it.” The boss put down his newspaper and wrote us a certificate.

The so-named ‘eight pieces’ were simply a policeman’s basic equipment. Gun, ammunition, handcuffs, extendable baton, pepper spray, flashlight, walkie talkie, and a notebook. I can’t use a gun. With my shooting ability, it would take about five rounds of ammunition to hit the suspect’s heel, even if I studied the Three Represents seriously. As for handcuffs, we originally had those. I wouldn’t use a baton stick much, so I just wanted the pepper spray. (Note: the Three Represents are duties of the Communist party, to represent (1) productivity of an advanced society, (2) forward progress of advanced culture, and (3) the fundamental interests of the people)

Since we were already writing up a certificate, we might as well equip the rest of the team as well. Xueqing already had a gun, so she didn’t need any new equipment. Zhenzhen wanted the baton, and Miao Miao wanted pepper spray like me. Since Wei ge was a ‘temp worker’ and his morals were somewhat questionable, he didn’t get anything.

After the boss handed over the certificate, I didn’t rush off to collect the equipment. Instead, Wei ge had some info for me about Mermaid Syndrome.

“It’s pretty rare, with a probability of about one in seventy thousand. Since the founding of our country, the number of cases can be counted on one hand. It’s rare worldwide as well.” Wei ge’s report finished in less than a minute.

“Is it hereditary?” I lit a cigarette for Wei ge.

“Yes, but that’s only one possibility. The medical world doesn’t understand much about this disease. What is known is that most babies born with it don’t live very long after their birth. There’s only been one case overseas, where the kid lived until 16.” Wei ge blew out some smoke. “You can’t use this to find out who Ye Xiaolou’s partner was though, since there’s no record of any cases of the disease in our province.”

As Wei ge said, I was indeed planning on using the Mermaid Syndrome case to find the person who impregnated Ye Xiaolou, because I suspected that the human-skinned doll had been made out of her baby’s skin. Unfortunately, my hopes were dashed on that front.

After receiving our equipment, we headed back to the university. Xueqing and Miao Miao continued to monitor Prof Xiao, and Zhenzhen and I headed to the camphor woods to help the tech team collect evidence. I also tried to make some time to check up on Supervisor Yu.

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When we arrived to the camphor woods, the tech team was already busy working. Their sergeant was a smart and beautiful woman named Gui Yuetong. We'd probably be considered old acquaintances, but...

"Ah Mu, good seeing you. I thought you'd been long ago slaughtered by a thief." Yuetong's greeting was really quite embarrassing.

"With the beauty Gui's blessing, I'm sure I'll live as tenaciously as Xiao Qiang." Like a Pekingese dog, I bowed to her, and then I introduced Zhenzhen who was standing beside me. "This is my partner. Her name is..."

Before I could finish, Yuetong grabbed Zhenzhen's hand and said affectionately, "If you're going to be Ah Mu's partner, you'd best be careful. This guy is really unreliable. He's the one who lost my boyfriend. It's already been two years, and I still haven't heard a thing from him..."

Yes, Yuetong's boyfriend was my old partner, Xiao Xiang. Two years ago, he mysteriously went missing, and up until today, there's been no news from him. As his partner, I couldn't say something like I had no responsibility in it, so I simply remained silent in front of Yuetong.

Although Yuetong always looked at me with a bad expression, she never let it affect her work, otherwise she wouldn't have been able to become the sergeant of the tech team at the young age of 26. Before we arrived, she and her subordinates had already collected evidence from the scene of the female ghost shooting. I told her about the path the female ghost and I ran as well as where I'd lost her, and then she led her subordinates to investigate those areas.

We followed the path that the ghost took to escape, and on the path, we found traces of the ghost's blood. But as we got closer to the edge of the woods, there was less blood visible. As we approached a tall, white camphor tree, the blood disappeared from the ground. After Yuetong had her team start collecting evidence around the tree, she started talking to Zhenzhen, but it was obvious

that her words were meant for me to hear. “From the amount of blood that the culprit lost, we can infer that before she left the woods, she would have fainted from loss of blood and her body might have even gone into shock. However, on the path of her escape, we’re discovering less blood the further we go. That’s impossible unless she wrapped up her wound immediately after she was shot or she has unimaginable self-healing abilities.”

“She started running immediately after she was shot. There was no time to wrap the wound,” I said.

“If she really had such astonishing self-healing abilities, then it’s possible her wound has already healed. It will be very unlikely then, that we’ll be able to find her from the gunshot wound.” Yuetong was still speaking to Zhenzhen.

“Sergeant!” Yutong’s subordinate, Langping, pulled out a cloth that was stained with a small amount of blood from atop the white camphor tree. He reported, “This cloth should have been caught by the tree branch as the culprit ran away. Look...” He pointed at the broken branch that the cloth had been hanging on. “The broken branch is probably two meters high, and the tree trunk also has traces of blood.”

“Take it back to the lab for testing. It might give us some more clues.” Yuetong had Langping and the others investigate some more around the white camphor tree.

This white camphor tree was located at the edge of the woods. Its leaves had all fallen off, as if it were dead. From the location of the cloth and the traces of the blood on the tree trunk, the female ghost had definitely fled from Xueqing last night by climbing this tree.

After Yuetong and her team finished their evidence collection, I tried climbing the camphor tree, but it wasn’t easy. I tried for awhile, but was still unable to get up. Zhenzhen saw that I couldn’t make it up and pulled me down. Then, like a monkey, she started heading up the tree. However, just a moment later, she fell off with a shout, and she brought the entire tree down with her— The tree was actually hollow! At the top of the tree, there was a hole just barely large enough for a grown adult to climb into, and the hole went all the way down to the tree roots.

Langping and the others pulled the tree off Zhenzhen, and then Yuetong helped Zhenzhen up. She didn't fall from that high up and the tree wouldn't crush her to death, so I didn't worry about her. Instead, I crouched down and examined the hole left behind by the fallen tree.

It wasn't a large hole, but an adult human would just barely be able to enter it. Moreover, it was at a thirty degree angle, angled toward the female dormitory. Because the sunlight couldn't shine into the hole, I wasn't able to see how deep it went.

Zhenzhen clambered up and walked over to me, thinking to kick me again for not caring whether she was dead or alive. But when she saw the hole in the ground, she slowly dropped her raised leg.

I borrowed Langping's pocket flashlight and was about to head in to explore the hole, but Yuetong pulled me back. "You want to die? Until you help me find Xiwang, you'd better not die."

I pushed off her hand gently and laughed. "Before I hand Xiao Xiang back to you, I definitely won't die." Then I told Zhenzhen, "Hurry and call the fire department for support. I'll head down to take a look first. If I don't find anything in 15 minutes, I'll be back." And then I entered the dark hole.

After I entered, I pulled out my windproof lighter from my pocket and lit it. Although I had the flashlight, the lighter would give me an estimate on the amount of oxygen there was. If the flame went out, I'd have to get out as fast as I could.

The hole wasn't as deep as I thought. After about four meters or so, the tunnel stopped sloping down and evened out. After crawling forward another ten meters, I ended up in a more open space. With the pocket flashlight, I could barely make out that this was a 40sqm stone room, and an uncovered sarcophagus sat impressively at the center. I suspected I'd found the tomb that Uncle Liu previously spoke of.

As Uncle Liu said, this tomb was very simple, without much decoration. There were just four stone walls and a very simple sarcophagus. The cover to it was on the ground beside it. Perhaps because of the dorm's construction, parts of the room had caved in and the ground was covered with quite a bit of gravel. I

shined the flashlight into the coffin, but it was empty. I took a look around, but other than a hole at the top of the right wall of the room, there wasn't anything particular. The hole in the wall was smaller than the hole I climbed in from, but I could still crawl through. As I approached it though, I smelled something foul.

I shined the flashlight into the hole. It was deep, but also seemed to reflect some light. There was probably water inside. I pinched my nose and climbed into it. Turns out it was a sewer crawl space. As I was about to head further in to explore, my lighter went out, and the filthy sewage smell emanating from beneath my feet made me lightheaded. It was obvious that the air in here was of very poor quality, and if I stayed too long, my life would be gone. Better just let the fully equipped firefighters search the place!

When I climbed back into the tomb, I couldn't help feeling my scalp tingle— There was someone else in the room. Because there wasn't much light, I couldn't see who it was, but from their body shape, it seemed to be a female. The female ghost? God, my life can't be gone just like this in this kind of place, meeting her face to face. And she was blocking the exit too. What should I do?!

– Strange Investigations Team –

Chapter 8

– Strange Investigations Team –

Volume 1

8 Who's the Female Ghost

When I crawled out from the sewer back into the tomb, there was a female figure in the room. Was it the female ghost?

As I was contemplating whether or not I should retreat back into the dizzying stench, the other person discovered my existence. She raised her right hand and a beam of light came at me, shining on my face. I couldn't open my eyes.

“Ah Mu, what are you doing? Why do you look like a sewer rat?”

Kao! The one who nearly scared me to death was just Zhenzhen. If I weren't afraid that she might beat me to death, I would've run to her and hugged her. To make her as dirty as myself.

I asked her why she crawled inside. She said that after waiting awhile above ground, I still hadn't come out, so she came in to check whether I was dead or alive. I sulkily replied, “I was originally fine, but after you came in, you nearly scared me to death.”

Because we were afraid that Yuetong would worry about us, we climbed back out. In any case, we didn't discover much inside the tomb, and because of the poor air quality in the sewage area, we couldn't continue searching there. We decided to leave and just wait for the firefighters to take a look.

Maybe because she was embarrassed, but on the way out, Zhenzhen insisted that I crawl out first. Although she had a rather exploding temper, she was still a girl. Crawling out with her ass in the air as a guy followed her probably wasn't something good. So I didn't say much and started crawling out first.

Before I moved very far, Zhenzhen's voice came from behind, “Ah Mu, did you hear that?”

“Hear what?” I didn’t pay much attention to her question.

“I heard a hissing sound.”

“I didn’t hear anything.”

“Then maybe I was mistaken...” After a pause, she said, “You stink. Hurry and crawl faster.”

“I didn’t make you crawl behind me.”

When the sunlight shined on me again, I felt very refreshed. Zhenzhen didn’t feel the same, and she kicked me away from her. Yuetong held her nose and kept her distance from me.

“Am I really that smelly?” I felt very helpless as I looked at my sewage covered clothes.

“Extremely. Hurry and go wash.” Zhenzhen kicked me again.

After the fire department arrived, I explained the situation to their captain, who was pinching close his nose. I told them about the sewer crawl space that they should search, and then I handed it over to Yuetong to take care of. Zhenzhen and I went to find Uncle Liu.

When we arrived at the security room, Uncle Liu wasn’t there. As we were about to leave, I saw him heading over from the gynasium.

“Ah Mu, how did you end up such a poor state?” Thankfully, Uncle Liu didn’t pinch his nose as he spoke to me.

“It’s a long story. Help me find some place to wash up first!” I helplessly forced a laugh.

Uncle Liu brought us to the washroom behind the security room. There was already soap there and he also brought me a change of clothes. Although his clothes didn’t really fit me, it was better than going naked, so I could only just deal with it. Zhenzhen had also gotten her clothes a bit dirty from going into the tomb, but since didn’t smell awful, she just washed her face after I finished showering.

After we washed up, Uncle Liu asked what happened to me. As the university’s security guard, he would eventually find out about the secret tunnel in the

woods, but I couldn't just haphazardly reveal sensitive case information to outsiders. So I just joked, "We went to catch rats!"

Uncle Liu seemed to understand that it wasn't convenient for me to explain, so he laughed and said, "It really isn't easy being a cop. Not only do you have to catch criminals, you also have to catch rats. Hahaha..."

"Uncle Liu, where were you coming back from?" I asked casually.

"I was just at the gym for a physical exam. They suddenly announced today that they were performing physicals today. All the teachers, and even I, had to participate. I thought there was going to be something about an infectious disease, but when we got there, they had us take off our clothes to examine our upper body. That was it, but I don't know why there were a bunch of your friends there as well."

"Ah, I'm not sure about it either. I'll go take a look." We said goodbye to Uncle Liu and then Zhenzhen and I headed to the gym. Actually, I wasn't uninformed about this matter. In fact, I knew about it very well, because this physical examination was setup by Boss. The intent was to find the female ghost who had been shot. Of course, I wasn't trying to hide this from Uncle Liu. It was just because of work. There were a lot of things I wouldn't even be able to tell my family.

When we arrived at the gym, the physical exams were nearly complete. I spoke to the officer in charge. They didn't find anything, not even any scars from a gunshot wound. Zhenzhen and I looked over the list of names. Nothing unusual was found on the bodies of Supervisor Yu, Prof Xiao and his assistant, Yaxian, Uncle Liu, *etc.* However, that didn't mean the ghost wasn't hiding in the school. Like Yuetong had said, it was possible the female ghost had some incredible self-healing ability.

As I was trying to figure out how to chase the ghost out, my phone rang. Yuetong was calling. "The beautiful Gui, how can this lowly one serve you?"

"Cut the crap and get over to the woods right now. Something's happened!" Yueong's tone was extremely serious, and it seemed that something major had come up. We didn't dare neglect the situation, so we rushed over to the woods.

There were four firetrucks stopped outside the woods, where there had only been one previously. We ran past the trucks, over to where I'd discovered the hole. There were three bodies lying still on the ground, and ten firefighters standing around sighing (in despair) and trembling. The captain who'd pinched his nose and spoken with me earlier was now sitting under a camphor tree, staring ahead with dull eyes, muttering, "Dead, dead, they're all dead..."

Yuetong was currently on the phone requesting forensic support on the scene. Beside her, there was only Langping. It seemed that the other team members had collected the evidence back for further investigation. Langping was currently crouched down, swinging a piece clothing or something else that was covered in mud.

"What happened?" I asked as Yuetong hung up the phone.

"After the three firefighters entered the sewer, they were attacked by some kind of creature..." Yuetong went over the details of the events that occurred—

After you two left, the captain sent three firefighters into the hole with protective gear and oxygen tanks. The entire time up until they entered the sewer, the captain was in contact with the firefighters via radio, and they didn't find anything significant.

But after they entered the sewer, one of the firefighters reported that there was very low oxygen content there and the methane content was increasing. Without oxygen equipment, a human wouldn't be able to survive in there for more than five minutes. Most animals wouldn't be able to live in such an environment either.

The sewer environment was very poor and the likelihood that it was the culprit's route of escape was very low, but considering that the culprit may have superhuman abilities, I asked them to keep searching. I would have never expected what came next.

The firefighters continued to search, and they found what they suspected was a complete snake skin. However, despite the poor environment, the skin didn't show any signs of decay. Even more surprising was that this snake skin had human-like arms.

After the firefighters reported in, a piercing scream came from their end of the

walkie talkie. Then there was a chaotic sound of a collision, followed by a chilling silence. But if you listened carefully, you could still hear a faint hissing and the sound of food being swallowed. After awhile, there was nothing being transmitted, perhaps because the sewage water broke the walkie talkie.

When reinforcements arrived, they only found three corpses and a strange 'snake' skin...

Langping rolled out the so-called snake skin, and as Yuetong said, it was indeed a strange snake skin. All in all, it was about two meters in length. Although the sewage had blackened it, it was surprisingly still in one piece and complete. Aside from the long crack on the back, it didn't appear to be damaged in any way, and there were no signs of decay. The lower body of the snake skin appeared as a thick and long tail. The upper body had the physique of a child, but its arms were somewhat long. The neck was about 40cm long, and the head was both human-like and snake-like.

I suddenly recalled the human-skinned doll that the female ghost left behind. The doll had a slightly protruding mouth and conjoined legs. Could it be...

"Seems like the true owner of the human-skinned doll has already grown up," Yuetong voiced my thoughts aloud.

Although I felt the developments were outlandish, with what was right in front of my eyes, I couldn't help but speculate. While Ye Xiaolou was studying at the medical university, she'd been involved with a non-human entity and then given birth to an abnormality. And this abnormality was a strange creature, half human and half snake. Just like a snake, it would occasionally shed its skin. One of those times, perhaps the first time that it shed, its skin was turned into a doll. It was probably the one that the female ghost left behind. Taking the age into consideration, the current 'snake demon' skin would have come from its most recent shedding. That means, it was very likely that it was the snake demon that killed the three firefighters in that sewer!

"Now what? Should we block the hole?" Zhenzhen asked. "Otherwise, if that monster comes out, there'll be big problems."

"If it wants to come out, we won't be able to stop it. The sewer connects all around and leads out to manholes. We can't possibly block off all of them!"

Moreover, the connecting channel between the tomb and the sewer, as well as the tunnel into the cave, were probably dug out by that thing.” After saying that, I called the boss for his instructions on how to proceed.

After Boss listened to my explanation of the events, he was silent a moment. Then he said, “It will be impossible to conduct a massive manhunt in the sewers. I would have to request that from the minister. I’ll immediately notify the Armed Police to cordon off the area. We’ve got to keep news of this from getting out right now though, else it will cause mass public panic, which will just be a mess.”

After speaking with Boss, I called Wei ge and asked him to get me a map of the sewer tunnels around the medical university within thirty minutes, regardless of the method.

“Getting the tunnel plans is easy. Five minutes should be enough. The problem is that I can’t drive. How can I get them to you in 25 minutes? The university is in the suburbs!” From the phone came Wei ge’s voice, along with the tapping sound of a keyboard.

“I don’t care if you have to take a plane or train. If you don’t get the plans to me in thirty minutes, I’ll let Xueqing turn you into a eunuch!” I shouted into the phone, about to hang up.

“Before you turn me into a eunuch, let me tell you something first!” Wei ge’s voice was slightly smug and flippant.

“Don’t keep me in suspense. Tell me already.” I really was in the mood to BS with him. We had deaths, three of them at once. Could I be in a good mood?

Wei ge could obviously hear from my tone that I wasn’t in a good mood, so he cut to the chase. “The poster of the school photo just replied to me. She said that not only did she know the four girls in room 106, she lived next door to them and knew them quite well. In their last semester, all four of them became very strange. They would keep their door locked all day long, and they rarely talked to or played cards with everyone else. Even stranger was that the loathsome dorm supervisor suddenly had a personality change. She would deliver food and things to them every day, and she even warned everyone else not to bother them. And so, the entire semester long, the door to room 106 was always closed. Before that, everyone had always just stopped into each others’

rooms. Everyone had jokingly asked if they'd become friends with the supervisor, but they would always avoid answering the question. This situation continued on until the end of the semester, when the murder happened."

"As to whether or not Ye Xiaolou had a boyfriend, she said that she'd never heard Xiaolou mention having a partner. But she had once seen Xiaolou head into the camphor woods behind the dorm at night with a 40 or 50 year old man, and they seemed pretty close. But since it was nighttime and the trees blocked the light, she didn't see what the old man looked like. And when she mentioned it to Xiaolou in conversation, she would evade the question."

For someone with the qualifications of Ye Xiaolou, for her to be attracted to a 40 or 50 year old man, he must have been wealthy or successful. Prof Xiao fits both of those conditions. Could he have been Ye Xiaolou's boyfriend?

"She also told me something else very important," Wei ge's voice interrupted my thoughts. "Two of the girls who lived in room 106, Xia Yulan and Yue Yingqing, stayed at the school to work after graduation. Although she hasn't kept in touch with them, so she's not sure if they're still there. I've already gone through the school's personnel, even cleaning staff, but I didn't find those names. Still, we can't rule out that they've changed their names."

After I hung up the phone, I got lost in my thoughts again. Did Prof Xiao get involved and impregnate Ye Xiaolou? Did those two girls who lived in room 106 still work at the school? If yes, then were they the two ghosts that Xueqing and I met in the woods?

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"Ah Mu, what are you thinking about so deeply?" Liunian and Asst Zhonggang walked over to us.

"What would I call you out for other than a dead person?" I had Liunian examine the three corpses.

The three firefighters' bodies were covered in sewage and let off a vomit-inducing smell. As Zhonggang approached the body, he couldn't help pinching close his nose, and then he immediately put on his mask. Liunian, on the other hand, seemed as if he couldn't smell anything, and pulled on his rubber gloves to start examining. Perhaps it was because he'd already seen many corpses, so he'd

long ago gotten used to the smell.

All three bodies were facing upwards on the floor, and there weren't any obvious wounds. After taking photos, Liunian and Zhonggang turned a body over and immediately discovered a hole in its back. When they turned over the other two bodies, it was the same. After a bit of examination, Liunian said, "All three of them died due to their hearts being pulled out, but it's a bit different from the student before. In the student's case, his heart was pulled out by a right hand that was missing a middle finger, but in these cases, the hearts appear to have been dug out by a 10 year old child's hands."

The cause of death was just as I'd suspected, but from Liunian's verdict, I reached a conclusion— The murderer that killed the three students was not the same one that killed the three firefighters.

As Liunan and other medical staff helped to carry the three bodies out, the Armed Police had arrived and started cordoning off the area. Yuetong and Langping took the snake skin back for examination. Zhenzhen and I had no reason to remain any longer, so we left the woods, intending on checking up on Supervisor Yu.

There were lots of students watching from outside the woods. Yaxian and her roommates were among them. When they saw me, they waved, and then when I approached them, they asked about what happened. Had another student been killed by the female ghost, and the like.

I put on a serious tone and said, "I can tell you guys, but the more you know, the more danger you'll be in. If the female ghost takes notice of you guys, don't blame me!"

The girls trembled in fear and all quipped up that they didn't want to know anything. Just as we were about to leave, Yaxian suddenly pulled me to the side. She told me quietly, "I suspect that Supervisor Yu is the murderer."

"Based on what?" I asked.

"Last night, I heard walking in the corridor again. So I mustered up my courage and opened the door a sliver to look outside. Then I saw Supervisor Yu open the door to room 106."

“She’s the supervisor. It’s not strange for her to patrol the rooms.”

“But it was nearly 3 o’clock in the morning. If she was patrolling, she wouldn’t do it that late! Moreover, she was wearing white clothes at the time and her hair was all messed up. If not for her jade bracelet, I wouldn’t have known it was her,” Yaxian said seriously.

When we ran into the female ghost last night in the woods, Supervisor Yu had been eating with Zhenzhen. She couldn’t have been in the woods as well. But then why was she pretending to be the female ghost? Perhaps room 106 carried a secret that she couldn’t share with others, and that’s why she deceived and scared the students.

After saying goodbye to Yaxian, I saw Xueqing and Miao Miao walk towards us.

“Ah Mu ge, why are you dressed like an old man?” Miao Miao circled around me, like I was a monkey on display.

“It’s a long story!” I laughed helplessly. Then I asked Xueqing, “Any movements on Prof Xiao’s end?”

Xueqing coldly and seriously responded, “There was nothing unusual with Prof Xiao, but I found out that his assistant, Zeng Qianyi, is missing a finger...”

“What? Do you have more details?”

“I thought it was strange before. Because she always wears gloves, it stuck in my mind. She was just washing her hands at the sink outside the toilets, and when she pulled off her glove, something fell out. Looking carefully, I realized that it was a fake finger. When I looked back at her hand, she was missing half of her middle finger. The ghost that got shot last night was also missing half of her middle finger. And the autopsy report for the two dead students also reported that the killer was likely missing a middle finger.”

“So now that we’re sure she’s one of the female ghosts, we should immediately arrest her,” Zhenzhen said excitedly.

“This alone isn’t proof that she’s the female ghost. Moreover, she’s got Prof Xiao’s backing, so we can’t act prematurely. If we beat the grass and alert the snake, it will be very hard to continue investigating later.” After thinking for a moment, I added, “Xueqing, would you be able to retrieve her saliva or hair?”

“You want to test her DNA?”

“Mm, there was blood at the scene of the shooting. If we can get a sample of her saliva or hair, we’ll be able to see if she is or isn’t the female ghost.”

Xueqing nodded slightly, “Okay. Getting her hair won’t be hard, but she has long hair, so it might not be that easy to get the hair follicle. But give me some time and it shouldn’t be a problem. I’ll get to work now.”

“Do you want me to come along?” Zhenzhen asked.

“More people will just be more troublesome,” Xueqing said before she turned away and walked off quickly. After she left, Zhenzhen complained to me, “Xueqing really is something, like I’m more of a nuisance than I am helpful.”

“Although Xueqing jie is a little bit odd, she treats me really well.” Miao Miao watched as Xueqing walked away, and then she suddenly pulled at my shirt. “What should I do now?”

I snapped, “Follow us then. If you get lost, that’ll be more trouble.”

“If you guys didn’t watch out for me, I really would lose my way!” Miao Miao’s words nearly knocked us out.

Xueqing was taking care of Zeng Qianyi and Wei ge hadn’t arrived yet, so I decided to check out room 106 again, hoping to find out what secret Supervisor Yu was hiding.

– Strange Investigations Team –

Chapter 9

– Strange Investigations Team –

Volume 1

9 Mastermind Behind the Scenes

When we arrived at the female dormitory, Supervisor Yu was once again sitting there, yawning. After I woke her up and informed her that we wanted to look at room 106 again, she complained a bit, but in the end, she still brought us to the room.

Because class was currently in session, most of the students were in the academic building. The ones who didn't have class now had gone over to check out what was happening at the woods, like Yaxian and her roommates, so the dorm was very quiet. Room 106 was ever the same and nothing seemed out of place. I knew there was something wrong, but I just hadn't discovered it yet.

After we entered the room, the lively and boisterous Miao Miao had become very quiet. And then she fainted. Thankfully Zhenzhen was beside her and able to catch her. I pinched her to wake her up and even asked her what was the matter and if she was alright. Her response nearly made me faint. "There are a lot of pigs here!"

"A lot of pigs? Are you okay? Do you have a fever?" Zhenzhen felt Miao Miao's forehead and then said, "You don't have a fever, so what are you talking about?"

"There are really a lot of pigs here... A lot and a lot... I can't count how many... There are also a lot of people... Some tens of them..." Miao Miao didn't seem quite right in her mind. Her eyes were slightly glazed over, her speech was somewhat ambiguous, though we could barely hear it.

"They seem to want to tell me..." Although Miao Miao seemed to be spouting nonsense, but my instinct was telling me that her words would give us some clues. So I asked, "What are they telling you?"

“Their voices are very quiet... They’re all circling around there...” Miao Miao seemed extremely tired. It looked like it took a lot of effort for her to raise her hand and point at a corner.

There was a large box in that corner, filled with damaged badminton rackets. Nothing strange about that. I looked through it and then turned back to look at Miao Miao with confusion, starting to suspect that perhaps she really was speaking nonsense. Her finger pointed downward at the floor under the box and said feebly, “Under...”

I pushed the box aside. The floor was cleaner and not covered in ash, but that’s because a box had been sitting there, so there was nothing strange about that. But Miao Miao kept pointing at the floor, repeating, “Under... Under...”

I knocked gently on the floor and realized that the sound was especially crisp, which made me want to pull it up. I thought I would have to exert some effort, but after sliding a key under, the floorboard popped right out.

After I pulled out the floorboard, a 30cm-wide hole appeared, the bottom not visible. Inferring from the distance between the hole in the woods and the tomb, this room was about three or four meters away from the tomb. Where the two connected?

I looked over at Supervisor Yu who unconsciously avoided my gaze. She stammered out, “Why are you looking at me? I don’t know why there’s a hole in here.”

Supervisor Yu obviously had a guilty conscience, but finding a hole in the dorm didn’t prove anything. Thankfully, Miao Miao’s ‘nonsense’ pointed me to another box. She pointed at a very inconspicuous box and said, “Basketball... They’re all circling the basketball...”

Zhenzhen had previously gone through the box that Miao Miao pointed at. It was filled with a lot of old basketballs. I poured out the basketballs inside and took a glance at Supervisor Yu. Her complexion was very poor, as large drops of sweat started emerging from her forehead. There was nothing strange about the basketballs at the top of the box. They were just old and worn. But when I pulled out an obviously cracked basketball from the bottom, I immediately felt it was strange— This old basketball was much heavier than the others.

There was obviously something stuffed inside this ball. I reached inside and there was a plastic bag of what appeared to be nut shells or something. I pulled out the entire bag, but before I even saw clearly what was inside, Supervisor Yu called out nervously, “It wasn’t me. I didn’t put that in there.”

She was so nervous because I pulled out a bag of poppy seeds from the basketball, about 500g. I finally realized why her restaurant’s food was so particular and why it made people addicted to it. It was because they added addictive poppy seed powder.

“The more you try to hide it, the more obvious it is. Aside from you, who else has keys to this room?” I lifted up the bag of poppy seeds and stepped over to Supervisor Yu. I told her seriously, “Drug possession isn’t a minor offense. This amount of poppy seeds is enough to put you away for half a lifetime.”

Actually, possession, transport, trafficking, and stockpiling a small amount of poppy seeds wasn’t really a criminal offense, unless you had more than 200kg of it. The amount in my hands was at most half a kilo, which would only result in a fine of several thousand yuan. But she was obviously unaware of the rules and regulations on this regard, otherwise she wouldn’t try to scare off the students. So I used this to exaggerate the charges against her, to force her to spill the things she knew.

From Supervisor Yu’s paper white face, I suspected I was successful, so I started to get a confession. “You’d better tell me everything that you know, and maybe I won’t have seen anything. Otherwise...” I swung the plastic bag in my hands. In a serious voice, I said, “Otherwise, you can wait for your jail cell! Hurry and talk. What secrets are hiding in this room? How are you related to the female ghost with a baby? Why did you trick Zhenzhen into eating dinner with you yesterday? What’s your motive?!”

“Th-th-this story goes back ten years...” Supervisor Yu was frightened to tears. With a trembling voice, she started to tell us about the circumstances surrounding the situation—

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Ten years ago, there was a girl named Ye Xiaolou who lived in room 106. She was very pretty and had a lot of pursuers. Often times, boys would run over to

the back of the dorm at night to play guitar and sing love songs to her through the window. But she was never moved by any of her pursuers, instead focusing on her studies.

Afterwards, her stomach gradually started to bloat up, and it was obvious that she was pregnant. It's actually not uncommon to see students getting pregnant, but no one had ever seen her dating anyone, so everyone found it very strange. But no matter how strange it was, it didn't have anything to do with my supervision duties, so I didn't worry about her situation.

During the Spring Festival break that year, most of the students returned home. Only the girls in room 106 stayed here, but it wasn't really strange for students to stay at school over holidays. I didn't mind. I just told them to keep safe and avoid bringing me trouble. But then on the first day of the break, Prof Xiao personally came to pay me a visit. Previously, we had just been two people who worked at the same university who would occasionally run into each other. We didn't really know each other, so I'd been very overwhelmed by it.

When he arrived, he got straight to the point and said, "Room 106's Ye Xiaolou is my student. She's... pregnant, and she'll be delivering soon. I hope you can help watch after her..."

I knew that Ye Xiaolou was in the same class as his son, and I'd seen his son pursue Xiaolou before. Now that he was coming to me with such a message, even a fool would know that the baby in her belly was his grandchild. Since he personally came to visit me, I couldn't reject his plea. Considering his position at the school, with just a word from him to the president, I'd be out of a job.

The day that Xiaolou had the baby, he once again came over to help, but his son was nowhere to be seen. This made me suspect whether the child in her belly was his grandchild or his child.

Although he wasn't an obstetrician, he was still somewhat familiar with those matters. I'd also given birth before, and the three girls also helped, so the delivery went very smoothly. But... But, she'd given birth to a deformed creature!

It was the most frightening baby I'd ever seen. It's legs were stuck together. It's mouth was larger than the average baby's, and it also protruded somewhat.

Moreover, when it was born, it already had four sharp teeth in its mouth. What was even more frightening was that it could crawl before its eyes even opened. Covered in blood, it crawled onto its mother's body. I was terrified and didn't know what to, so I just stayed still and stared. The others, including Prof Xiao, were the same.

The freak's legs were stuck together, but it wasn't slow when it crawled. It was very agile and in a moment, it crawled onto Xiaolou's chest. It started scratching and biting until it tore her clothes and her breast was exposed, and then it started biting onto it. I originally thought it was trying drink breastmilk, but then I heard Xiaolou's piercing scream and I saw blood flow down her breast. Then I realized it had bitten its mother's breast and was feeding on her blood. It was just too horrifying!

After that, Prof Xiao gave me a sum of money and wanted me to cook healthy supplements for Xiaolou, and he wanted me to keep this secret; I couldn't let anyone know that she'd given birth to a freak. At the time, my husband's restaurant was doing well and he was planning to close it. I wanted to help my man get a job at the school cafeteria. Since the professor was requesting my help, I figured he wouldn't reject my request.

He thought about for a moment and then told me, "Arranging for a job for your husband isn't difficult, but the wages may not be desirable. How about this. I have several friends working in traditional medicine. Perhaps they can help acquire some poppy seeds for you..." After that, he would give me some poppy seeds every few months. After my man added the poppy seeds to his food, business got better and better each day.

Because our business was revived by Prof Xiao's poppy seeds, I didn't dare neglect the things he'd entrusted to me. Not only did I send Xiaolou food and soup every day, after school started, I didn't let the other girls randomly enter her room, lest they find out about her giving birth to a freak.

That freak was really very strange. It never cried or made a fuss. Other than biting its mother's breast to feed on blood, it spent all its other time sleeping. So none of the other girls found out about it.

But later, the freak's appetite grew, and it only sucked blood from the breast,

nowhere else. It was obviously too hard for Xiaolou alone. No matter how many health supplements I sent to her, her complexion just got paler and paler each day. So then the other three girls started to feed the freak as well, which improved the situation somewhat. During that time, Prof Xiao continued to send me money each month, asking me to make the girls health supplements. Since there was a decent amount of money to be earned, I was happy to do the work. I never expected what was to come...

After Xiaolou killed Qiongzhi, the freak disappeared. At first, I thought Prof Xiao had taken it away, but the next day, Prof Xiao told me that room 106 had a hole in the floor. He told me to drop a pig's heart into the hole every night, and then on the 15th of each (lunar) month – the full moon – he would bring me a human heart to throw in. I suspected he must be hiding the freak down in the hole, because only that freak would eat such disgusting things.

Every night, I would carry a heart into the room where a murder once happened. It wasn't anything splendid, and sometimes I had to carry in a human heart. I was worried that the girls in the dorm would discover the situation. Coincidentally, that was the time when rumors started going around about a female ghost in the camphor forest. So then, every night when I went to deliver the pig heart, I would change into white clothes and mess up my hair, scaring the girls so that they wouldn't dare to come out...

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After listening to Supervisor Yu's account, I said, "Since everyone suspected that there was a ghost here, if you hid the poppy seeds here, no one would discover it."

"This... Prof Xiao gave it to me. I don't know about it," Supervisor Yu avoided my point.

"You really don't know about it?" I put on a serious tone and said, "If you didn't know that poppy seeds were an illegal substance, would you have needed to hide it?"

"I don't know. I really don't know..." Supervisor Yu started to cry.

Zhenzhen glared at me, as if I were using some horrendous methods to bully this old woman. I shrugged and smiled helplessly at her. Then I turned back to

Supervisor Yu and continued my intimidation. “Then you should at least know about last night. Why did you trick Zhenzhen into leaving the school? Are you working together with the female ghost?! You must surely know that murder is punishable with execution by firing squad!”

“I’m not involved, I’m not involved. I have no relation to the female ghost whatsoever. I didn’t kill anyone.” Supervisor Yu kept waving her hands frantically.

“Then why did you invite Zhenzhen out to your restaurant?” I snapped.

I’d frightened Supervisor Yu and she started trembling. She stuttered, “I-it was Prof Xiao who instructed me to do so. Last night, he called me and told me to find the female officer who was working on the female ghost case. Then I should bring her to the restaurant, and make sure she didn’t return before 11 o’clock. He even specified that I should bring her to a private room.”

“Why a private room?” I asked.

“Maybe because the walls of the room are soundproofed. Most phones don’t get signal inside.”

So that was it. Even if Zhenzhen had taken her phone along with her, I probably wouldn’t have been able to contact her. Looks like Prof Xiao isn’t an easy opponent. He likely discovered that Xueqing was monitoring him, so he had Supervisor Yu divert Zhenzhen and then led Xueqing and me into the woods. Then he called on the female ghost to attack us.

With the current situation, the mastermind behind the scenes would soon make an appearance. I still had to ask Supervisor Yu, “Do the other two girls from room 106, Xia Yulan and Yue Yingqing, still work at the medical university?”

“Yes, but they’ve changed their names. The library administrator, Pan Qiuxia, is Xia Yulan, and Prof Xiao’s assistant, Zeng Qianyi, is Yue Yingqing...” Supervisor Yu just revealed all I wanted to know. With the help of the policemen blockading the woods, I had Supervisor Yu escorted to the police station to make a detailed statement.

She’d unraveled all my suspicions, and now the case appeared very clear. Ten years ago, Prof Xiao got into a relationship with his student, Ye Xiaolou, which

resulted in her giving birth to a freak. Perhaps because she suffered from postpartum depression, she murdered her roommate, Qin Qiongzhi. To avoid public scandal, Prof Xiao hid the freak under the depths of room 106 and had Supervisor Yu feed it. However, as the freak must eat human hearts, he would steal the hearts from bodies at the hospital after their autopsies had been performed. When there weren't enough corpses in the medical university, he would have his son commit a crime and steal hearts from the general hospital's morgue. Then he had Xia Yulan and Yue Yingqing pretend to be female ghosts to kill in the camphor woods, in order to feed that freak— The very one that killed the three firefighters.

The fire in the library had obviously been caused by Xia Yulan. She'd painted the page in the records that listed the residents of room 106 with white phosphorous, and then she tampered with the fire extinguishers. If anyone tried to find information from those records, the information would be burned.

Of course, these were just my speculations. As for the truth of the matter, we just had to arrest and question Prof Xiao to find out. The problem now was that Yue Yingqing, situated beside Prof Xiao, had superhuman abilities, so catching them would be difficult. Moreover, the crafty Prof Xiao was unlikely to outright confess his crimes.

When I had the officers escort Supervisor Yu to the station, I originally wanted to let Miao Miao leave with them. But when we left room 106, the seemingly half-dead girl gradually came back to life, and then she chattered on endlessly with Zhenzhen. When I offered for her to leave first and go home to rest, she just wouldn't leave.

I suddenly thought about how Miao Miao had played a part in the supervisor's confession. Although she had just been spouting off seeming nonsense, it did lead us to find out more details. Had the boss perhaps recruited her to the Strange Investigations Team because he knew of her superhuman ability?

Not long after we sent off Supervisor Yu, Wei ge appeared in front of me. I lifted my leg to give 'little Wei' a kick, but he dodged me.

"Kao, you dare to dodge?! I told you to get here within thirty minutes, but you dillydallied for an entire hour." Like the saying goes, a newly wed wife is just like

a child. You had to beat up a guy like Wei ge once in awhile so he understood why flowers were so red.

“Mu, old buddy, you have to know that it’s lunch time. The roads are jam packed right now.” Wei ge’s voice showed he was obviously aggrieved. I felt a bit bad for messing with him. After all, even if he’d arrived half an hour earlier, it wouldn’t have been much more helpful. Right now, the first matter we needed to take care of wasn’t the snake demon in the sewers, but rather the mastermind behind the scenes, Prof Xiao.

After Wei ge handed the sewer plans over to me, I let him and Miao Miao take a stroll. In any case, they didn’t currently need to be here. They just needed to make sure to stay in contact. Then Zhenzhen and I got ready to ‘invite’ Prof Xiao and company back to the police station for questioning.

Just then, the crisp sound of gunfire rang across the campus. I knew that something had happened again. And indeed, Xueqing called me with some startling news. “Prof Xiao’s dead!”

– Strange Investigations Team –

Chapter 10

– Strange Investigations Team –

Volume 1

10 Abandon the Soldier to Save the General

Just as we were about to pull out the mastermind behind the scenes, an alarming shot of gunfire sounded. Xueqing called to inform me that Prof Xiao was dead. I was completely taken aback, and I only came back to my senses after Zhenzhen kicked me.

“What happened?” Zhenzhen asked.

“Prof Xiao’s dead!”

“Dead? Did he commit suicide to avoid punishment?!”

“If he wanted to commit suicide, would Xueqing have needed to fire? Let’s meet back up with Xueqing first.” Zhenzhen and I hurried over to the academic building.

Prof Xiao was killed in his lab. When we arrived, only Xueqing and a few teaching staff were present inside. A large group of students were watching from outside. We finally made it inside with some difficulty. I told Xueqing what we’d learned from Supervisor Yu, and then she told us what she’d found out—

After I parted with you guys, I came here in search of Zeng Qianyi, that is, Yue Yingqing, to pull out a few strands of hair. Then I heard the soft moaning of a woman. Presumably, it was Prof Xiao and his assistant with their illicit business.

I hid by the window, and though the doors and windows were shut tightly, I’ve received strict auditory training, so I heard very clearly what happened inside the lab room. At first, I only heard gasping, moaning, and other such obscene sounds. After awhile, it sounded like clothes ruffling, so it seemed that they’d concluded their business and were tidying their clothes.

“This is the last time,” came a female voice. It should have been Yue Yingqing.

“Ah, ah, I was just a bit careless today. I came too early, so you’re unhappy? When the master’s snake immortal son grows up and gives me a drop of that immortal blood, I’ll make sure you climax every day!” I couldn’t imagine such vulgar language coming out of a famous professor’s mouth, but aside from Prof Xiao, there were no other males in the lab room.

Then a slightly odd sound came. It seemed to be Prof Xiao pulling Yue Yingqing into his arms, but she was struggling. In a displeased voice, he said, “What? I’m too old?! Don’t you forget what kind of situation you’re in. Aside from me, the only ones who would do this with you are the dead, you poisonous woman!”

“I’m a poisonous woman. So what are you? As the saying goes, ‘without poison, a man cannot be great’ (a great man has to be ruthless). Not only are you malicious, your body is toxic. Aside from Qiuxia and me, hasn’t everyone you touched died?!” Yue Yingqing suddenly cried out.

“Y-you want to rebel? Do you believe me when I say I’ll make sure the master doesn’t give you any immortal blood. Then you’ll neither be able to live or die!” Prof Xiao shouted angrily.

“I’m afraid you want have that chance...” Another strange sound came from inside. One of them seemed to be retreating while the other was pressing forward. Someone kicked over some papers, and then Prof Xiao’s trembling voice came, “What are you trying to do? You dare to touch me? Not afraid that the master will take care of you?”

Yue Yingqing let out a sinister laugh, and then said coldly, “The one the master wants to take care of isn’t me, but you!”

“What? That can’t be. You’re lying to me! If not for me feeding the master’s snake immortal son, would it have lived to this day? And I’ve always obeyed the master. I’ve never gone against him or done anything wrong. Why would he want to kill me?” From the sound of it, Prof Xiao had retreated into a corner.

“Really? You’ve never done anything wrong?” Yue Yingqing turned ferocious. “Controlling Supervisor Yu with those poppy seeds was indeed a good idea. But did you ever think that since you could control her with those seeds, that the police could also extort a confession from her? Sooner or later, she will reveal your involvement. For the master’s path to immortality, and in order for us all to

live eternally, we can only sacrifice you. You wouldn't want your precious son, my good classmate, to rot behind bars, would you?"

"Ah!" Prof Xiao's scream sounded from the lab. I pulled out my revolver and kicked open the door. When I went into the lab, I saw Yue Yingqing licking the blood from her hands. She wasn't wearing any gloves, so I could see clearly that her blood-covered right hand was missing a middle finger. Prof Xiao was lying in a puddle of blood. From the wound on his chest, he probably died after his heart was pierced. For a famous cardiology professor's life to be taken by his assistant in such a manner, it's somewhat ironic, isn't it.

I pointed my gun at Yue Yingqing and told her to put her arms up or I'd shoot. She smiled slyly at me and slowly raised her hands, and then she suddenly escaped by jumping out the window. I immediately went over to the window, but she was already on the ground. She tumbled across the grass and ran off. I shot at her, but I didn't hit her. Even if I did hit her, it probably wouldn't have done anything, so I gave up trying to snipe her...

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After Xueqing's account, Zhenzhen asked, "So did you grab any of Yue Yingqing's hair?"

Although we were positive that Yue Yingqing was the female ghost that got shot last night, investigators must collect evidence. If there isn't adequate evidence, the criminal may be able to find a loophole out of their sentence. However, Xueqing disappointed Zhenzhen this time, because she didn't have the chance to get any of Yue Yingqing's hair.

"Whether we have the hair doesn't matter. This is enough." I crouched down by the trash bin and pointed at a wet paper towel. The towel had semen on it, which guaranteed that there would also be female secretion on it. We just had to hand this towel over to Yuetong, and if Yue Yingqing's DNA matched that of the ghost from last night, that would guarantee that she was one of the female ghosts.

Supposing that Yue Yingqing was one of the female ghosts, then the possibility of the other ghost being the library administrator, Xie Yulan, was very high. So now we knew who the female ghosts were, but who was the 'master' that Yue

Yingqing and Prof Xiao spoke of? Since Prof Xiao had been a disposable soldier, he wouldn't be the mastermind. He'd previously mentioned 'the master's snake immortal son.' That meant that the one who'd had relations with Ye Xiaolou ten years ago was, needless to say, not him, but this master person. Seems like this 'master' is the key to this case and the true mastermind!

After Xueqing called me, I immediately notified the Armed Police Force to block all exits to the campus and also asked them to do a search of the school. But we all knew that we wouldn't be able to get Yue Yingqing. She had superhuman abilities and this was her territory. She was familiar with every nook and if she were to venture into the sewers, we wouldn't be able to find her.

Catching Yue Yingqing wouldn't be easy, but catching Xia Yulan shouldn't be too hard. After the Armed Police arrived to the lab, we rushed over to the library, hoping to arrest Xia Yulan. However, when we got to the library, we were already a step too late.

Outside the library, there were many scared and helpless faces. I grabbed a male student and asked him what happened. His voice trembled as he said, "Murder, murder..."

"Who's the murderer? Who was killed?" I asked as concisely as possible.

"The administrator died... A woman killed her..." Although the boy's words weren't clear, I could still just barely make them out.

"It was Prof Xiao's assistant!" someone shouted out in the crowd. But I'd already guessed as much. Another soldier sacrificed.

Without regard to the students outside, we rushed into the library. It was empty and quiet, completely different from outside. We found Xia Yulan in a corner; she was the very same Pan Qiuxia who had previously helped Zhenzhen look up the student files. She was lying in a puddle of blood, her body convulsing as she exhaled deeply.

Zhenzhen was at the front of our group. She wanted to help Xia Yulan up, but Xia Yulan said faintly, "Don't. My blood... is poisonous..."

I had Xueqing call for an ambulance, and then I asked Xia Yulan, "Aren't you and Yue Yingqing working together? Why does she want to kill you?"

“Immortality... What lies, complete lies... We’re all just chess pieces. Xiaolou, Qiongzhi, everyone... Pieces that can be abandoned at any time for the safety of the general...” Xia Yulan was breathing with difficulty, and finally explained the truth—

Ten years ago, Xiaolou had relations with the master and became pregnant with an immortal seed. The master was afraid we would reveal this secret, so he had Xiaolou add his blood to our water bottles and poisoned us. His blood is like heroin. Once poisoned, you need to take an antidote each month. The pain that ensues from the treatment is unspeakable, but it was the difference between life and death. After taking one drop of his blood, not only did the pain immediately disappear, we were then be filled with a light, heavenly feeling. But once the poison came into effect again, without his blood, we would be tortured by pain. He’s been using this to threaten us for ten years. If we dared to disobey him, he wouldn’t give us any blood and let us feel the torturous pain of the poison.

After we were poisoned, not only did it cause us pain each month, our bodies also became toxic. On the night of my first time with my first love, he left this world. After that, we could only avoid intimate acts with other men. In the past ten years, other than my first love, only Prof Xiao has ever touched my body.

Prof Xiao originally had no involvement with this, but after he accidentally found out about Xiaolou and the master’s relationship, he was also coerced with the same method as us. Actually, coerced might not be the right word, because after taking the master’s blood, his body obviously became much better than before. His appearance also turned younger, so he was always loyal and devoted to the master.

After Xiaolou gave birth to the snake immortal, the master told us, “After the snake immortal becomes grown, he will give you each a drop of immortal blood. You will all become immortal, all-powerful, and you will be able to do all you please, to summon the wind and rain.” At first, I was somewhat suspicious of his words. But later on, I believed him completely, because Yingqing really been granted the snake immortal’s strength.

When the snake immortal was three months old, the master wanted one of us to offer up a finger to it. Whomever offered up their finger, that person would be granted its strength. At the time, everyone was very suspicious of the whole

ordeal. No one was willing to offer their finger aside from Xiaolou, but her body was very weak, so in the end, it was Yingqing who did it.

After the snake immortal ate half of Yingqing's middle finger, it started to shed. First, a crack split along its back, and then it climbed out from the skin. The master gave the skin to Yingqing and said it was the proof of her pact with the snake immortal. Then he gave her a drop of the snake immortal's blood. She later took the skin and turned it into a doll, the one that was lost in the woods last night.

After her pact with the snake immortal, Yingqing's body started to change. Her wounds from feeding the snake immortal would heal quickly, and they didn't leave scars. Her strength also increased. She's the one who broke the dorm window. It was to prevent the boys from secretly opening the window and finding out about the snake immortal's existence.

When the snake immortal was six months old, the day that we graduated, the master told one of us to offer up a heart to it. He said that whomever offered up their heart, their soul would fuse with the snake immortal's, and they would live eternally with boundless strength.

After having seen Yingqing's situation unfold, we all believed those words to be truth. We were all eager to sacrifice our heart, but in the end, we drew lots to decide. You already know the outcome of that; it was Qiongzhi. But what you don't know is that it wasn't Xiaolou who was in charge of taking her heart, it was Yingqing.

The master arranged for us to escape criminal charges by faking mental illness. By then, Yingqing already had great strength, so pulling out Qiongzhi's heart didn't require much effort. And since Qiongzhi had been fed the master's fresh blood, it wasn't at all painful for her when her heart was pulled out, so she didn't scream out.

Because Yingqing and I constantly required the master's blood to stop the poison, Xiaolou was left with the task of becoming the mental patient. She originally planned on pretending for two years, and after people gradually forgot about this case, she would start her new life. But who would have expected what was to come.

After the snake immortal consumed Qiongzhi's heart, Yingqing secretly dug out the hole from the dorm room to the tomb, and Supervisor Yu would drop in a pig's heart every night. The master said that on the night of the full moon, the snake immortal must eat a human heart. The best would be a living human's heart. So under Prof Xiao's instruction, Yingqing and I were brought in to work at the school. Every 15th of the lunar month, we would wait out in the woods to find an unassuming prey. The first time we delivered the heart to the snake immortal, we dug out the path from the woods to the tomb. If we were unable to find a fresh heart, Prof Xiao would take a heart from a body from the dissection class or steal one from the hospital's morgue, to give to Supervisor Yu to deliver to the snake immortal. That's how it's been for ten years...

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After hearing Xia Yulan's account, I finally understood why Prof Xiao called Yue Yingqing 'poisonous woman.' The term 'poisonous woman' originated from the Japanese Sengoku (Warring States) period. Legend has it that a famous ninja faction once trained three secret female ninjas. Each of them were devastatingly beautiful, but all of their blood, saliva, sweat, and other bodily fluids were highly toxic. Coming into contact with it would result in death for any normal human, and thus they were given the name 'poisonous woman.' Although the poisonous women's bodies contained toxins, they were still able to live ordinary lives. However, anyone they had intercourse with, or even shared a drink with, would be poisoned to death. According to unofficial records, even the evaporated sweat from a poisonous woman after a dance was sufficient to kill the members of the audience.

Yue Yingqing's situation was very similar to that of the poisonous woman, so it was no wonder Prof Xiao called her as such. However, the legend of the poisonous woman was little known. I was only aware of it because of a previous case I'd investigated, where I had to read up a lot on ninjutsu and related things. The fact that Prof Xiao had spoken of it so casually meant that he was a very learned man. But he was dead now, so it didn't matter. Right now, the important thing was luring out the mastermind behind the scenes.

"Was your and Yue Yingqing's surprise attack on us yesterday also the master's suggestion?" I asked.

Xia Yulan nodded with much difficulty. She said, “You all... know... too much.” She seemed to have gone into shock from excessive blood loss. After her eyes closed, they didn’t open again. I quickly asked, “Who is your master? Hurry and tell me!”

“L-Lu...” Her voice was very faint, and her eyes closed again— She was dead!

Oh God! You’d already said so much, but you couldn’t hold on for another second and finish the tale? And I thought that kind of thing only happened in wuxia stories. But complaining was futile. I asked Zhenzhen and Xueqing if they’d heard her, Lu what? They both shook their heads helplessly. I closed my eyes to think, to recall the other details of the case, hoping there would be someone named Lu...

“Could it be President Lu?!” I exclaimed with a slap to my leg. There was only person named Lu involved with this case. Head of the university, President Lu.

We couldn’t wait for our colleagues to arrive, and we immediately ran to the president’s office. Zhenzhen kicked open the office door, and we found Boss inside.

“Why do you have to break down the door? It wasn’t even locked.” Boss said this casually as he flipped through his newspaper. President Lu was sitting across from him, answering his phone that was ringing nonstop. He couldn’t even be bothered to notice us.

Eventually, President Lu hung up his phone. I showed him my credentials and said, “President Lu, I suspect that you are involved with numerous murder cases and directing others to assault a police officer. I hope you’ll return to the police station with us for further investigation!”

President Lu laughed helplessly and looked at Boss. Boss was still reading his newspaper, and without lifting his head, he said, “Ah Mu, you’ve guessed wrong this time. President Lu was playing mahjong with me all of last night. Our phones were off. We went to the restroom together once. Do you think he had the opportunity to make any moves?”

I put away my credentials and shrugged helplessly. “No wonder the physical exam this morning went so smoothly. You already set it up last night.”

“Ah...” President Lu let out a sigh. With another laugh, he said, “If I’ve done any wrong, it must have been offending Tai Sui. I lost money last night. And now, today, things are a big mess. Adding a few charges on probably won’t make a difference. Looks like I won’t be able to stay on as president for long. Old Mu, see if you can find any work for me!” (Note: to offend [Tai Sui](#); it has to do with folk religion, and the term means that you’ll have a bad year with your health or your job, etc.)

Boss laughed. “An old fox like you should just retire early. All your profits these years isn’t enough for you to live the second half of your life?”

President Lu laughed without responding.

Just as we were preparing to leave, my phone rang. It was Wei ge, but when I answered the phone, I just heard what sounded like a maniac’s nonstop laughter.

“What are you laughing about? We’re busy!” If Wei ge were in front of me, I would definitely have given him a kick. But I suspect Zhenzhen would have reacted faster than me.

“I’ve hit the jackpot!”

“Really? Goodbye!” It was enough that he didn’t mess anything up. If he hit the jackpot, it would most likely just be some confidential files on the web, so I didn’t have any great fantasy of his success. I was about to hang up.

“Don’t hang up yet. I’ve really succeeded here. I’ve caught Prof Xiao’s assistant!”

“What?! You’ve caught Yue Yingqing?!” I exclaimed. Everyone’s eyes on the scene landed on me.

– Strange Investigations Team –

Chapter 11

– Strange Investigations Team –

Volume 1

11 Sewer in the Nighttime

After finding that President Lu couldn't have been the mastermind, I had no clue where to turn. Wei ge suddenly called me and said he'd caught Yue Yingqing. To be honest, a crazy monkey like him being able to catch a pouncing mouse would have been strange enough, so when he said he'd caught the legendary killer female ghost, I wouldn't have believed him even if you beat me to death. You have to remember, she'd escaped from Xueqing and her gun twice.

“Aren't you together with Miao Miao? How did you end up chasing after a ghost?!” I suspected he'd lost his mind, so I wanted to see if he was still together with Miao Maio.

“Miao Miao's the one who brought me to catch her! Hurry over. We're near the storm drain to the sewer. Check the sewer map and you'll be able to find us.”

Wei ge catching Yue Yingqing was an impossible thing, but he knew that he'd have a big price to pay for joking about something like this. Even if Xueqing didn't turn him into a eunuch, Zhenzhen's fist would be enough to handle him. Was this another trap? Perhaps it wasn't Wei ge who'd caught Yue Yingqing, but rather, he and Miao Miao had been caught by her?

I opened up the sewer map. The storm drain was at the north-most part of the campus. It wasn't far from the female dorm. That made me suspect that this was a trap. But regardless of who captured who, we still had to make a trip over there. It would be best if Wei ge actually caught Yue Yingqing, but if it was the other way around, we still couldn't leave him and Miao Miao to die.

After I explained the situation to Boss, he said that all the police on the campus were under his orders and he would assist us if possible. But when I

asked for some Armed Police to protect us, he said, “The duties of the police are to protect the citizens. How can you ask for someone to protect you? Quit your nonsense and get moving!”

The snake immortal hiding in the sewers could come out at any moment and harm the defenseless students. Spreading the police force more thinly would indeed be difficult. I couldn't blame Boss for being heartless in this case. He had his own share of problems. There was no other option then. We just had to bite the bullet and go in. Hopefully, Wei ge had really caught Yue Yingqing. If not, Zhenzhen and Xueqing would hold up fine, but my little life might come to an end.

The sun was setting and the sky grew dark. We hurried over to the north end of the campus, but it was unusually secluded and deserted. At the open space near the drain, we found Wei ge and the others. This guy really caught Yue Yingqing. But she was lying on her side feebly and the pain on her face was very clear. Her body was covered with a yellow powder, and when you approached her, there was a slightly pungent smell. Wei ge wore slippers and his foot rested on top of her body. He shot us a V sign with his fingers, like he was taking a photo. From the tattered clothes on his body, it indeed looked like they'd had some kind of tussle, although the outcome was really inconceivable. Miao Miao was sitting at the side, not too far away. Her face looked very tired, like she'd just gone through a great deal of hardship.

Zhenzhen pulled out her baton and extended it in front of her, pointed at Ying Yueqing. On alert, she moved over to Miao Miao and helped her up. Xueqing pulled out her gun and pointed it at the female ghost, in case she suddenly tried to attack us. We were all on guard, but Wei ge said, “No need to be so anxious. She can't move.”

I looked at the yellow powder on her body and frowned. “That's not sulfur on her body, is it?”

“That's right, it's sulfur...” As if taking credit for his brilliance, he turned to us and sprayed out, “After we split up with you guys, we just walked around the campus. When we got close to the academic building, Miao Miao suddenly said she was dizzy, and then she said she saw Prof Xiao. Then she kept prattling on nonsense. She insisted that I help her over to this area. I could only do as she

asked. Thankfully she's not very heavy. If it were Zhenzhen, I wouldn't have been able to support her."

Zhenzhen glared at him furiously. "Am I fat?" Then he laughed embarrassed, "No, not fat. You're not fat."

So women did all care about being called fat. Zhenzhen was no exception. Although she had a very fit and healthy body, and you couldn't call her fat, she was tall and definitely much heavier than the tiny Miao Miao. Wei ge was just telling the truth.

Under Zhenzhen's murderous glare, Wei ge continued. "I helped Miao Miao over to this drain and saw that Yue Yingqing was preparing to enter it. Of course she discovered us. When she saw us, she bared her claws and charged at us. Of course, a wise man knows better than to fight with the odds against him. I wouldn't be able to win a fight against her, but I could still take the chance to run, so I ran with all my efforts."

"You ran off and left Miao Miao behind, right?!" I looked at him suspiciously, but he had the audacity to say, "I wasn't running away. It was a strategical retreat. Sacrificing part of the group was better than being completely annihilated. When you bring in a hundred guys to execute her to get revenge for Miao Miao, won't it all be good?"

"Mm, when I get the chance, I'll get revenge for you too," I quipped.

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Wei ge knew he was in the wrong, so he quit quibbling and continued the story. "Maybe it's because I'm just too handsome, but she didn't go after the sitting Miao Miao. Instead, she flew at me and pushed me onto the ground, her five claw-like fingers..." He glanced over at Yue Yingqing's four and a half fingered right hand, and coughed. "I should say, her four claw-like fingers were about to plunge into my heart. I immediately summoned my internal strength. I'm not afraid to tell you guys that I've studied the Nine Yin Scriptures. 'It is the way of heaven to take from what has in excess in order to make good what is deficient...'"

The more this guy talked, the more ridiculous he got. Seeing how Yue Yingqing had been still the whole time, I walked over to him and pulled at his shirt. "More

like she grabbed at you and then found the bag of sulfur in your pocket. You can tout your horn with me all you want, but Xueqing and Zhenzhen don't have the patience for it, I'm afraid."

Xueqing cooperated and aimed her gun at Wei ge's pants. Zhenzhen continued to glare at him with disgust. He shivered and then laughed. "I'm just kidding guys. No need to be so serious."

"Get to the truth. Quickly!" Xueqing called out coldly, like a general giving orders.

Intimidated by Xueqing's gun, Wei ge didn't dare to make nonsensical remarks. He said truthfully, "She seemed very frightened after she broke the bag of sulfur. She started retreating, rubbing her hands and trying to get rid of the sulfur. So I figured the sulfur would be able to deal with her and poured it all over her body. At first, she rolled around madly on the ground, but after a bit, it seemed like she couldn't move anymore, as if she didn't have any strength left." (Note: sulfur supposedly repels snakes, but Google seems to suggest otherwise)

"Why are you carrying around a bag of sulfur?" Zhenzhen asked.

"Ah Mu said that there was a snake immortal in the sewers, so of course I have to carry some sulfur on my body. Otherwise, what would happen if the snake immortal bit me?!" Wei ge said, pleased with himself.

"The reason it took you so long was so you could buy sulfur?! You coward!" I snapped.

"This isn't about being a coward or not. As police, it's our duty to protect the citizens of our nation. But before we can protect others, we have to protect our own lives first! If not for my foresight, Miao Miao and I would be dead already. And then imagine the countless people she would have killed with that hand!" Wei ge boasted continually. He pulled out four bags of sulfur from his pocket and a receipt. Then he said, "I bought these for work purposes. I can get a reimbursement, right?"

"You're a temp worker on amnesty. You dare to call yourself police?" I took his bags of sulfur. "But if we get the snake immortal, forget a reimbursement, getting the boss to give you a bonus out of his pocket shouldn't be a problem."

I crouched down by Yue Yingqing, about to ask for her statement, but she weakly said, "I have the right to remain silent!" Although she looked like a dead snake, unable to move and without any power, her mouth was still quite stubborn.

"You don't have the right to remain silent!" Xueqing said coldly.

"You've watched too many Hong Kong and Taiwan cop films. Chinese law doesn't give its citizens the right to remain silent. We only offer leniency for those who confess and strict treatment for those who resist. You have the obligation to respond to all police questioning," I said with a smile. Then I put on a more serious tone, "Who is your master? If you don't confess, then you'll be charged with all the crimes!"

Faced with my forceful questioning, she simply closed her eyes and pretended to sleep, in the same way that a dead pig wouldn't be scared of boiling water. Zhenzhen was so angry that she tried to pry open her mouth with the baton. Since it looked like there was no point in questioning her further, I just handcuffed her, and Zhenzhen and I carried her off.

Speaking of, Miao Miao had looked extremely exhausted, but after I handcuffed Yue Yingqing, she suddenly livened up. When I asked her about it, she just said that she felt as if she'd been dreaming before, but she couldn't really remember anything.

We handed Yue Yingqing over to the Armed Police and called the boss for a debriefing. Boss said, "Looks like we'll have to use some force to pry open her mouth."

I laughed. "Whether she talks or not isn't important anymore. After Yuetong does a comparison to the blood from the female ghost from last night, along with the autopsy report that the murderer was missing a middle finger, convicting her won't be difficult. As for her master, I suspect he's still inside the school. We just have to use sulfur on another physical examination..."

"Haha! Since Yue Yingqing's afraid of sulfur, her master probably shouldn't be any better. You can even come up with such a trick! No wonder you were the CIB's rookie of the year." The boss' easygoing voice suddenly turned serious. "Finding out the mastermind isn't an urgent matter. What you need to take care

of right now is the monster in the sewers.”

I thought for a moment. “That shouldn’t be hard either. That snake immortal should also be afraid of sulfur. Moreover, according to the sewer map, the area by the sewer drain is pretty wide. Just put some Armed Police into suits covered in sulfur and go back to catch the snake.”

“That... In order to protect the students, it’ll be hard to hand over officers to you.” Boss’ voice sounded from the phone.

“You don’t mean to have us go into the sewers to catch the monster, do you?!”

“Mm, you understood my meaning. I can help with the protective clothing and fire department support, but you’ll have to take care of the manpower yourself. Don’t bring Ah Wei and Xiao Miao though. They won’t be of help.”

“I’m the one who has to figure it all out, right?” I sounded in despair.

“Then it’s decided. You’re in command of the sewer investigation. When this case is over, I’ll treat everyone to a snake banquet.” Then Boss hung up the phone.

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“Ah Mu ge, are you okay? Why are you sweating so much?” Miao Miao asked with concern.

“I’m fine, just a bit hot.” There was imminent catastrophe ahead. Could I really not sweat?

After I relayed the boss’ orders, we headed over to the firefighters near the camphor woods. We borrowed three sets of protective clothing, oxygen bottles, walkie-talkies, *etc.* Zhenzhen also borrowed an ax. We brought all the stuff over to the sewer drain opening, and Zhenzhen, Xueqing, and I suited up and sprinkled sulfur onto ourselves. I put the remaining sulfur into my tool bag, just in case. Then we entered the sewer. Wei ge and Miao Miao stayed outside and kept contact via the walkie-talkie and took care of other logistics.

The entrance to the sewer was built next to a small, dark river. The entrance was slightly less than two meters tall, and although we didn’t hit our heads on the way in, it always felt like you would hit it. Zhenzhen and I couldn’t help

lowering our heads, but Xueqing didn't seem to be at all affected.

Since the snake demon might attack at any moment, I didn't dare to lead the group. Of course I also didn't walk at the back either. Instead, I was sandwiched in the middle, receiving the beauties' protection.

Zhenzhen turned on the light on her helmet and held out her ax. I followed behind her. Xueqing and her gun brought up the rear. The light on her helmet moved around, searching.

Not long after we entered the sewer, the air quality detector showed that the oxygen level was decreasing. The methane content increased as we headed further inside, so we had to start using our oxygen tanks. The tank was heavy on our backs, and after awhile, my waist and back were sore. But if we got rid of them now, even if I could run faster than Liu Xiang, I'd faint before I got out of the tunnel. (Note: Liu Xiang is an Olympic and world champion hurdler)

The sewer paths were very complicated. They criss-crossed like a big maze. Thankfully, this place was pretty far from the city, so the sewer systems weren't interconnected. Otherwise, with just the three of us, we'd probably have to spend years to find the bloody snake demon.

With the image of the sewer plans in my mind, I instructed the group over to a tunnel where we had to walk single-file. We also had to bend over, with our asses up, to get through the space and head toward the dorm. Because we had to walk in a bent position, Zhenzhen became uncomfortable, so I could only have her and Xueqing switch positions. In any case, I wouldn't be leading. That would just be sending me to my death.

Xueqing didn't make things difficult like Zhenzhen had. She just raised her bottom and started walking through the tunnel. Walking behind her, I couldn't help daydreaming a bit. After all, in front of me was a mature woman's raised, round bottom. I suspect that any straight male would inevitably have some dirty thoughts in their mind. I felt that I could even smell a light jasmine scent, but of course, that shouldn't have been the case since I was wearing an oxygen mask. And the only thing you could smell down in the sewers were disgusting, vomit-inducing smells anyway.

After a short distance, the sewer water was already up to our knees. There was

also a lot of plastic bags and debris floating in the water, and occasionally, there were also some used condoms. The walls were covered in a layer of black mud. I wonder, if it were used for a face mask, would it have whitening effects? Though, I doubt there was anyone who would dare to test it out.

The walls were black. The sewer water at our feet was black. The protective suits on our bodies were also black. Aside from the lights on our helmets, everything in sight was black. I suddenly felt like I was inside a black hole, as if I'd never be able to return to the earth where the sun shined brightly and the warm breeze blew across my face. As we approached the area around the dorm, this feeling grew stronger. I even felt that this filthy sewer would be my burial place.

As I was caught up in my thoughts, I suddenly bumped into Xueqing. Although the feeling wasn't bad, I quickly backed off, lest I be called a pervert and molester. I didn't expect that my ass would bump into Zhenzhen. I thought to myself that if we weren't stuck in such a narrow space, she'd have definitely kicked me.

Xueqing gestured for us to be quiet and listen. I pulled my legs together and listened attentively. "Hiss, hiss, hiss..." A faint and strange sound echoed in the tunnel. The things we would have to face, we would have to face in the end. The battle of life and death was soon to come...

– Strange Investigations Team –

Chapter 12

– Strange Investigations Team –

Volume 1

12 Capturing the Leader

For humans who were accustomed to a bright and spacious environment, the dark and cramped sewers were full of unknown disasters. What we had to face weren't things like rats and cockroaches, but rather a terrifying monster that could kill three people in an instant.

The slight hissing signaled to us that the snake demon was nearby. Although snake-like creatures didn't have true noses, but with their tongues and olfactory organ, their sense of smell was comparable to a dog's. I suspected that the snake demon would be the same. The hissing became clear and crisp, and it was obvious that the sulfur on my body had already attracted its attention. And rather than running away from the smell, it was coming after us. Perhaps the smell had angered it. This wasn't a laughing matter!

Xueqing pointed her gun forward, ready to shoot at any moment. An idea suddenly appeared in my head—Methane! I immediately checked my air quality device. Just as I thought, the methane levels here were extremely high. A spark and this place would explode!

“Don't shoot! It'll cause an explosion!” I shouted at Xueqing through my oxygen mask.

Xueqing was startled, and it was obvious that she hadn't thought of this earlier. The hissing grew louder, and the snake demon could very well appear before us in a second. But since we weren't able to shoot, how would we fight it?

“Let me!” Zhenzhen wanted to push me out of the way, but it was impossible with how tight the tunnel was.

“Retreat! Lets go back to more open space to discuss.” Under the circumstances, even if Zhenzhen could hack apart the snake demon with her ax, it would be hard to save Xueqing and me. With no other options, it was best to escape and ensure the safety of our lives first.

Thankfully, even though the tunnel was tight, I was still able to turn around. Just as I started turning, a white creature appeared! Its upper body was white as snow, but its eyes were an alluring red, like two blood-red rubies in the darkness. Its lower body looked like a serpent’s tail covered in sludge. Its upper body looked like a human’s body with a snake’s head, with a long neck and flickering, blood-red tongue. This was the killer that took three firemen’s lives and triggered a chain of events— The snake demon!

“Don’t go straight, make a turn!” I pushed Zhenzen from behind. Under ordinary circumstances, it would have been strange if she didn’t kill me. Snakes moved linearly with great speed, so bent over and walking with our asses up, we definitely wouldn’t be able to outrun it. We could only take lots of turns to put a distance between us. Fortunately, the sewers had tunnels in all directions. There would be a new tunnel to turn into after a short distance no matter which way you went. But if you panicked when choosing your path, it was very easy to lose your way.

Sure enough, after turning through tunnels, we put some distance between ourselves and the snake demon. Of course, with Zhenzhen leading the way like a headless fly, we weren’t able find a larger space to battle it out with the snake demon. At this junction, my useless right leg started cramping again. I lost my balance, and my whole body fell into the sewage.

When Zhenzhen helped pull me up, the snake demon had caught up and was only ten meters behind us. Xueqing pointed her gun at it. If it attacked us now, whether or not Xueqing fired her gun, we’d end up dead all the same. The only difference was that if she fired, it would be buried down here with us, and if she didn’t, it was going to have a nice meal.

In the midst of panicking, I suddenly realized something strange. The snake demon seemed to be staring at the gun in Xueqing’s hands, but its eyes didn’t carry a murderous intent. Instead, they looked like the curious eyes of a child. Normally, snakes and such creatures had quite poor vision and could only see

roughly a meter ahead. Considering the distance between us and it, it shouldn't be able to see us. It should just be able to smell us and estimate our position.

The snake demon's eyesight hadn't completely degenerated, perhaps because it was partially human. After all, part of its genes came from Ye Xiaolou. Since it had human genes, of course it would also have some human traits. Maybe it was just like a ten year old child, curious about a gun.

In this moment, a dangerous thought popped into my head, but it was also our only chance. I immediately told Xueqing, "Throw your gun to it!"

Xueqing was taken aback, but without pressing for further explanation, she tossed out her gun. Just as I'd suspected, the snake demon was very curious about the gun. It picked up the gun and started playing with it. The snake demon even pointed the barrel at its own eye.

"What's it doing?" Zhenzhen didn't understand.

"Who cares? Run!" Relying on the map in my memory, I directed Zhenzhen through the sewer tunnels. Probably because it had already feasted on the three firemen earlier, the snake demon wasn't much interested in more 'food.' It was concentrated on playing with what was likely its first and only toy to date— A Type 54 pistol.

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When we got closer to where the storm drain was located, the tunnel grew more spacious and we were able to stand up straight. It gave me a bit of comfort. And it seemed like the snake demon didn't chase after us.

"We're just going to leave the snake demon?" Zhenzhen asked.

"We'll talk after we get out of here." I turned back to look at the tunnel we'd just crawled out from, and at the same time, I pushed Zhenzhen, intending to rush her out. However, my hand touched something soft. Although we were in protective gear, I was still able to feel it— My hand was on her chest!

Even with the layers of protective gear, clothing, and bra between us, my palm was still able to conclude— C cup! Although the size was inferior to Xueqing's, they weren't small either, so I concluded that she was a C cup. I was positive.

However, reaching this conclusion meant that there was a price to pay.

Zhenzhen cried out in surprise, and then she shouted angrily, “Are you looking to die?! You dare to feel me up?!” Then came a slap, but fortunately, she hit my helmet. Still, she knocked me over. Golden stars were circling in front of my eyes, and the floor seemed to be shaking as well. But then the thundering sound of an explosion caused me to realize that the ground was indeed shaking, very strongly at that.

Xueqing was the first to notice something odd, and she threw herself and Zhenzhen to the ground. Almost at the same time, a large amount of sewage flowed out from all the tunnels. It felt warm. In the midst of all the sewage, we finally pulled ourselves up. The place seemed like it was going to collapse at any time, so we didn’t stay any longer and rushed out.

When we got out, the moon was already hanging high in the sky. Although it wasn’t very round, I felt that that evening’s moon was especially beautiful. Even the unlikeable Wei ge seemed more pleasant to the eye under that moonlight. I couldn’t help but move in for a warm hug, but this guy didn’t accept my good intentions. Instead, he pinched his nose and ran far away.

“Ah Mu ge, take off your protective suit!” Miao Miao brought me a towel. I just remembered I was covered in disgusting sewer grime.

After we removed our protective suits and wiped the grime from our faces, Zhenzhen asked again about what just happened.

I laughed. “The demon blew up the sewer. If it was playing with the gun, it would eventually pull the trigger. Once it pulled the trigger, the methane would ignite and the place would explode. Whether it’s a snake demon or a snake immortal, with such a powerful explosion, if it didn’t fry him, that would be strange.”

“What?! The snake immortal is dead?” Uncle Liu suddenly slipped out from behind a camphor tree.

“Uncle Liu, how did you end up patrolling all the way here?” Zhenzhen asked foolishly. Even an idiot would have realized that Uncle Liu wouldn’t be here to patrol.

Sure enough, Uncle Liu ran at me and grabbed me. He opened his mouth to bite my neck. Because of how suddenly he’d attacked, I wasn’t able to move out

of the way. To avoid being bitten in the neck, I instinctively raised my left arm to block. Fortunately, my jacket was thick and he wasn't able to bite through it, but from the searing pain in my arm, he was probably going to bite through in a few more seconds. In such a short amount of time, even the strong Zhenzhen wouldn't be able to pull him off. Moreover, Xueqing no longer had her gun. Miao Miao and Wei ge were even more helpless in this situation. If I wanted to live, I could only rely on myself. The moment his teeth pierced my skin was likely the moment that my soul would ascent to heaven, because it was very likely that he was the mastermind behind everything!

I reached my right hand to my waist, intending to pull out the bag of sulfur. But the sulfur was in my tool belt, and I'd put that on the outside of the now sewage-covered protective gear. My life was hanging by a thread. Where did I have time to run to my tool belt? Fortunately, the heavens didn't want my life yet. There was another piece of life-saving equipment in my pocket— Pepper spray.

I pulled out the pepper spray and sprayed it at Uncle Liu. He cried out in pain as he raised his hands to his eyes and staggered backwards. Zhenzhen and Xueqing quickly charged at him and threw him to the ground, handcuffing him.

“You're the mastermind! Before her death, Xia Yulan wasn't saying President Lu, but rather you— Liu!” Even though I felt that my speculation wasn't quite right, I couldn't think of any other reason for Uncle Liu to have attacked me— Unless he was getting revenge for his child.

Because of the stinging in his eyes, Uncle Liu was still moaning in pain. He didn't respond to me. I had Miao Miao hand me a colorless drink and I helped Uncle Liu wash out his eyes. Then I helped him sit up to answer my question.

“It's over, it's over, it's all over. The immortal is dead, it's all over...” Tears flowed down Uncle Liu's wrinkled face. Suddenly, he seemed to age a lot. As if in a dream, he started to recounting everything. When he reached a certain point in his tale, sometimes he would laugh as if intoxicated and sometimes would cry tears of despair—

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Thirty years ago. Everything that's happened started thirty years ago, when An

ge and the rest discovered the white snake immortal's burial ground...

Actually, when An ge slaughtered the white snake back then, I also ate with them. And he didn't only pull out one gallbladder from the snake. There were two, one large and one small. He and his team treated me as a guest and offered me the larger gallbladder. Unable to refuse their hospitality, I ate it. If I hadn't eaten that 'snake gallbladder' back then, then all that followed wouldn't have happened either. Because that wasn't a gallbladder. It was the white snake immortal's 'neidan' (internal alchemy)."

What An ge and his team discovered wasn't a human's tomb, but rather a white snake immortal's cultivation place. It had already cultivated for the last thousand years. If they hadn't discovered it, it would have reached immortality eventually. Unfortunately, in the end, it couldn't escape death.

After I ate a part of the white snake immortal's corporeal body, I should have ended up like An ge and his team, poisoned and eventually dying of some gastrointestinal disease. But out of luck, I ate the immortal's neidan which cures the body of toxins and allowed me to live to this day.

After An ge and his team all passed away, I would often dream of the white snake immortal that we'd eaten. It told me everything in my dreams. It said that An ge brought disaster to himself. It told me that if I disobeyed its orders, when it reincarnated, it wouldn't forgive me. What it wanted of me was very simple. That was, to remain at the medical university until a girl named Ye Xiaolou appeared.

And like that, I continued staying at the medical university for nearly twenty years, and then Xiaolou finally appeared. When I first saw her, my heart grew restless. In the twenty years before, after I'd eaten the neidan, I hadn't been interested in any women. I knew that I was already deeply in love with her.

After I met Xiaolou, the white snake immortal appeared in my dreams once again. It wanted me to have a relationship with Xiaolou, to produce another body for it. This caused great distress to me. Xiaolou was just a young girl. She was beautiful and had many suitors. And I, I was an old man, nearly 50 years old already. I had no power or money, so how was I to gain her favor?

But the white snake immortal told me, "Her father ate my immortal

gallbladder. She was born from intercourse that he'd had with his wife while his body contained my spirit. You fell in love with her at first sight because your spirits are attracted to each other. Just like you, the first time that she saw you, she fell in love with you."

As the white snake immortal had said, Xiaolou had really fallen in love with me at first sight, although I couldn't believe it. A beautiful, young girl actually fell in love with an old, ugly security guard. It was really something ridiculous. Others would laugh if they knew, so I told her to keep our relationship a secret. But in the end, she was unable to keep it from her roommates. Then the white snake immortal told me in my dreams that these three girls would be of use in the future, so I let Xiaolou take my blood and secretly drip it into her roommate's water bottles.

The white snake immortal's neidan turned my blood into something mystical. Although it could enhance the human body, it could also act like an addictive poison. I used this to control the girls. When Prof Xiao accidentally came across our relationship, I continued my blunders and used my blood to control him as well. I didn't realize at the time how much help he would end up being.

After ten months of pregnancy, the white snake immortal was finally reborn. But that was also when this tragedy began...

In order to speed up the recovery of his powers, the white snake immortal started feeding on Xiaolou and her roommates' blood. Three months later, it asked for a human finger to help it shed. Six months later, it even wanted to eat a human heart!

In order to fulfill its desires, I lied to Xiaolou's roommates time and time again. I even deceived Xiaolou. I told them that once the white snake immortal grew up, it would bring us all sorts of greatness. It could let us live forever, and bring us riches and splendor. They were all convinced by my words. Not only were they willing to kill, they were even willing to give up their own lives.

I didn't care about anyone else's lives. I only cared about Xiaolou's, so I arranged for her to leave the university. I never expected that I would put her into harm's way instead...

After Xiaolou's death, the white snake immortal was my life's everything. In

name, he was my and Xiaolou's child after all. For it, I remained as a security guard at the university, living ten more years of loneliness. I only found a bit of delight again when you showed up.

I was very thankful that you would sit to play chess with me. Although you only did so because of your work, I was still thankful! But as your investigation got deeper, you'd created a threat to the immortal son. That's why, when we were playing chess last night, I excused myself to the restroom and called Prof Xiao. I ordered him to have Supervisor Yu attract your partner away and have Yingqing and Yulan ambush you in the woods. I knew that when you couldn't contact your partner, you would search for her in the woods. Unfortunately, I didn't expect another of your partners to show up, and with a gun at that.

Since you two weren't taken care of in the camphor woods, Supervisor Yu would definitely become a prime suspect. From her cowardly character, it was inevitable that she would rat out Prof Xiao, so I had Yingqing kill him. Not only did I plan to kill Prof Xiao, I planned to kill everyone involved, but if they all died, I would become a general without soldiers. So I decided to let Yingqing live. I had her go into hiding in the sewers, but my plans were foiled again. I hadn't expected for her to be caught by you guys...

Uncle Liu's explanation cleared all my doubt. This case started out thirty years ago. Ye Ping'an and his team intruded upon the white snake demon immortal's cultivation tomb, which initiated the abnormal love between his daughter, Ye Xiaolou, and Uncle Liu. Following, she gave birth to the culprit of these serial murders.

Although Uncle Liu was the mastermind behind this case, from another perspective, wasn't he also a victim in this ordeal? And there was no one more pitiful than Ye Xiaolou. She was originally just an innocent and shining girl, but because of the white snake demon immortal, she fell deeply in love with the unattractive Uncle Liu. Under Uncle Liu's deception, she thought she was like the Virgin Mary, giving birth to a son. Then after being on the receiving end of her doctor, Xiao Ou's, foul deeds, she came to an unfortunate death. In this case, she was the most innocent person involved, and she was also the one who'd been hurt the most.

Epilogue

– Strange Investigations Team – NEXT

Vol.1 White Snake Demon Immortal Epilogue

Ministry of Public Safety, Office of the Director.

A knock came from outside the door. Liang Zheng pushed open the door and entered. He placed the files for the medical university ghost case down in front of the director. There was a lofty smile on his meaty face. “The culprit was Liu Liugen, called Uncle Liu. He’s already confessed to abetting murder and other charges. The accomplice, Yue Yingqing, also known as Zeng Qianyi, has also confessed to murder and assaulting police officers. The accomplice, Xiao Yixuan, while never directly involved with a murder, has committed theft of hearts from corpses. He’s been dismissed from the general hospital, but the directors don’t wish for any rumors to get around, and decided not to pursue the matter. But I’m afraid that he won’t ever be able to work in the medical field again. Female dorm Supervisor Yu cooperated with the investigations before the truth was revealed, though her involvement in the case wasn’t large. Moreover, she kept a good attitude during our investigations, so she will only have to undergo educational training.”

“Mm, well done!” The director picked up the files and flipped through them before closing the folder. He smiled. “I gave a half month deadline and it was solved in three days. The secretary will be pleased.”

“I only gave my subordinates one week.” Liang Zheng said confidently.

“It’s good to be strict with your subordinates, but don’t push them too much. Thankfully, the Armed Police were keeping students away from the area. Otherwise, there would have been many casualties from the methane explosion. The explosion already caused great damage to numerous buildings on the medical university campus, and the maintenance fees are frightening.”

“That’s for the secretary and Ministry of Education to deal with. It’s not our business, but someone else will be anxiously rebuilding the campus each day.”

“That’s true. It’s best to leave these matters for someone else to deal with. Let us just do our own jobs well!” The director handed another file to Liang Zheng.

Liang Zhen read it, “The victim died from a myocardial infraction (heart attack). Facial expression was seriously distorted, but no other apparent injuries... Seven witnesses on the scene that claim the victim was murdered by a ghost... This case sounds very interesting.” His eyes shined with a competitive radiance.

[End of Volume 1]

Supernatural Records

White Snake Tomb

Note: The following is paraphrased.

Volume 1, White Snake Immortal, was inspired by the story sent in by a reader about a white snake tomb found in Zhuhai, Guangdong in the '90s.

The information provided described a story very similar to the discovery of the snake in this novel, but instead of a school dormitory, the tomb was found under an eight-story residential building. The migrant workers dug up a grave and found a snake, and then they ate it. The workers who ate the snake died within ten years from gastrointestinal diseases (changed to ten months for the novel). The author does mention the possibility of the snake having carried some type of virus, but of course, the oddity lies in the fact that there’s a living snake that doesn’t move, buried in a tomb.

The reader that sent in the story, Miao Miao (who got a character in the novel, haha), said that she’d heard about the story from elders. After the first worker died, there would be some people who would go back to the site of the snake tomb each year to light incense and burn joss paper. After the last worker died though, no one returned to the site and so, the story became legend.

– Strange Investigations Team – NEXT